

Triple treat kept firmly in its place

January 12, 2013

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Marking Place at Canberra Museum and Gallery, corner London Circuit and Civic Square, Civic Closes March 24. Mon-Fri 10am-5pm; Sat-Sun 12pm-5pm.



Wendy Teakel, *Corridor for one* 1984 (2nd state 2012)

Among the plethora of events marking the centenary of Canberra, the Canberra Museum and Gallery's exhibition *Marking Place* imparts a deeply reflective mood, at once "marking" site as an important aspect of one's self-identity, yet showing how a place name or certain place is moreover a generalised idea - of how man situates himself and where passages of life, its rituals and ceremonies are performed.

Bringing together the individual visual languages of three prominent Canberra-based artists, G.W. Bot, Anita McIntyre and Wendy Teakel, the exhibition's curator, Peter Haynes, former director of CMAG and now University of Canberra art curator, intuits subtle yet fundamental synchronicities in their work. In coalescing their art, Haynes discloses a personal insight into how he perceives "site" in the general, and in the more particular, the Australian landscape and the local area.

These contemporary artists are well-known in their fields, and having based their practices in the Canberra region for several decades, they hold special affection for Canberrans.



Anita McIntyre, *Song lines/Survey lines* 2011.

Bot is a recipient of many local, national and international awards, including being recognised as *The Canberra Times'* 2004 Artist of the Year. Similarly, Teakel, head of sculpture at the ANU School of Art, has attracted many accolades including winning the 2010 Countryscapes prize, while the least-known of the three, McIntyre, born in Queanbeyan, is a visiting fellow at the School of Art.

An obvious divergence is the dominant mediums in which they work, with Bot centring her practice on printing, Teakel on sculpture, and McIntyre on ceramics. Yet all incorporate aspects of painting and move effortlessly between various mediums.

From the small porcelain sculpture of McIntyre to the large sculptural installations of Bot and Teakel, different visual mediums create interest and variety for the audience.



Wendy Teakel's *Drought*.

Yet there is a certain gentle sensibility or sensitiveness prevalent throughout. There are no brash overstatements here. Quite the opposite. With a common thread presenting as an assured quietness, their work whispers and suggests rather than shouts or demands. They captivate and cajole the onlooker, allowing the gallery-goer to enter into their own reflective mood, to transition from the gallery space into one's personal space - of one's memory of place and sense of being. In this sense, Haynes has set up an elusively captivating show which, if taken in slowly and attentively - as an act inveigling the artists' intent - takes you on a journey which deviates from the artist's own "place" to one's own.

The exhibition and its pieces speak of ancient beginnings and infer that which lies beyond the present-day, disrupting time and place. Read in its entirety, the art work here represents the permanence yet fragility and ephemeral nature of Australian landscapes. Whereas man is but a fleeting moment in the transitory landscape, the landscape simultaneously outlives man, yet is itself ever-changing and likewise impermanent.

McIntyre's "paper porcelain" pictures conjure waterways, lakes or seabeds, with *Song Lines/Survey Lines* (2011) capturing small creatures as fossilised remnants of the past, as nature caught in stone. By sketching in Wandjina-like figures, she also evokes Aboriginal rock paintings, thus alluding to the cultural and spiritual legacy of the land's first owners. With tally marks scoring untold years, her work acts as a reminder that before Lake Burley Griffin's formation, archaeologists found evidence of Aboriginal settlement including rock paintings and burial places dating back more than 21,000 years - sites now submerged and replaced by the lake.

Correspondingly coalescing past and present, Bot's forms evoke an antiquity yielded with a contemporary sensibility. As they represent forms of and in the landscape, Bot's glyphs appear as figures dancing across the frame, shaping the patterns of movement that nature forms in its own creation, its motions in its drifts, ebbs and flows, confluences and so forth.

Ever attentive to the smallest of detail yet simplifying it in calligraphic markings, Bot's works, such as *Sacred Manuscript* (2000-01), can be thought of as an examination of the minuscule facets which form the greater whole, while also magnifying the significant forms within and of the landscape. Perceptively, Bot moves the viewer's gaze between "zoomed out" and "zoomed in" perspectives, between detailed scenes and the bigger picture. Enticing the eye to find individual peculiarities, perception is played upon with *Alpha I* (2000) and *Omega* (2000), juxtaposing the linocut matrix (cut-out mat) with its printed impression.

Haynes has also thought to include some fine examples of Bot's fluid, pastel watercolours from 2005, such as *Morphic Field*, drawing parallels with McIntyre's porcelain images.

Teakel's large installations bear upon historical notions of a sense of place, with *Corridor for One* (a new installation state of the original 1984 work) spelling out the complexity and individuality of man's relationship with the land. *Drought* (2004) and *Failed Crop* (2010) are other examples of the poignant expression of Teakel's inimitable style, drawing upon the grazing and farm landscape she grew up in and is inspired by. Using striking diagonals to pull in the gaze, *Drought* portrays matrices of paddocks and traces of agricultural equipment on the landscape. Whereas parallels with Aboriginal art have been made, her affinity with her "place" has different roots and is accordingly distinctive.

While autobiographical traces of each artist are manifested throughout, their art is rendered in universally accessible terms, with manifold directives and influences behind each artist and artwork. Although materiality is made quite literal through the various mediums employed, it is the immaterial which comes to the fore, with the artists' response to the landscape articulated as being physical and spiritual, political and ecological.

In all, *Marking Place* attests to mankind's mark on the natural landscape - and its profound impressions upon us.