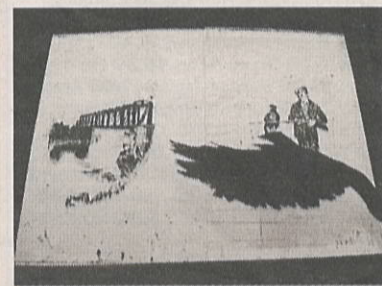


Craft Penny Webb



A splendid lyrebird in *Dawn Survey #2* (left); and images from multi-media installation *Searching for Bird River*.



Etching that is fit for a King

MARTIN KING

James Makin Gallery
Until August 10

Mid-career artist Martin King has been questioning what can be achieved in print-making, specifically etching, for as long as he has been excelling in the medium. *Dawn Survey* comprises just four works, but its impact exceeds its scope.

Featuring familiar bird motifs, King's unique-state etchings (meaning not editioned prints) are subtly coloured with a pigment-infused wax – a technique called encaustic.

Flow #2, a horizontal composite of six sheets, each printed with a single silhouette of a cormorant, may remind you of an Eadweard Muybridge analysis of bird movement; whereas *Dawn Survey #2*

Dark Morning features a single, splendid lyrebird printed over a grid of 12 small sheets of paper.

These richly monochromatic works, dated 2013, have finely detailed surfaces that repay scrutiny. But there's something fleeting at work in the space, and it's wonderful to encounter.

The illumination of the works on paper, which are seen to advantage in being spotlit on dark walls, does not compromise the legibility of a complex, free-standing, mixed-media installation *Searching for Bird River*, 2013, which includes a hand-drawn, stop-motion DVD projection that "animates" the etching onto which it falls.

As you gaze on what appears to be a facsimile of two pages of an open sketch book lying on the top of a

metre-high column of coffee-table art books, the silhouette of a dove, projected from overhead, flaps quickly across the "page".

The moving silhouette seems big and dark in comparison with the line drawings it traverses, which are of a rigidly geometric iron bridge on the left-hand page, and of a whimsical boy and bird on the right.

The first time the dark shape of the dove entered my field of vision I felt that involuntary intake of breath and a straining to catch a sound that accompanies surprise. There is a soundtrack, but it's not the one I now imagine, which is that of a page flapping, caught by a breeze.

What's so successful about *Searching for Bird River* is that King presents a balance of the ephemeral and the material. However, in addition to the

knowledge of the mental phenomenon of persistence of vision that is necessary for the illusion of movement in animation, an awareness of the intermittent nature of animated images provokes another realisation.

King has created a rhythm of long, light-filled moments between the shadowy appearances of the bird. These moments of illumination return us to the sketch book and remind us of the looking away from the subject and down at the working surface that is a necessary part of drawing from nature.

And once you start thinking about looking down, and about looking away in the attempt to internalise the scene, you are in the artist's shoes, and standing on the shoulders of the dead white males whom King references.