

# Existentialist angst goes on display for Frazer exhibition

**David Frazer:** Homesick: Paintings, prints and sculpture  
Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison St, Deakin  
Closes May 22, Tuesday-Friday, 10am-5pm, Sat-Sun 9am-5pm

Reviewer: **Sasha Grishin**

David Frazer is an allegorical artist, whose art is preoccupied with themes of alienation and existentialist angst.

The prevailing theme in this exhibition is the feeling of being lost, misplaced somewhere on the edge of the world, and relying on action as way to establish identity and location. His work is essentially an illustration of a state of being, rather than an engagement with this state. When many artists seem to require much fanfare to make quite a trite comment, Frazer has a quiet manner of understating things, to make quite a profound observation concerning life in contemporary Australia.

In many ways his oil paintings and gouaches could be viewed as "studies" for the prints. I don't know, nor does it particularly matter, whether the painting or the print came first, but it is in the prints - etchings, wood engravings, lithographs and linocuts - that the image is tightened, distilled and establishes a "comfortable scale". Take for example the largish oil painting *Homesick* of a person seated in a park surrounded by autumnal leaves. In the painting the cut-out clouds, the vibrant colours and the competing shapes create a very busy, congested surface. In the etching of the same title, which is about a quarter of the size, there is a patterned surface tracery of form which frames the figure within a

subdued light. He becomes a symbol for belonging and not belonging caught at the moment when nature itself is in the process of deciding on the season.

Etchings including *The Ladder*, *Lonely Boy* and the tiny *Homesick*, as well as the wood engraving *The Ladder III* and the lithographs *Lonely Boy III* and *Two Ladders*, are some of the most captivating works in the exhibition.

They are complex and understated images where the elements of farce and irony are kept in check by the prevailing note of pathos. Frazer in the classic sense of the phrase is an "image maker", an artist who arrives at an obsessive motif and then endlessly refines it until all extraneous detail has been deleted and it is allowed to assert the maximum hypnotic power.

At the start of the exhibition, in the entrance foyer, there is a strange and slightly unsettling oil painting of a man seated in a shaded suspended rocking chair, simply titled *The Tired Man*.

Set somewhere in rural suburbia, outside a corrugated iron shed and between houses, the figure is physically and literally suspended in time, space and spirit. The shadows seem more tangible than the objects.

It is as if many layers of cut-out forms, one geometrically echoing the other, have been assembled to heighten the focus on this solitary tired figure and the weight of his thoughts.

Frazer is a Melbourne-based artist in his 40s who is quickly establishing a national reputation as a serious figurative artist whose quiet and unassuming works assert a powerful and disturbing presence.



**DETAILED STUDY:** David Frazer's *The Tired Man* features a figure physically and literally suspended in time, space and spirit. Frazer's works include complex and understated images where the elements of farce and irony are kept in check by the prevailing note of pathos.