

Careful Cathy captures flora



“Variable eyebright” by Cathy Franzi

*Craft / “Cathy Franzi – High Country”. At Beaver Galleries, Deakin, until February 26. Reviewed by **MEREDITH HINCHLIFFE**.*

CATHY Franzi is an exacting and careful artist.

She observes and captures Australian flora in her thoughtful work, and her science background adds depth to her knowledge.



Alpine triggerplant, speckle clay, wheel-thrown and altered, hand-drawn stencils

In this exhibition she is showing the delicate flora from the high country, the alpine peaks of Kosciuszko National Park. The flowers are small, with pale colours, and soft leaves. Granite outcrops are important to

the growth of these tiny flowers. Snow melt trickles into deep trenches, which in turn protect the flowers from exposure to the harsh weather.

Wheel-thrown, altered forms, frequently flared at the base, provide a canvas for the soft colours of the flowers and leaves. They contrast with the robust forms of other works, such as Alpine sunray, with its textured, sgraffito ground.

Franzi has used grey, speckled clay to evoke the colour and surface of the granite, which is widely scattered over the country, and Limoges porcelain with a soft cream ground.

She used hand-drawn stencils to create many of the small plants, building up their images in relief. Muted colours emphasise the fragility of the flowers and leaves.

“Alpine trigger plant” has pink flowers on pink stems. The tall plants gently wind their way up the tall form.

“Bidgee widgee” has a globular flower-head with reddish-brown spines, with toothed leaves. As a plant it creeps and is sometimes tangled. Franzi is showing this on a cream, slightly altered form.

Franzi finishes her work carefully – the interior surface is always coloured to reflect the colours of the flora she is depicting “Variable eyebright,” which grows in the Alpine sphagnum bogs and fens of the high country, is a pale pinky-lilac.

Through her ceramics, Franzi draws our attention to the tenuous hold on life these high-country plants have. Their existence is threatened by climate change, and its inherent dry, hot years, and fire. While they are tough, will they survive an uncertain future?

This is an exhibition that is definitely worth visiting.



“Bidgee widgee” porcelain, wheel-thrown and altered, inlay