

# Turning up heat on climate of fear

## Art

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**Anna Eggert and Lucienne Rickard: On common ground. Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Closes March 21.**

"Think globally, act locally" as a slogan for the environmental movement goes back to the 1970s, but the sentiment is as valid today as ever. *On common ground* is an exhibition that brings together two very different artists with different comments on the existential threat facing the environment.

Canberra-based sculptor Anna Eggert recycles discarded industrial waste to make small-scale assemblages that resemble organic growing objects, while Tasmanian-based draughtsman Lucienne Rickard makes very detailed drawings of tiny and easily overlooked native insects and orchids that are present, but almost invisible in the real world.

Last year Rickard was awarded a 12-month 'investigative performance' at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery that consisted of her making an intricate pencil drawing each day of a recently extinct plant or animal species, then, the following day, erasing the drawing and commencing another on the same sheet of paper.

Within this process of drawing and erasure the sheet of paper became a kind of battlefield on which traces of earlier existences, no matter how fully erased, remained like ghosts of our almost forgotten ancestors. The piece of paper itself progressively deteriorated and became a metaphor for the threat to the environment. I don't know how the project finished as COVID closed the museum and the performance at about the halfway mark.

In this show Rickard exhibits five pencil drawings where she works on a 1:1 scale trying to replicate every single infinitesimal detail - a sort of precise facsimile within a black and white drawing.

They are curious drawings where, on one hand, it is difficult not to be impressed by the painstaking technique and the

hyperrealism in the exquisite mastery of detail, but, on the other hand, there is some slight distancing in the work with a lack of warmth or intimacy. The use of genus title, for example, '*Psaltoda moerens nymph*' - I assume that this is the nymph stage of the common red eye cicada - makes these little nymphs appear enigmatic.

The precision of drawing invites you to pull out a magnifying glass to appreciate the mesmerising detail, however the sheet of paper itself contains smudges, signs of erasure and finger marks. This may suggest the human touch and that the image is not a mechanical reproduction, but also, at least in my mind, relates to the battlefield from

which these slices of nature emerge.

Most of the drawings are of dwarf orchids, where the preciousness of the drawing is contrasted with the soiled space that surrounds it. Commenting on this series of work the artist notes, "Meeting the natural world on its terms and shrinking my world down to the tiny subject matter."

Eggert literally burst onto the art world in the 1990s with her hollow metal woven dresses and for a time they were everywhere and in high demand. Rather than endlessly milking a popular mode of production, Eggert has in more recent years constantly changed direction and has lost her earlier high profile.

The present series employs industrial discarded elements - stainless steel mesh, electronic components, capacitors, copper tubes, light bulbs, badges and the like - reimagined and woven together to suggest strange organic plant-like forms on the scale of small table sculptures.

Pieces like *Unfurled* are attractive to the eye but possibly not completely conceptually resolved or satisfying. They are intriguing and slightly puzzling objects, hybrids that bring together technology and the natural world in an uneasy union.

Ultimately, Rickard and Eggert through their art challenge us to question our threatened environment.



Anna Eggert's *Unfurled*, an example of her work which employs discarded industrial elements reimagined into organic plant-like forms.