



(left) FIONA VAN OYEN
Mother, Daughter and Daughter 2022
Single state linocut, ink & acrylic paint on cotton paper, 670 x 860 mm.

(below left) FIONA VAN OYEN
Suspirium 2023
Single state soot & ink on cotton paper, 1450 x 560 mm.

(below right) FIONA VAN OYEN
Clematis 2022
Single state linocut on black gesso primed watercolour paper, 500 x 700 mm.

Christchurch Fiona van Oyen *Anatomical Garden*

The Central, 2 February–5 March
DOROTHEE PAULI

Anatomical Garden is Fiona van Oyen's third solo exhibition at the Central

Art Gallery, and once again nature is the leitmotif of her most recent work, coupled with her ongoing commitment to experimentation with paper and pigment. At times she turns the basic premise of printmaking on its head. Instead of near-identical multiples, her complex creative process often produces editions of one. But these are not monoprints in the traditional sense either, because there remains a possibility that the underlying lino plate may in turn form the basis of another individual work, overlaid perhaps with paint, fabric, gesso or soot.

Her interrogation of what can be achieved with some of her favoured materials such as cotton paper provides a further link to her previous work, but this time around van Oyen is more reticent in her use of scale and colour. This is not surprising, as most of us have experienced the last few years as a time of introspection and constraint in the face of uncertainty and constant adjustment, especially in Christchurch. *Anatomical Garden* rests on the observation of common patterns of change in our environment with

a focus on generic natural elements, such as grass, trees, rocks and water. This, as well as her subtle use of colour and tone, recalls the fleeting moods we all process each day, triggered perhaps by a view from a living room of a garden beyond or a scar on the land left by road works. The light and hum of bright summer days emanating from *Mother, Daughter and Daughter* (2022), is contrasted by the dark mood and vigorous mark-making of *Suspirium* (2023). *Carbon, Water and Air* (2022) points to nature at a molecular level and, similar to the other works overlaid with soot, introduces notions of heat and fire as the ultimate and unpredictable agent of change.

Van Oyen's work does not clamour for the viewer's attention. Instead, it employs a range of mostly subtle visual elements to speak of the solitary nature of our daily pursuits, the fleetingness of our observations and the ordinariness of what we see. As such the exhibition is accessible and inclusive. We recognise the content or the mood of the work and can see in it reflections of our own subjective experiences we so often judge to be unremarkable. At the same time each image stands on its own, apart from the viewer, as a self-contained, introspective comment on change and the passage of time we are all subject to.

