

Well-developed skills

Endangered Glyphs by GW Bot. On show until May 1 at Beaver Gallery, Deakin.

GW Bot's exhibition *Endangered Glyphs* demonstrates a sustained exploration of nature expressed through a diverse art practice.

Widely exhibited and collected, Bot's work is well known to many in Canberra for her prints, and increasingly, cast metal sculpture. In this exhibition she combines these with paintings and ceramics. All of this work is centred on a personal language of visual forms that she has honed and deepened over time.

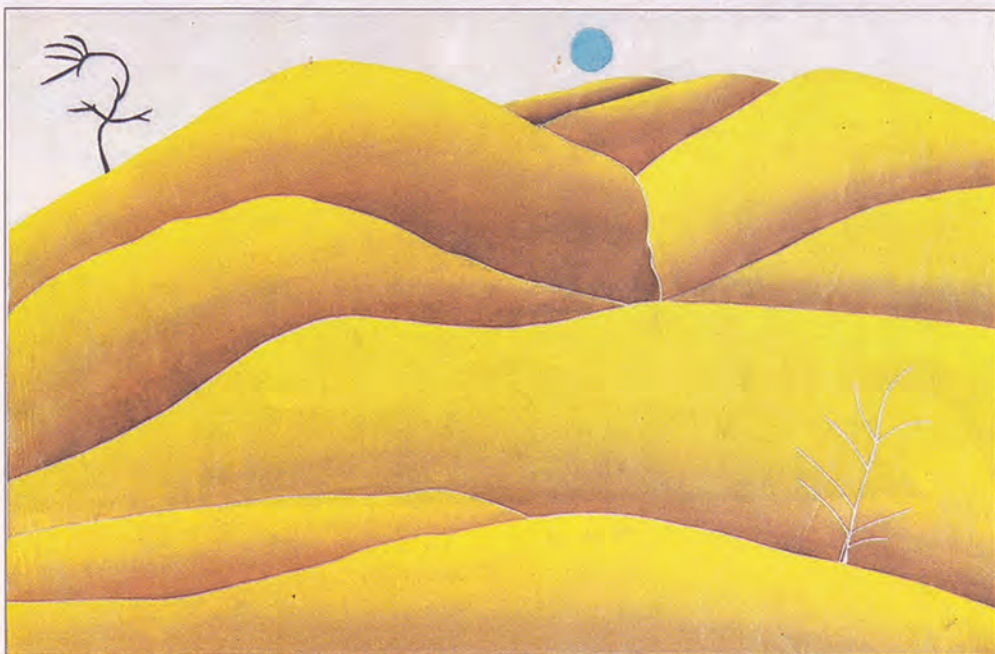
Bot's language, that she calls "glyphs", are notations derived from decades spent drawing in the landscape around Canberra, the Monaro and the Murrumbidgee. (This connection to her surroundings is also expressed in her working name, taken from one of the first European references to the wombat, le grand Wam Bot.)

The glyphs are angular tree-like shapes, but they can also be seen as human bodies, struggling against nature. The abstracted forms sound an ominous note, signifying the multiple pressures constricting the environment. The different media Bot has used in this exhibition show the development of these forms – from the linocuts for which she is best known, to steel and bronze sculptures, paintings and their most recent iteration in ceramics.

It is challenging to present so many different types of media in such a small space and the large totem-like *Endangered Glyphs* series do not appear to their best advantage in this exhibition, being somewhat crowded in the corner of the gallery. Yet the forms of the glyphs link the different pieces and the varied materials together. In this exhibition are the first oil paintings I've seen by this artist, the delicate linear patterning of her linocuts have been translated into subtle gradations of colour that in *Winter Glyph* bathe the landscape, as though by a soft mist.

The depth of Bot's skill as a printmaker is evident throughout the works on paper in this show, bringing together technique and materials with great restraint. (Papers including Pacific tapa, Thai mulberry and Japanese kozo make for a kind of UN of superb paper craft.) Each has been chosen to showcase its particular qualities, beautifully combined with printed elements. These works aren't merely an image printed onto paper, but each element is combined to create an art object that needs to be seen in person.

Standouts are the golden yellow landscape of *Glyphs - Between*



Glyphs - Between Worlds I, GW Bot.



GW Bot: *Eternal glyph*, oil on canvas, 80x132cm. Right: *The Poet* - bronze, edition of five, 103 x 44cm.

Worlds I and the use of Korean hanji paper in *Fallen Glyph I* and *Glyphs - Between Worlds*. The latter is reminiscent of Joan Miro; controlled, elegant forms against a landscape created using colour blocks provided by the paper. *Poet and Garden* employs her long-established use of linear patterns formed by small cuts in the lino, a technique relying on utmost precision yet appearing loose enough for forms to organically emerge. Here kozo paper is layered,

using the fringed edges of the papers to create interludes of lace-like delicacy in the work.

Bot marries subject and medium, employing her materials to express her experiences of nature and place. The exhibition evokes the virtue of slowness, of skill developed over time and applied to subjects long considered.

Anthea Gunn is curator of art at the Australian War Memorial

