

Genius of Frazer's understated prints lie in the hidden meanings

There is a disarming honesty, directness and profundity about the work of Melbourne printmaker David Frazer, who has been showing with this gallery for more than a decade.

There is an understated quality about his prints, where everything appears as clear and even transparent in meaning, but there always seems to be a concealed narrative, an additional level of meaning.

In some ways, I am reminded of the verse of one of my favourite poets, John Shaw Neilson, whose work I started to read when I was still in my teens and whom I am still reading today. I am not certain that I understand Shaw Neilson any better, but my love and admiration for him has grown over the decades. Frazer,

David Frazer: Hug
At Beaver Galleries, Deakin. Until May 27.

Reviewer: Sasha Grishin

like Shaw Neilson, loves the Australian rural scene and at his core is also basically a romantic. In both there is always a sense of anticipation, the "hidden" is present in the poem, etching or linocut and it somehow it is up to the viewer to tease this out.

A recurring theme in this exhibition is "waiting for the rain". In a rural vision of great panoramic splendour, there is a considerable sense of anticipation. Is it a work about the breaking of the drought? Or is it about the cycle of the seasons

and the sense of pent-up fecundity, which lies just below the surface of the land? Beyond the toughness of the outer husk, there is a great richness and solemn beauty. I am reminded of Shaw Neilson's immortal words "My riches all went into dreams that never yet came home, / They touched upon the wild cherries and the slabs of honeycomb, / They were not of the desolate brood that men can sell or buy, / Down in that poor country no pauper was I."

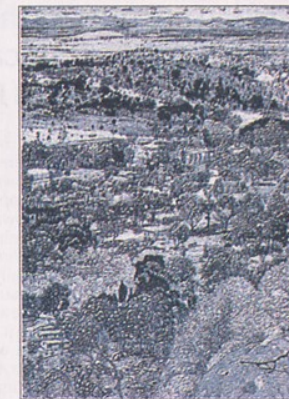
The theme of romantic love also recurs throughout the exhibition, where with the subtlety of biscuit box images a loving couple walk into the bush in a heart-shaped mandorla or sit on a park bench and melt into one another with a complex entanglement of hearts and legs.

These little vignettes imply some complex, yet concealed narrative, one concerning love, home, long awaited letters, joy and desperation.

We are never fully given access to the story, but we are provided with enough clues to make an emotional commitment without being party to all of the details.

I admire this sense of longing, nostalgia and touches of the existential which run throughout Frazer's art.

Although he is an exquisite printmaker, one who is happy to work in wood engraving, intaglio and relief printmaking techniques, his genius lies in the making of these intense enigmatic icons of haunting power with a touch of Samuel Palmer magic about them.



NARRATIVE:
The viewer must tell the stories behind David Frazer's prints, *Walk Away, far left, and Waiting for rain.*