

Frazer makes Nick Cave's love lament his own

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David Frazer: Love letter prints. Beaver Galleries, 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Until March 19. beavergalleries.com.au.

Love letter is a very well-known song written and performed by Nick Cave in 2000 on his spoken word album *The secret life of the love song*, and then famously released in 2001, with the Bad Seeds, on the album *No more shall we part*.

In 2021, the virtuoso printmaker David Frazer produced an artist's book, *David Frazer Love Letter, words by Nick Cave* and this extensive exhibition at the Beaver Galleries consisting of linocuts and wood engravings is largely associated with that project.

The first observation that needs to be made is that there has been no radical transformation in Frazer's

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er's imagery.

The somewhat morose sense of longing that characterises Cave's verse is also completely in harmony with the mood in Frazer's art of the past couple of decades.

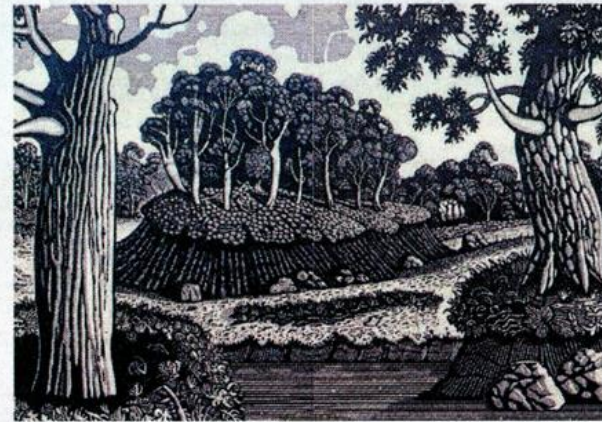
I kiss the cold, white envelope/ I press my lips against her name/ 200 words/ we live in hope/ The sky hangs heavy with rain. The words belong to Cave but have been illustrative of the feeling of Frazer's prints for many years.

Apart from a number of connections between Cave's lyrics and the titles of some of Frazer's prints, for example, *A kind of prayer*,

A wicked wind, Love letter, The heavy sky and We live in hope, the link between image and verse is tangential. Frazer has made Cave's love lament his own and imbued it with a personal narrative, believing that the best way to honour a source of inspiration is with a parallel act of creation that shows the whole world that you have caught the flame.

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The large bold linocut, *We live in hope II*, that is printed in what nowadays is considered a large edition of 50



David Frazer, Love Letters I & II. Picture: Supplied

copies, has two heavy bodies melting into one in their embrace. The clouds appear as solid as boulders that float through the air surrounding the couple. The ground is desolate and barren, and the couple caught silhouetted against the big sky and the low horizon appear as heroic in their hopeful embrace. Frazer, like a chiaroscuro painter, highlights the bod-

ies to give them a sculptural feel as they are bathed in light in an otherwise dull and depressing scene.

Another of Frazer's archetypal images is of a man kneeling and seen either from behind, as in *A kind of prayer*, or from the front, in *Words on paper*. In this exhibition, both prints are realised as linocuts although it is interesting that a variant

on the kneeling figure seen from the front also appears in the smaller and finely worked wood engraving *A letter and a prayer*.

The artist has engaged with both techniques for decades and exploits the boldness of the linocut and the sense of intimacy, darkness and mystery of the wood engraving. In both media, Frazer creates a rustic fantasy world into which he invites the viewer to enter and to lose themselves in a sad and nostalgic daydream.

Cave's lyrics, to me, have always appeared as urban and cosmopolitan and breathing of the café culture of St Kilda in Melbourne, while Frazer has embraced rural life and country humour that frequently has a touch of the absurd. *The Love Letter* has brought these worlds together with the prayer for love set to conquer all.