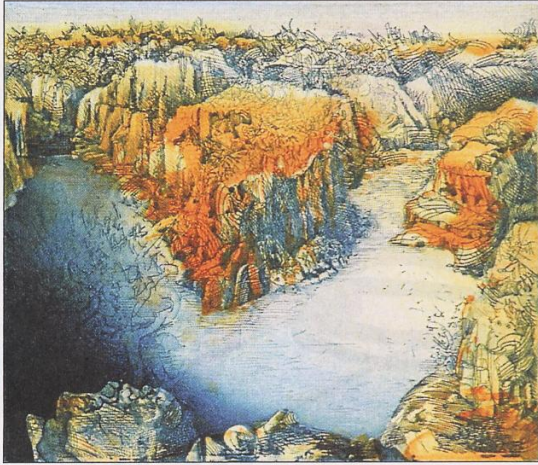


# Treasures of a master printmaker

The remarkable precision of Jörg Schmeisser's unique artwork is on show, just months after his death



**INTRICATE WORK:** Schmeisser's 1988 masterpiece, *Katherine Gorge*.

**Jörg Schmeisser:** Selected prints 1966-2010  
Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin  
Closes August 14, Tues-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat-Sun 9am-5pm  
**Reviewer** Sasha Grishin

**W**hen Jörg Schmeisser died a couple of months ago, aged 70, although his death was anticipated, it came as a shock.

For more than three decades he had been at the centre of the Canberra printmaking scene. He first visited in 1976, as a visiting fellow at the Australian National University, and two years later returned to head printmaking at the newly revamped Canberra School of Art under its visionary director, a fellow German artist and printmaker, Udo Sellbach.

He remained at the school for almost 20 years where he trained and inspired several generations of printmakers.

He never became an institutionalised art school teacher – the type that become buried in teaching, administration, school politics and who always have an excuse for not getting

on with their work. Instead, he worked incessantly, travelled constantly and exhibited internationally. He became one of the most successful printmakers in Australia and one of the few who attained an international profile.

This exhibition is a cameo "survey" of Schmeisser's work and contains 39 of his etchings. It includes some of his earliest prints and ranges through to a number of his most recent pieces, including the impressive *Beach bits from Yilpara*, 2010, the only non "pure etching" in the show, one where painting and pencil are combined with etching.

Schmeisser possessed two remarkable qualities in his art. The first was his ability to precisely observe something with a breathtaking precision. He could observe and depict things with the sense of detachment of an archaeological draughtsman, whether it be the Dead Sea, the landscape around Korinth, the Hamburg cityscape, Katherine Gorge, Exeter Cathedral, termite mounds or a mud crab in Rosedale. Superimposed on top of this is a very personal diaristic record often recording a journey through time and space.

In each of his prints Schmeisser



**PRECISE TECHNIQUE:** *Exeter Cathedral, Winchester tiles*, 1990, is a good example of Schmeisser's multi-tier methods.

created a private microcosm inviting the viewer to "unpack" and enjoy the narrative, one which is frequently built around this sense of the objective record of an observed, often exotic reality, and the artist's personal response.

The second quality in his art was his technique. He perfected a method of multiple-plate colour etching, so that each image was built up in

layers, in some ways replicating his process of observation. This created an intricate and multi-tier field of vision which at times was of bewildering complexity.

Throughout his long career Schmeisser never lost his sense of visual curiosity and visual excitement and this sense of excitement pervades the whole exhibition. In Canberra he found a supportive and

enthusiastic audience, especially among the academic community and this is testified by the fact this exhibition has virtually sold out.

It is too early to try to estimate the legacy of Schmeisser, that has to be left to posterity, but I am confident that he will be remembered as an artist who left a long lasting impact on the visual culture of the nation's capital.