



A STRONG EXHIBITION: Local artist Helen Geier's *Meridian* acrylic on canvas, 150 x 250cm.

Ideas explored with experimental boldness

Helen Geier: *Meridian*. Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Closes Tuesday.
Reviewer: Sasha Grishin

It has been four years since Helen Geier's last exhibition in Canberra and there has been both a consistency of vision as well as a development in the processes of art making over this period.

Geier is a veteran artist, who has been exhibiting in Canberra for 35 years and has been an active presence in the art scene for several decades.

Almost 20 years ago she resigned from the local school of art, after teaching there for more than a decade, and has devoted herself to full-time studio work from her home outside of Braidwood.

Although Geier ranges broadly across many mediums, she is primarily a printmaker, who in much of her art thinks as a printmaker, with a constant layering of surfaces like printing many separate blocks of different colours.

Many years ago she came across an 18th century text on perspective by Carrington Bowles and this served as a point of departure for a whole series of her works in the 1990s.

Bowles' diagrams were overlaid on her own observations of nature creating a multi-tiered composition which could be interpreted on many levels.

In this exhibition she revisits the Bowles book, but adopts a looser and more romantic and meditative interpretation. *Meridian*, a key painting in this exhibition, and also the most successful work in the show, presents what could be termed a cerebral landscape with speckled colours. The trees are presented arranged in

recessional parallel planes following the teachings of single point or artificial perspective, but at the same time they appear like a superimposed tracery with strong ornamental surface qualities.

The whole work is built on a series of contrasts between the rigid perspectival structure and the quite sensuous treatment of surfaces, the abstracting linear articulation and lovely details like the gnarled tree trunks.

Geier is one artist who needs scale to realise fully her current body of ideas.

The act of squaring up the canvas, the use of the grid and the demarcations in the canvas surface are most effective in such large canvases as *Moments* and *Ghost gums*.

The smaller pieces appear more like studies or meditations on the larger pieces.

One of Helen Geier's most ardent champions for many years is Peter Haynes, university art curator at the University of Canberra.

He writes in the exhibition catalogue: "Helen Geier's recent work ... clearly asserts the complex sophistication of the manner in which she visualises her world. Hers is a meditative vision, constantly exploring and always uncovering fresh ways to challenge herself and her viewers."

Indeed, this is an exhibition with an enormous fecundity of fresh ideas and an experimental boldness.

Over decades Geier has acquired a mastery of many techniques and she now demonstrates a preparedness to engage with different visual structures of European and Asian cultures and to unite them within her own artistic vision.

This is a very strong exhibition by a local artist who is now receiving national acclaim.