

**Art Review** Sasha Grishin

# Landscape as an active collaborator

**Wendy Teakel: *Mungo Traces*: Paintings and sculptures, Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin, closes November 5, Tuesday to Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday and Sunday-9am-5pm.**

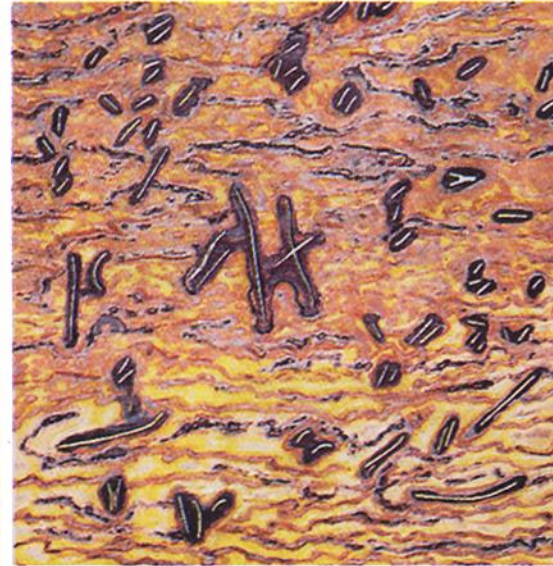
**W**endy Teakel emerged as an environmental sculptor in the 1970s, in the context of artists such as John Davis, who moved away from sculpture which was carved or modelled to sculpture constructed with found materials employing elements of chance and bricolage.

The temporal replaced the monumental and the permanent and sculpture became more accessible and viewer-friendly.

This was part of the international Arte Povera movement which set out to demystify art and to incorporate nature, industry and the everyday into the art-making process. Teakel was brought up in



the Riverina and subsequently settled on the rural fringes of Canberra, where the rhythms and patterns of country life impressed themselves on her art practice. Local artists, especially Rosalie Gascoigne, were to remain a lasting influence.



**Sky and earth:**  
(From left) Wendy Teakel's *Moon Rise, May 4, Mungo* and *Sand Country*.

In the general development of her art she has sought to allow the environment to have a voice in the things she makes. The landscape, whether it be her backyard or Lake Mungo, as in this exhibition, is not objectified and treated as a passive object to be observed, but is instead

viewed as an active participant or collaborator in her art-making.

This is true of this exhibition comprising 13 drawings, two woven rugs and three small sculptures.

Over the years she has developed a certain morphology in her art and a range of techniques which she

exploits to make these designs and surfaces. These include the use of pokerwork to create the scorch marks and the manipulation of the acrylic paint to suggest weathered and corroded materials.

In the sculptures, ringlock wire from cyclone fences is combined with sheep fleece, so that within a prickly cradle there nestles a cuddly form. On occasion, the repeated use of this morphology does become formulaic and predictable, a somewhat mannered strategy.

Some of the more interesting pieces refer to the celestial heavens, where in the vastness of a rural sky, distant from urban lights, the stars appear as holes pierced into the dark canopy through which shines the radiance from beyond. On occasion the use of tinsel, as for example, *Moon Rise, May 4, Mungo*, becomes less effective on close viewing.

This is an impressive exhibition by an artist who has consistently been developing her own rural vision.