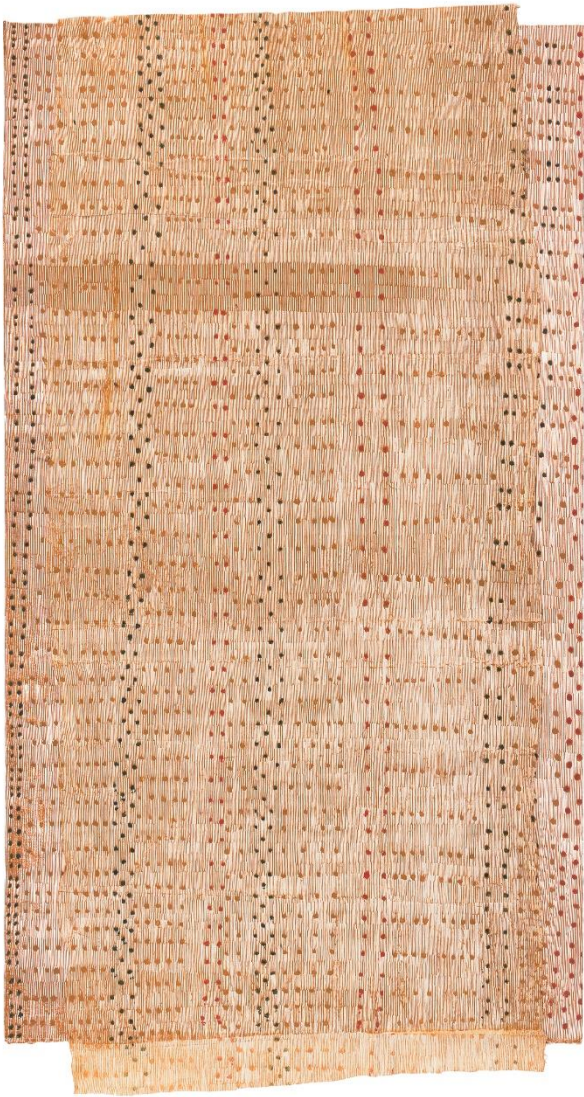


GW Bot's latest exhibition showcases her continuing use of *the poet* as simultaneously the messenger and the message, the artist and the image. To ally the preceding with the notion of *the garden*, elides it with another of the artist's abiding aesthetic, philosophical and conceptual concerns – *the garden* as metaphor, as a place (real and imagined) that gives structure, succour, meaning and understanding to the fragmented experiences that constitute human life. For Bot *the garden* embraces her immediate and wider environment and significantly her *self* and that of each viewer who engages with her pictorial and plastic propositions. The amalgam of *poet* and *garden* exhibits experience, explores experience and offers pathways to understand experience.

Bot's chosen language – that of the glyph – allows for multifarious avenues for expressing her world view in ways that envelop the beauty and the poetry of that language. Her nuanced aesthetic explorations and expressions, and viewer experiencing of these, remain significant and embracing exemplars of contemporary visual practice and its importance in the wider critique of the precarious balance of man's place in the natural scheme of things.

In this exhibition the artist uses linocuts, drawings and sculpture to bring the viewer with her on her real, corporeal, metaphorical and spiritual journeys through her complex and multilayered environments and ultimately herself. Bot's relationship with the Australian landscape is a deeply spiritual one, and one that remains a fertile source for her ongoing pictorial and philosophical investigations. A large graphite work (*Christ recrucified*) powerfully exemplifies this. This is an extraordinary image with immediate visual impact. Bot transfigures the place of Christ's crucifixion to the Australian bush landscape, averring the condition of our landscape as a place of spiritual desolation. The ongoing human incursions into the natural world and their destructive aftermath is here quietly but insinuatingly questioned.

The quiet melancholic tone in this work is achieved through the artist's commanding aesthetic control of her chosen means. The intense and eloquent repetition of marks evokes not only space, depth and the denizens of the bush topographies, but symbolises man's incursions on the landscape. Bot's commanding use of line and mark, light and shade (Antipodean chiaroscuro?) is remarkable. The seductively interrogative stance of *Christ recrucified* expressed through such richly expressive and aesthetically alluring graphic language marks it as a special work, and showcases that the didactic can be accompanied and indeed articulated by the beautiful.



*Sea Urchin Glyphs* - linocut on tapa cloth and Arches paper, i/10 var, 98 x 58cm (irregular)

As the exhibition title states the language of glyphs in various iterations and combinations constitutes the majority of the artist's graphic inclusions. A singularly beautiful example (and one of many) is *Sea Urchin Glyphs* (2023). This work reveals how an eloquent concept – sea urchins on the move – can be articulated so handsomely through controlled aesthetic manipulation of layered patterning and repetition. The work has an insistent kinetic quality, a sense of ongoing and continuous movement imbued through the artist's subtle and fully controlled understanding of concept, visual language and aesthetic resolution. The material contrasts of the ragged edges of the tapa cloth with the straightness of the Arches paper sitting on top of it, further underscore the finesse of Bot's subtle inclusions and celebration of aesthetic tropes that continue to play important and necessary roles in her melange of ingredients. Bot's mining of her personal archive is a given in her art and continued use of methods, matter and motifs in new and innovative formats means each iteration is a fresh and artful one.

The spiritual base of much of Bot's art is exemplified in several works in the exhibition. ...*let the earth bring forth grass*

(2022) is imbued with a beautiful visual lyricism as befits a psalm. The tendril-like glyphs take a sinuously elegant climb through the carefully contrived spatial configuration. The brooding tonal contrasts of blacks and reds demarcate the terrestrial and the celestial areas of the work. This is an image of redemptive growth powerfully articulated and beautifully expressed.





*Let everything that breathes sing praises ...*  
linocut on tapa cloth, i/10 var  
75 x 31cm (irregular)

Another work whose conceptual premise is taken from a psalm is *Let everything that breathes sing praises* (2023). As always with Bot, the consummate control and use of space within the overall pictorial configuration is a given. The majority of the image is essentially sky, the latter nicely counterpoised against the rectangle of brown comprising the bottom plane. This fundamentally abstract composition is given real and spiritual identity through the insertion of the white sun at the top right-hand corner and the free-form organism that traverses the terrestrial and celestial elements. Deep space beyond the top edge of the bottom rectangle is achieved simply through astutely placed tonal changes. The appearance of the sun/moon is ubiquitous in Bot's oeuvre and can be read as the meditative observer, looking into herself and nature. The symbol also points to the continuum of nature and the fluid energies of life's cycles.

*Glyphs of what is past and passing and to come* (2022) is a densely populated work, tightly packed and layered. The insertion of lucid and dynamic swirls of black accompanied by a chorus of lightly embraced white glyphs, imbues an element of graphic drama, that is at once conceptual, aesthetic and pictorially theatrical. While the kinetic impulse of both of these *gestures* is towards the left-hand edge of the image, this is slowed by the inward curves and other directional signs that visually and metaphorically animate the overall composition. Movement here points to life's continuum and in its quietly beautiful articulation expresses Bot's

inclusive world view. An earlier work – *A season of glyphs* (2015) - is also concerned with movement. Here the glyphs move laterally across the picture plane in dance-like configurations. The space towards the left-hand side has the glyphs freely interacting with one another in a joyous, celebratory dance. The right-hand space, less populated, but individual glyphs given increased scale, is a more sedate space nonetheless imparted with spatial and thematic interaction.

*Jacob's ladder* (2023) is beautifully intricate and visually rich, layered pictorially, symbolically and metaphorically. The contrast between the vertically moving white lines with the chocolate-brown of the ground provides immediate clarity. The interactions between the verticals and the horizontals (the *ladder*) activates the surface.

Another work in which the use of the aesthetic trope of *contrast* is beautifully exemplified is *Ghost Gum Glyphs* (2023). The striking lateral movement of the finger-like branches reaching across the picture plane imbues a strong element of visual excitement and creates an immediate and gripping Gestalt. The dramatic white of the branches is played off against the more subtle background but as in all Bot's work the background is integral to and integrated with the overall pictorial composition. The delicate elisions of areas of khaki and pale blue overlaid with patterns of linear glyphs and surface marks, provides an element of harmonious tonal play in this alluring work.

*Palaeoglyphs* (2023) consists of 12 pieces arranged like objects on an archaeologist's sieve following their extraction from their earthly tomb. Each object and the 11 in combination, resonate with a past (where they are from), a present (where they are) and a future (where they will be). Bot has imbued each with a particular character and identity replete with many possibilities, none of which is explicated. Each glyph invites close (archaeological?) inspection and Bot has given the surfaces the appearance of age. This is an intriguing work redolent of time lost but with a contemporary relevance. Meaning in this complex and elusive presentation is for each viewer to find.

The above brief discussions point to the richness that populates this wonderful exhibition. Bot's vision is a distinctive and clear one, one that through its refined and seductive pictorial language articulates a world view that reverberates with all who engage with it.

Peter Haynes  
Art Historian and Curator  
January 2024



*Ghost Gum Glyphs* - linocut on tapa cloth, i/10 var  
92 x 50cm (irregular)



*Paleoglyphs - woodfired ceramics, steel, 45 x 65 x 3cm*

**GW Bot**

*Glyphs – the poet’s garden*  
works on paper and sculpture  
8 – 24 February 2024  
Beaver Galleries