

Visual Art

1 km From Home

By Stephanie Jones, Artspace 71, 7–16 June.

Reviewed by Kirsten Farrell

It has been a while since Stephanie Jones' last solo effort and this fact is intricately connected with her exhibition *1 km From Home*. The exhibition consists of a series of six linocut prints and 13 metres of small rectangular panels, each a linear rendition in icing sugar of the decorative gates or fences commonly seen gracing suburban houses in the fifties and sixties. The panels, all painted in slightly different intensities of pale duck egg blue and decorated with white icing, were arranged in a continuous single line around two of the three walls of the gallery. The title of the exhibition refers to the artist's self-imposed and time-consuming project of cataloguing the patterns of the iron fences found within a one kilometre radius of her home in Queanbeyan.

There is a sweet irony in the rendering of cold iron in edible cake decoration, yet this irony coexists with a parallel nostalgia made physical in icing sugar. The lines of icing are not merely functional in the taxonomy of gates and fences that Jones has undertaken; their tracery also speaks of familiar journeys in familiar places. They are meditations upon overlooked immediate surroundings made new and affirmed through the time-consuming method of their creation.

Intimately sized, the work invites close attention and thus the viewer is reminded of the potential for the ordinary to be transcendent. This unusual medium recalls wedding and christening cake decoration keepsakes, and the domestic rites of passage of such occasions. It is an unavoidably feminine allusion, which hints at mother-as-artist, precious and pretty things and a genuine admiration for home handcrafts. The fragility of the sugary lines contrast knowingly with the surety of the steel they stand in for; boundaries rendered harmless and pretty. The solidity of the line is also a private and good humoured re-examination of drawing itself.

The print works branch from the icing sugar pieces, and can be considered recordings of the icing sugar project. Each linocut print is a series of the 'original' icing sugar drawings, some a similar blue, others in combinations of cake decoration pink and green. The images appeared in a band in the bottom third of each sheet of paper, humbly dwarfed by the expanse of the paper. These works revealed Jones' intelligent and well-considered approach to her work. Their success was also borne out in their popularity with the gallery goers, with all prints having at least one edition sold.

1 km From Home tracks the first steps in an artistic journey resumed. Jones raises the process of conscientiously and quietly mapping her immediate environment into a body of work that is both aesthetically and intellectually replete. With this exhibition she has laid the groundwork for more sustained forays into the world of art.

Kirsten Farrell is an artist who lives in Queanbeyan.