

# Poetic pieces subtle and seductive

Peter Haynes

**G.W. Bot: The return of the poet. Beaver Galleries. 81 Denison Street, Deakin. Until May 21, 2022. [beavergalleries.com.au](http://beavergalleries.com.au).**

G.W. Bot has a sustained and distinguished career as one of Australia's foremost artists. The current exhibition reinforces that status and further cements the embracing power of her concepts and the means of expressing these.

The exhibition title leads viewers in to the artist's personal exploration of her substantial oeuvre. The image/metaphor of the poet has played a significant role in Bot's work since the mid-1990s. Bot's poet is both carrier of the message and (arguably) simultaneously the message itself. The poet here has no human physiognomy but rather is presented as an imaginary "landscape", each iteration densely populated with layered and serried ranks of marks occupying the bottom three-quarters of the pictorial surface.

The top quarter is variously configured but always contains the ubiquitous circle (moon or sun?), performing as a visual caesura, a purposeful pause to the energetic activities that characterise the rest of each work.

The "circle" can also be read as a metaphor for the artist/poet's imaginative eye and/or the eye/imagination of the viewer, overlooking the energetic density of the marks below. Bot's choice of paper is always astute and in the several "poets" in the exhibition, the use of tapa cloth creates not only material contrasts but beautiful textural insinuations underscored by the ragged edges of each cloth set against the clean edges of the paper atop it.

While there is consanguinity among the several "poets", each holds its own identity, a characteristic imbued through simple but pictorial modes such as change of palette or tonal twists. These are done, as always with Bot, in a subtle and nuanced manner, elisions rather than overt intrusions



G.W. Bot, *Glyphs - Three trees (Homage to Rembrandt)* - linocut on Hahnemhle paper (printed by Theo Tremblay). **Picture: Supplied**

of works. A work of tremendous visual, aesthetic and conceptual perspicacity is *Glyphs - Three trees (Homage to Rembrandt)*. This is a large piece - 74 centimetres by 124.5 centimetres - physically and creatively.

Bot's consummate use and understanding of the aesthetic and expressive power of black (and tonal variations) is beautifully demonstrated here.

The three trees of the title (here multi-branched glyphs) dance across the surface in a lilting rhythmical dance, their vivid whiteness a dramatic visual ploy to the blackened horizontal bands that constitute

insertions (such as the tiny group of white glyphs disporting themselves towards the top left-hand edge) and Rembrandt would be mightily pleased to have such an impressive work as this paying him homage.

*Water glyphs* is a watercolour on paper. Its shimmering surface composed of an energetic amalgamation of marks and gestures (glyphs and familial others) sitting in and on gestural swathes of tonal shifts, is imbued with a quietly elegant movement, at once seductive and embracing. The "water" of the title is certainly present but characteristically in an insinuating rather than declarative

fugitive effects that are instigated by the combination of light on and in water.

*Prayer rug* is a dense picture composed of horizontally layered bands of autumnal colours flowing across the picture plane in a carefully balanced order. The colours are solid and the surfaces reflective of the oil paint with which they are painted.

Rugs have been part of the artist's repertoire for some time but the present example sees new explorations of a well-used theme. This exhibition is rich in many ways, not least the splendid individual examples mentioned above and in the demonstration