

Craft Penny Webb

# Perusing fine prints gives insight into skills

**ANDREW BROWNE**  
Australian Print Workshop

**BRONWYN REES**  
Firestation Print Studio  
Both until June 22

Being awarded a Collie Print Trust Printmaking Fellowship at the Australian Print Workshop must be like being invited to appear on *Dancing with the Stars*: you get to work with dedicated professionals, but you have to be willing to learn on your feet.

With this show of six large, monochrome, single-plate etchings (or intaglios), Andrew Browne, a painter and photographer active since the early 1980s, shows some fancy footwork, thanks to Simon White, who printed five works, and Martin King, who collaborated on all, and printed *A Hollow*.

Before entering the APW workshop, Browne created detailed charcoal drawings that fully visualised his proposed etchings. He favours a mix of abstract shapes and naturalistic forms gleaned from habitual photographing of wherever he happens to be. This series includes New York graffiti and detritus along Merri Creek.

Adding to the complexity of his coded mark-making is Browne's delight in making his darks and lights ambiguous so that it may be unclear whether we're looking at a

detail of a dazzlingly lit scene or enjoying the reversal effect familiar from a black-and-white photographic negative.

A symbolist, Browne can tease out the anthropomorphic character of natural forms, such as the limbs of a tree, by the merest adjustment in drawing. See the superb *Fictions* #5.

Perhaps Browne's major achievement with this folio is his innovative use of air-brush to apply liquid resist on plates for processes including lift-ground, aquatint and spit-bite etching. The softness to the edges of the tangle of branches of *A Hollow* was achieved this way.

Bronwyn Rees is also showing etchings (from May 29), but printed from more than one plate, and with multiple colours applied intuitively. See *Old Marriage*, with a block of blue straddling two blocks of ochre; and *Nanango*, with lovely blobby black verticals uniting a design of gestural and linear drawing in ochre on a Prussian blue ground.

Trained in the early 1990s as an illustrator, Rees worked in prints for 20 years in Queensland before spending a couple of years at Glasgow Print Studio, and then moving to Melbourne.

She's been involved with Firestation Print Studio since 2004, and has a studio there. The space feels domestic, but perhaps I think that because of Rees' attitude to her work, which feels

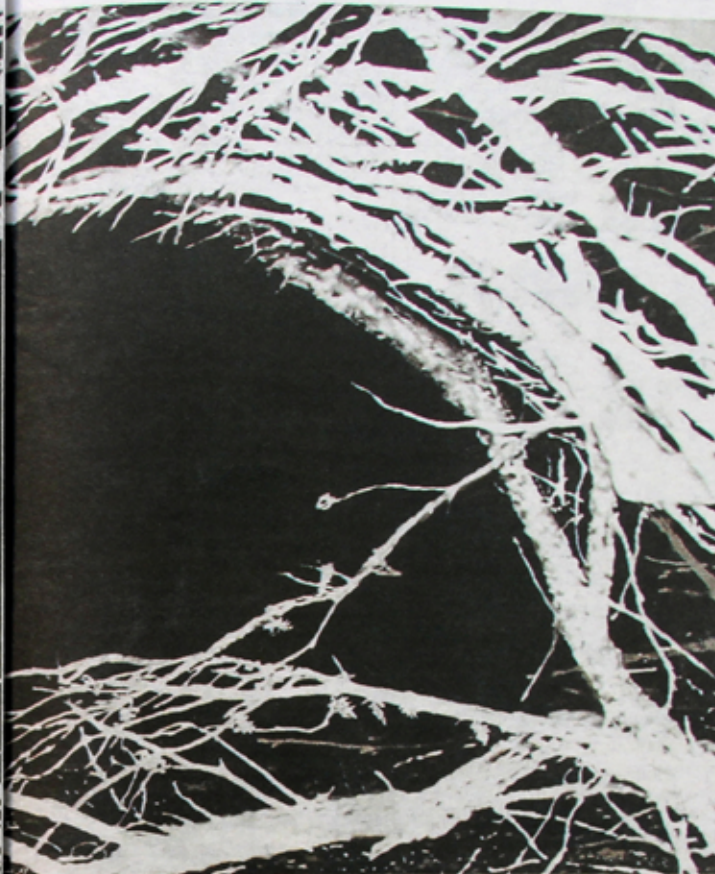


lived in, intimate. Printmaking is second nature to her, her affinity with it being shown by a willingness to improvise.

Rees may use acrylic sheets to print from rather than copper plate and the results are particularly inventive and uninhibited. Of course, the acrylic is not subjected to corrosion by acid as copper is, but worked in drypoint.

She scores the acrylic with conventional tools including a power drill. She may create textures by applying carborundum to the surface, or even, by a handful of dirt from the car park.

The works in this show, which, for the artist, is a mid-life reflection on a long and successful life partnership, are more likely to be perceived by the viewer as textured notations from nature.



They might have resolved into landscapes if the artist had wanted to take a long view of the scrub. Instead, they offer a headlong immersion in the scene.

Overlaid with line drawings of

fish, grasses and trees, and with vertical blocks of colour that work as durational markers read against massed shapes sometimes suggestive of a horizon line, they are congested, gestural, lively, and

Nature wrought finely:  
(clockwise from main)  
*A Hollow*; *Fictions* #2; and  
*Fictions* #1 all by Andrew  
Browne; *Nanango* by  
Bronwyn Rees.



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