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▲ *Run Rabbit Run*, a hand-colored etching and aquatint by Barbara Hanrahan.

The Adventurer Magazine, 20 September 1986.

SUCCESSFUL WRITER AND ARTIST IN PRINT

Barbara Hanrahan: Printmaker
by Alison Carroll
Wakefield Press, Adelaide, \$29.95
reviewed by Neville Weston

▶▶ PRINTMAKING is a wondrous process; it replicates and makes multiple copies of an artist's most personal and idiosyncratic gestures. It democratizes fine art and, through its processes, reconciles the opposites of violent action and great tenderness.

Barbara Hanrahan is both writer and printmaker and in her work the two activities interact. Hanrahan's love affair with printmaking began at the SA School of Art, continued at the Central School of Art in London during the Carnaby Street rage of popular culture and reached maturity back in Adelaide.

During the '70s she wrote perhaps her best-known book, *The Scent of Eucalyptus*. This book, along with *Sea-Green* and *Kewpie Doll*, draws heavily on her artistic experience. I believe that many artists who write, and writers who make art, suffer professionally from their creative dualism. Barbara Hanrahan, however, appears to be taken seriously both as writer and artist. The reason for this is, I suspect, locked into the very kernel of subject matter which she draws upon and the time in which she is working.

Her general thematic concerns are with the hapless individuals of both sexes whose patterns of behavior interweave to create the awkward fabric of our suburban society. Images of children and women predominate and her awkward Eves parade their carnal vitality through most of the prints reproduced in this well-made

book. She writes and draws themes of sexuality with great directness and clarity.

Her directness was not immediately appreciated in Adelaide and her own illuminating biographical notes recall that in 1964 she showed her prints to Kym Bonython, who bought a large number. He was, however, advised by his solicitor not to show them publicly in Adelaide. Sydney art dealer Barry Stern also declined to show them, saying that his was a family gallery and he would never show a naked man and woman occupying the same picture.

Much of her art deals with issues of behavioral "norms", prejudices and societal "hang-ups".

The text of the book by Alison Carroll is objective, lucid and well researched. It quite properly relates the content of Hanrahan's printmaking to that of her novels but it also indicates where the writing and narrative picture-making divide. She also puts Hanrahan's art in the wider context and clearly indicates the important relationship to the English pop movement which was flourishing at the time the artist first worked there. She also finds links to Hogarth and William Blake.

Pop art was a movement which developed initially in England out of the long line of documentary art which had been emphasised in the training of most of the pop artists. The author believes that pop was a reaction to American abstract expressionism but I would interpret it as an inevitable consequence of the teaching of pictorial composition for the National Diploma in Design, which occurred simultaneously with the development of kitchen sink drama and literature. This essentially suburban imagery in itself relates back to the Victorian period and provides another interesting level of sources for Barbara Hanrahan's artistic sorcery.

The provincialism of English and Australian art are closely related and a deeper study of Hanrahan's work will reveal comments on society. This fine book is a welcome addition to the thin ranks of good Australian art books about the equally thin ranks of good Australian artists.

strange mountainscapes and North-the-painter teases up chocolate box approximations of seasonal change: no leaves fall in the garden, some weeds appear amongst the shrubbery, smudges of snow sit uncomfortably on a bush, but there is no growth, no action. Sentimental memories. Gilding the lily. "The romantic tradition".

In ennobling labour a bountiful harvest is gathered by farmworkers under a fierce, draining sun ... dropping ... long shadows spread from the corn stooks and bullock wagons. A painting of rewarding summer toil: the Lord shall provide. His magnificence is the subject of this picture. Pressed into service by Ian North, assimilated, despite the variance in scale, flora and season, the cornstooks transfigured to scrub, the paddock drifting out into rocks, another record of the snow capped mountains is perversely adjusted; now there is the suggestion of the awesome task of pioneering, or appropriation.

The sprawling grandeur of the mountains is enchanted, given resonance by the formality of the requisitioned image.

The spectator is drawn to the photographer's and painter's confrontation with the landscape.

LYNN COLLINS

*John Berger, "The White Bird" (1985); "Painting and Time".

Refreshing insight

BARBARA HANRAHAN: PRINTMAKER

Alison Carroll.
WAKEFIELD PRESS

ALISON CARROLL'S monograph on Barbara Hanrahan is as direct and as refreshing as the techniques and graphic imagery of her subject.

It is a concise book on this leading Australian printmaker, of sharp lucidity, logical construction and a no-nonsense layout, comprised of an introduction and three chapters plus biographical notes. The 100 illustrations of which 35 are in colour are of the highest quality and have been carefully selected and strategically positioned within the framework of the text.

From the initial autobiographical passage to the final sentence of the book there is a consistent ring of authority combined with a rare knowledgeable explicitness which, from the outset, captures the reader's attention and sustained interest.

Carroll's introduction does not prepare the reader for things to come. It propels one in at the deep end with a tight fluency, a warm frugality of words, creating an immediate involvement in a described situation. Descriptive passages broadcast throughout the treatise engender in a printmaker/reader a sense of being in a familiar precinct. The illustrations focus "on the major themes and images as well as on the physical explorations of Hanrahan's print" and

the artist's development and creative imagery with a rare singleness of purpose, leaving no room for distractions, gossip or private chit-chat.

The prints have been analysed and woven into the fabric of the text with a great deal of insight, scholarly research and critical responsibility which is basic to the publication as a whole.

Further to this, there is an attractive sense of fitness in the laminated paper cover with its bright captivating design based on a Hanrahan print.

Barbara Hanrahan the printmaker is never too far removed from Hanrahan the novelist. However, there are important differences between the two — differences which the author examines and clarifies as the book progresses.

Hanrahan's prints flow through the book pointing up the years, the struggles, the fashions in art — social and family mores and conventions, and deep private battles.

Her use of wood, copper or stencil bears the stamp of technical competence. Many of her prints of the last decade possess a quality which is uncompromising and personal. Hanrahan states the unpleasant and the socially unacceptable with an ease that deceives. Her vision and touch are deceptively child-like as she presents the serious and the ridiculous facets of society and living.

One finds that, no matter how graceful, soft-tongued or enchanting the prints are, they possess a sting in the tail — a built-in ambush for the unwary, which snaps one out of complacent nostalgia to a problem of Now or perhaps an answer to Then.

To anyone familiar with Hanrahan's work, this monograph will be a surprise and a delight; to others it will fascinate and point a direction as it presents Hanrahan and a selection of her major prints since 1960.

Alison Carroll's working knowledge of prints and printmakers and her uncluttered critical insight make this a milestone in the ever-increasing literature on the art of the Australian.

The sewn and laminated paper covered volumes retail at \$29.95. There is also available a signed and numbered edition of 150 case-bound copies, which include a separate signed lithographic print, retailing at \$125.

CHARLES BANNON

Notes on contributors

KAY LAWRENCE is an Adelaide based artist and member of the Crafts Board, Australia Council.

TIM MORRELL is a Sydney-based curator and art writer.

LINDA MARIE WALKER is an Adelaide based artist and writer.

PAUL HEWSON is an Adelaide based writer, artist and curator.

IAN WERE is an Adelaide based artist and art reviewer.

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Throughout the book the writing is clear and direct.

It is a caring book, concentrating on

struggles, the fashions in art — social and family mores and conventions, and deep private battles.

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CHARLES BANNON is an Adelaide based artist. He has been a member of the CAS since the late 1940's and helped establish the original *Broadsheet* in 1954.

ADRIAN WESTON is currently completing a Bachelor of Arts Degree at Adelaide University.

MARGOT OSBORNE is the *Broadsheet* Editor and Director of the Contemporary Art Centre of S.A.