

Art review Sasha Grishin

Hymns of praise to natural beauty

Renascent: Paintings and works on paper by Dianne Fogwell. Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Until March 5.

Titles of exhibitions tell a story. Dianne Fogwell's past four exhibitions have been titled *Renascent* (2017), *Recrudescence* (2016), *Evanescence* (2015) and *Inflorescence* (2014). In other words, three years of blossoming coming to a revival or a rebirth in this year's show. As her national and international standing as an artist has grown in recent years and her journeys abroad have proliferated, Fogwell's field of vision has gradually narrowed from the broader environment to that of her immediate neighbourhood. As an artist, she epitomises the philosophy of acting locally while thinking globally.

Fogwell has been exhibiting for almost 40 years and I have admired her work through-

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out this time. She has a curious artistic personality, favouring an ornate, intricate and "busy" style, one in which fantasy and narrative combine and are closely interwoven. She flirts with qualities in art that are discouraged in the discourse that is frequently parroted around contemporary art: her art depends on a high level of skill, she adores ornamental surfaces, in her art there is an



expression of joy and wonderment in nature and she creates images that are deeply personal, dream-like and belong to a distinctly feminine sensibility.

After staring closely at some of the linocuts in this exhibition (Fogwell is primarily a printmaker who also paints), the burning question I had was whether her lino blocks were all hand cut or contained some fine laser cutting. She treated my question like a personal affront - "I'm old school, no lasers, just very fine Chinese and Japanese cutting blades".

The linocuts are exquisite in their intricacy of detail with observation bordering on the obsessive. Trees, seedpods, insects and birds in flight are treated with exceptional botanical and ornithological accuracy, but at the same time there is no desire to create a convincing representation of a zoological specimen.

It is as if Fogwell enters into the spirit of birds and trees and wishes to relate a story from the "inside", rather than as an observer from the outside.

Scale seems to be, at least in part, determined by how a bird may see another bird and how a tree may see birds in flight or settling in its branches.



Clockwise from main: Dianne Fogwell's *Renascent*, from her *Renascent* exhibition at Beaver Galleries; *Acquiescence*, which underlines her intricate style; and *Reminisce*.

Her compositions are gripped with this sense of an enchanted story, a fairytale told by the participants and presented with glowing ornamental beauty.

The strength of this exhibition lies in the linocuts, such as *Night music*, *Reminisce*, *Dusk dreaming 2*, and *Acquiescence*, in which the sense of observation, outstanding and skilful cutting and a personalised narrative are all perfectly balanced and brought together. The linocuts are generally assembled

in unique editions with colours subtle and subdued.

Fogwell is a rare artist who has created a distinctive and personal artistic language in which she creates a hymn of praise for the intimate suburban natural environment. There is something slightly wistful in her work, a comment on transience, the passing of time, and an awareness that nothing remains static and that even this beauty will ultimately pass.