

{2007 Review of Macushla Robinson - Canberra Times, Times2}

Darkness of opposites
SASHA GRISHIN
Review

ADFA Library, Northcott Drive, Campbell. Closes August 26,
Monday-Thursday 8am-9pm; Friday 8am-5pm,
Saturday-Sunday 1-5pm.

AN ARTIST'S first solo exhibition is a significant event in the life of any artist's and represents their first public baptism.

Macushla Robinson's Transcription is an unusual exhibition that is being held at an unusual venue - the library of the Australian Defence Force Academy.

As is the case with many inaugural solo exhibitions, this one is wildly ambitious.

The artist is basically concerned with polarities-permanence and ephemerality, life and death, destruction and survival.

It is a rather black exhibition, where Robinson's primary concern is with fire and the word, and with the idea that although fire may destroy a book, it cannot destroy the ideas which that book contains.

In an age where book burning is once more becoming fashionable, the exhibition appears topical and timely.

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Robinson is a printmaker who, in this exhibition, employs burnt paper (mainly pages from books) onto which she has transcribed texts and her commentaries.

They are actually quite beautiful objects that carry within them many layers of meaning. As she observes, "We cannot assume that we have understood any text that we have read, whether we seek to destroy it or revere it."

"The works in this exhibition, while referencing the destructive impulse, seek to physically manifest my relationship to a variety of texts, and the way in which those texts are associated with one another in my experience of reading."

What is particularly attractive in this exhibition is this struggle for legibility and the prolonged meditation on burning and shades of black.

As one moves around the gallery space, the series of images, or phrases as they are titled, appear repetitive, yet each contains its own richness and diversity.

Bea Maddock and her meditations on the existentialist text by Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, may have been one significant point of departure for this body of work.

While Macushla Robinson's work may have a broader frame of reference than a solitary text by Sartre, it is no less obsessive or dark in its imagination.

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This is a very formidable exhibition with the work challenging and provocative. It augurs well for this artist's career.

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