



# Giving world of birds a stronger voice

**ART REVIEW**

**KATI THAMO: ANOTHER LANGUAGE - WORKS ON PAPER**  
 Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin.  
 Until April 7, 2019.

REVIEWED BY Sasha Grishin

Of the five exhibitions that Kati Thamo has held at the Beaver Galleries, this is her strongest and most coherent.

Although she was born in Western Australia in 1956, and has resided in that state for most of her life, the sensibility and narrative in Thamo's printmaking reflect an Eastern European, and specifically a Hungarian, Transylvanian and Romanian, heritage.

*She asks us to explore the world through the language of animals.*

Whereas in many of her previous works she has been preoccupied with fables and the creation of an anthropomorphic breed of animals that engage in human behaviour, in this exhibition birds, possums, butterflies and lizards are provided with a stronger and more independent voice of their own.

If in the anthropocentric view, humans are the centre of the world and the world exists for human benefit and exploitation, in Thamo's *Book of Nature*, animals possess their own language through which they can communicate their own narrative that may



Kati Thamo's *A moment's grace* (top) is one of the smallest and most successful etchings at the exhibition where a sense of harmony is achieved as a small bird nestles within a hand as a sort of human nest and (above) her triptych etching *Sign language with birds*.

have an equal validity to that of humans. She asks for us to suspend our human-centric view of the world and explore the world through the language of animals.

Thamo does not apparently embrace the thinking of some environmental artists, for example John Wolseley, who would argue that when you are trying to depict a Honey eater, Barking owl or a Tawny frogmouth, you should try to enter into that bird and think and behave like that bird.

Instead, Thamo brings together the world of people and birds by juxtaposing

the human hand with a bird, as in her triptych etching *Sign language with birds*.

She is a proficient printmaker, one who enjoys combining etching with watercolour tints that give the prints something of the character of both an ornithological illustration and an anatomical study. Although, one should observe that the drawing of the birds appears more accomplished than the drawing of the hands and the tricky perspectival problems that they pose.

Thamo's *A moment's grace* is one of the

smallest and most successful etchings at the exhibition, where a sense of harmony is achieved as a small bird nestles within a hand as a sort of human nest.

In a number of her etchings, Thamo adopts the illusionistic ploy of an image of an actual botanical book, such as in her *And banksia*, with the natural specimens translated into a humanised space.

*Another language* marks a further development in Thamo's spiralling vision in which she argues for a more holistic image of us within our environment.