

WORK BY STUDENTS OF THE TASMANIAN SCHOOL OF ART
11 September - 2 October, 1987







This is an exhibition of drawings by undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University's School of Art. The works were executed between 1986 and 1987, and demonstrate a variety of approaches to the concept of drawing.

In the schedule of subjects offered by the School, drawing is available as a minor elective. That is, any undergraduate at any level may enrol in one of several classes available, and will attend for five hours per week throughout the academic year.



WORK BY STUDENTS OF THE TASMANIAN SCHOOL OF ART

CENTRE FOR THE ARTS GALLERY,
HUNTER STREET,
HOBART. 11 September - 2 October, 1987



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Art Exhibitions Committee, University of Tasmania would like to thank the artists, Meg Taylor, Lynda Warner, all the lecturers/tutors involved in the drawing programme, and Lutz Presser for co-ordinating the exhibition.

The ongoing exhibitions programme is greatly facilitated by a general purpose grant from the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board.

Catalogue Design/co-ordination	Guy Roberts
Catalogue essays	Ian Atherton
	Rosalind Burgess
	John Farrow
Photography	Photolith
Typesetting	Cox Kay Screencraft
Printing	Guy Roberts
Poster	

Catalogue published by the University of Tasmania, September, 1987

Copyright, 1987

The artists, the authors and the University of Tasmania

ISBN 0 85901 371 5



DAMIAN HARRIS B.F.A. *Painting (leave of absence)*

DRAWING/FIGURES

NOPLACIA was once my name,
That is, a place where no one goes.
Plato's REPUBLIC now I claim
To match, or beat at its own game;
For that was just a myth in prose,
But what he wrote of, I became,
Of men, wealth, laws a solid frame,
A place where every wise man goes:
GOPLACIA is now my name.

Lines on the Island of Utopia by the Poet Laureate, Mr Windbag, Nonsense's sister's son.

- Thomas More, *Utopia*, 1516

1.

And it's another big day in the walkman world... Sometimes there are those days that when you finally do venture onto the streets outside you find things, a world, which seems to have completely pre-empted everything that you read last night. There's no shock of recognition, and certainly nothing of the wearied nostalgia of *deja-vu*, for this morning's difference is not that easy. But to walk on these streets today is to see them as possessing a certain kind of shifting surface that they didn't have yesterday; all these streets populated by dint of a blind faith in fakery and an unerring grasp of something easily missed. There's a parallel to be drawn...

From the very first, the prospect of writing on drawing exercises a fatal attraction for writing itself. It is at once an attraction which far exceeds the simple pleasures of the flaunted prohibition, and one which certainly precludes any thought of punitive consequence. Writing on drawing offers, for instance, the spectacle of the endlessly reflexive play of relation which can be set in motion by the simple expedient of placing writing in opposition to scribble, a game which can be played with both purpose and gleeful perversity. But unlike drawing, it's always writing which succumbs to these ludic impulses, and it is thus writing alone which suffers the fatality of the attraction.

As I write, so then I will be lured. Except for a moment let's try to forestall fatality by means of a knowing-embrace, to maintain some distance through a little knowing play.

To begin this particular writing on drawing, I choose then to assume the intention that it will actually appear as written, in my own hand as it appears here before me now. I assume this intention as a kind of contingency against this fate which I know will lie in wait for this writing. My intention is then one shot through with a purposeful disingenuousness, for it is an intention which I must realise from the outset will be thwarted by the very conditions under which this writing must appear. This writing will only ever be seen to be by, and never in, this hand.

This handwriting on drawing is proposed then as a ploy, as a means to the end of examining the consequences of this attempted substitution. This substitution, at once both inept and fraudulent, is so for it seeks to establish an impossibility - a straightforward morphological equivalence between writing and the subject it would address. It seeks to replace into writing that presence, that originary hand, that is so insistently valorized in the activity of drawing. This attempt by writing to show itself is always finally fraudulent, for in its desperate eagerness it can seek only a further disguise. This handwriting 'hides in the light', and it has ultimately less to do with writing than it does with the elevation of means to manifest content.

At the same time there is something poignantly doomed about the attempt. It's really the spectacle of the hopeless aspiration of writing to that ideality of presence which this culture of writing seeks in, and holds to be definitive of, drawing. The masquerading handwriting will always be doubly condemned in its presumption to similarity by the cultural convention which grasps writing as a means of simulating such presence in the first place.

It is indeed on just this condition of appearance that the attempted morphology is founded, for it is the distinctive appearance of an individual's handwriting which is used as an attempted metaphor for this ideal state to which writing would aspire. The futility of the attempt is evidenced by the necessity of the metaphor to the expression of the aspiration, there's no way you can get beyond the writing. As Derrida puts it; 'all the concepts which played a part in the delimitation of metaphor always have an origin and a force which are themselves metaphorical.' What you get in the end is a conceit, and as such it is an example of the fatality which befalls a writing attempting by such means to efface its own materiality.

So I willingly acquiesce in the obliteration of this handwriting, it has already served to demonstrate the sort of end which awaits the writing on drawing which seeks the evasion of its name. This will appear as you read it and my purpose in this knowing embrace of the seamlessness of type is two-fold: firstly to turn this writing against its own appearance and secondly, as a result of this attempt on appearance, to make it apparent as being the first condition of (im)possibility which must be thus imposed upon any writing on drawing.

2.

29.(i) *This book has been designed to provide a survey of the extent and nature of drawing and to broaden the reader's appreciation, taste and skills.*

(ii) Daniel M. Mendelowitz's **Drawing** (Holt, Reinhardt and Winston Inc. 1967) is an exhaustingly exhaustive tome, covering every aspect of drawing to a degree which would prevent any cavilling at the grandiloquent simplicity of its title. The development of drawing is carefully traced down the misty arcades of time, all the way from the first cave-dwelling Neanderthal, daubing animals in outline with a burnt stick, down to the daubed abstraction of various American proto-modernists of the late 1960's. Not content with the mere sweep of the ages, Mendelowitz then goes on to elucidate each and every medium, provides a closely analyzed taxonomy of such things as 'line', 'value' and 'form', and finally brings his compendium to a close with a chapter entitled 'Imagination'.

I've read the whole thing several times now, and it remains fascinating despite itself, for it's one of those occasional books that actually goes some way beyond being a book alone. Daniel M. Mendelowitz's **Drawing** achieves a rare status - it's the very paradigm of conventional writing on drawing. In speaking of form, it supersedes all the particularities of example in its own form. To be more specific, it displays an almost uncanny ability to make its writing disappear, to efface the tropological formations of its text.

But the fortunate corollary of this state of affairs is the opening of a way to a writing on drawing which escapes this cultural demand for the effacement of one set of figures in favour of another. Mendelowitz's 'Drawing' also offers the possibility of finding within it a different drawing, one which is actually and actively constituted by this writing itself. The assumption which leads the author to construct his writing so it appears empty of its own forms results in a writing which leaves itself open to a recolonisation. There is thus a space for the intervention of another writing, for today writing is reappearing at last from its long exile, from its subordination to the Platonic 'myths in prose' of our western Dystopia.

29(i) *'Some individuals sing while drawing, others are tense and grit their teeth; each emotional state is transmitted through the work to the observer the same way as speech transmits the speaker's personality'*

(ii) In its pursuit of the 'onto-theologies' of Western Platonic thought, the deconstructive approach has consistently sought a methodico-philosophical counter to what it identifies as the founding premise of that tradition. That premise is, of course, this need for every structure to be centered, the principal of logocentricity which is rendered invisible in its very ubiquity. This desire for center holds as its ideal model the condition of speech, and as we have seen, writing tends to come off second best in any encounter with this ideality of presence.

The deconstructive counter to this photocentrism proceeds from the recuperation of writing as an enabling condition of speech, made possible thanks to a model of signification emphasising the essentially differential qualities of that process. Just as each and every signifying entity only has a value by virtue of what it is not, this paradigm of difference opens the way to a re-evaluation of writing as constitutive rather than merely reflective or expressive.

This simplistic parody of the 'deconstructive' approach has at least the value of providing a ground from which Mendelowitz's writing may be read against the logocentricity which otherwise defeats it. 'Drawing' is here to be partially read, a process seeking those moments in its text that reveal this drawing as a textual entity, constituted in, and by nothing other than, that text itself. 'Drawing', once parenthesized, becomes a play of tropes, the product of the careful deployment of figures and processes. So constituted as the play of metaphors, metonymy and deferral, 'Drawing' may yet escape its subject.

vii(i) *'...the text has been kept to a minimum to permit the 330 reproductions from the master works of all ages to speak for themselves.'*

(ii) Drawing, unlike (potentially at least) **Drawing**, is everywhere shot through with the tyranny of presence, for everywhere too is the relentless equation of drawing with speech. Drawing, one catalogue here before me states, 'is a form of non-verbal language, the two-dimensional and more or less linear analogue of a 'speech act.' It wouldn't appear to be much clearer than that.

Yet this 'more or less linear analogue' prevails by means of a kind of teleology - this apparently self-evident truth is maintained primarily by reference to the 'truth' of evidence of self. And it is this justification for the 'minimal' text that can only demand further explication.

302(i) *This hesitant tremulous edge has the ring of sincerity, much as a deeply felt, inarticulate search for words may convey sincere feeling more effectively than brilliant rhetoric.'*

76(i) *'An almost morbid taste for artifice and formality produced a certain kind of cold elegance in the work of the mannerists which contrasted sharply with the deep fervour which animated the High Renaissance.'*

29(ii) *'...drawings since they are done for the artist's personal satisfaction rather than for a client or for public display, tend to provide an intimate contact with the artist and the creative act.'*

(ii) And so, on the one hand we are presented with the conventional distrust of mastery as empty artifice, on the other there is that mastery which by means of a teleology is allowed to escape the fate which lies in wait for the former. Such a fate is the consequence of the self-consciousness of artifice itself, it is rhetoric which is always condemned to inhabit the cold nether-regions of the mannered, of the dying.

Yet it is just this realm of the negative which even while standing for denial, actually provides the very means by which the positive term may be defined. Its not so much a matter of art into life as it is life as art; the unmediated expression of that which is undefinable by any other means than the Other, its negation. Denial becomes affirmation, and it is this stricture which would be further countered by the subjugation of writing.

Drawing, once mastered, is excused the distrust of mastery that is to be detected in the condemnation of the rhetor. Drawing as ideal, as speech, is everywhere allowed to escape the 'cold elegance' of rhetoric by confounding the latter with an aberrant speech, one which would seek to deny its natural condition. Rhetoric is condemned in its figural affiliations with the written. It is by this ploy that drawing is perpetually excused from any implication in the terms by which it becomes definable as ideal.

It is thus only by these convolutions that the convention of drawing as speech is maintained, it is also by these convolutions that the one important way in which drawing differs from the ideal of its putative analogue may be concealed. A close interrogation of this apparently morphological analogue, and of the necessity of its opposition to writing, quickly reveals its essential and inadmissible contingency.

For all the applause accorded its spontaneity, its unaffectedness, drawing is in fact never accorded the ultimate ideal condition of speech - that holistic closure of presence. Drawing, even while being lauded in its 'intimacy' with the creative act, is nevertheless maintained always as the fragmentary, the preparatory. It is itself contingent upon that which it proceeds. Even that drawing which is presented as finished 'in itself' will find itself so placed within the frameworks of oeuvre and media.

Crucially, this 'inconsistency' with the condition of speech signals not the inapplicability of the equation but its actual condition as a figure formed in language. Given the differential quality of signification, it is the fundamental instability in these terms which would be simplistically opposed that, paradoxically enough, makes such oppositions definitive of that 'Drawing' which appears in writing.

309(i) 'An 'Odalisque' (Figure 10-1) done in pencil and ink has all the airy lightness and fresh charm of a bouquet of spring flowers.'

(iii) If Genet could be said to have ever actually taught anything, then it would surely have been the necessity of writing as theft. More correctly perhaps, what is to be learnt from Genet is the necessity of this theft as an act of retribution upon convention. The imperative must be to steal back for writing those metaphors which have, by the relentless convention of continued usage, been lost to the appearance of natural fact.

There seems to be a kind of law of adverse possession continually at work here which operates to strip writing of its figures and, in turn, allots them to a constitutive consciousness which would precede it. A certain kind of metaphor of nature seems in particular to be no longer a turn of phrase, having become a figure of speech. The kind of metaphor I have in mind is well exemplified by the description of a Matisse drawing offered by Mendelowitz.

Interestingly, it is a description based upon what is actually a quite lengthy chain of associations. The figure of the Odalisque is to begin with hardly an object without considerable associations of its own. Like the metaphor of speech through which its medium is grasped in writing, the Odalisque is itself much more a construct of culture than it is any serendipitous occurrence of nature.

Yet it is just this 'nature' which is constantly invoked throughout this text on drawing. It is a double-edged play once again, a rhetoric which is placed against rhetoricity. The upshot of the process is a 'Drawing' constituted in and by metaphor, yet these figures are constantly 'impressed' into the surface of that on whose behalf they trope.

The 'miracle' of Genet's flowers is thus transformed here by Mendelowitz from something quite extraordinary in language into the ordinary and given quality of what it describes/constitutes. What is in fact happening here is one of those purely metaphorical moves so accurately fingered by the ever-sceptical Nietzsche as a move from 'image to concept'. The metaphor held to be definitive of drawing, that it is 'more or less (a) linear analogue of the 'speech act', is finally, and for all its quasi-scientific flavor, no more natural than Mendelowitz's 'spring flowers.'

29(i) '...because they are sketches or studies, and are not elaborately finished, they contain elements of ambiguity which encourage the viewer to interpret those drawings through his own imagination.'

(ii) Such are the imagined pleasures of drawing conceived, and here written, as metonymic fragment, where the very incompleteness of the preparatory fragment comes to stand for some ever-elusive whole. By virtue of this fragmentation, it is here suggested, a pleasure may be indulged - a pleasure which is not simply that of a deferred gratification, a sacrifice of this moment in favour of another. By contrast, the deferral of the whole works carried out in such a way as to produce a pleasure in presence, in the present instance, which is the antithesis of any such temporal deferral. In fact the preparatory sketch, the study of a moment, has a quality of its own and is not dependent for this effect upon the existence of another. There is, in short, an open-endedness which would seem to allow the play of multiplicity, of differentiation.

Yet as we have seen, there is a crucial and enabling paradox at work here in the same moment. The very presence which is conventionally ascribed to the closure of the whole is not usually ascribed to such fragments. It is in this moment of metonymy, of the admission of the figure, that the act of reading drawing as an entity which is written comes quite explicitly into play. The metonymic drawing, which appears in relation to some deferred and ungraspable whole, is very much a 'Drawing' constituted as writing. It actively partakes in the process of signification which is dependent upon differentiation. It is this differentiation which, as noted above, is so crucial in constituting drawing as an ideal form and one which would surpass any such mediation.

Yet it is this sort of differentiation/deferral which is inadmissible if drawing is to be maintained as a transcendental signifier of pure presence. Mendelowitz's writing seeks in this momentary reversion to the metonymic figure to evade this differentiation in time. To maintain this all-important presence it is, strangely enough, time itself which is being deferred. The magic of these fragmented moments, Mendelowitz everywhere tells us, is that presence which would apparently defeat the passage of time. It is upon this deferral of time itself that is established a presence which comes across all the centuries and decades to us today when we contemplate such fragments. And it is in just this that Mendelowitz's writing, in its subjugation of the structure of writing, falls finally into the fatality which has been awaiting just this inevitable moment.

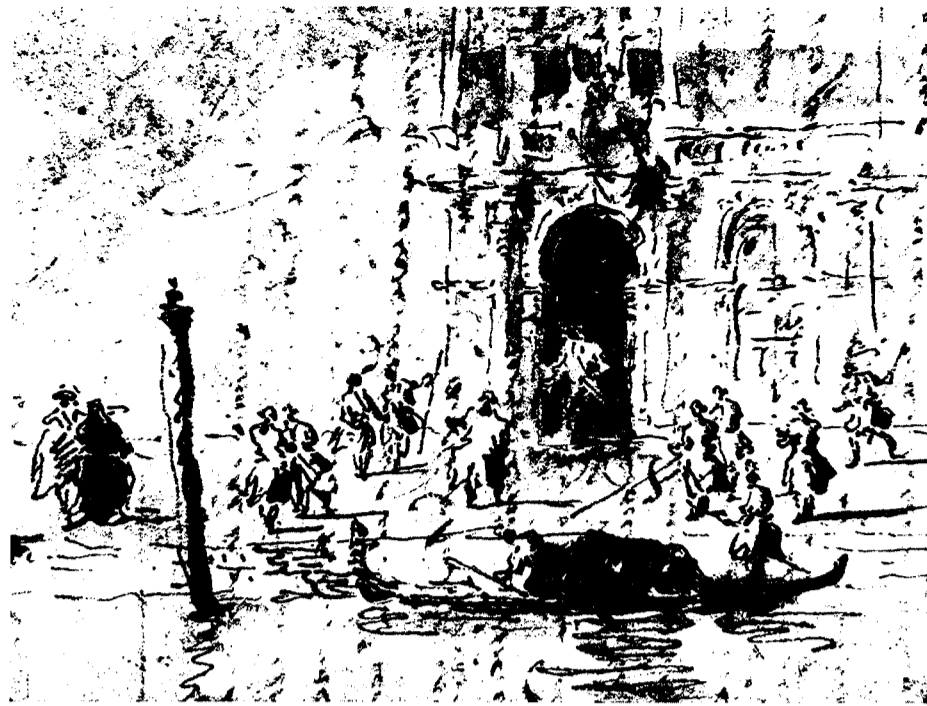
The flaw is simple: the constant deferrals which enable signification cannot be so simply disposed of - for this immediacy of presence is in fact valued only in direct proportion to the time that would be so deferred. The 'opposing' term always returns once again to actually enable the definition which would attempt to efface its own means.

302(i) 'The precise lapel caught Degas' attention and he defined it neatly with a single stroke of the pencil'

(ii) ...just as though Degas himself had done it in front of us. The magical touch is recreated for us as though we were witness to The Moment itself. In order to open this closure of presence and to see how it is actually made operable only through writing it is necessary to examine this moment of narrative that would escape the temporal. What we find is that this textual reading of Degas' drawing seeks to efface deferral by an inversion of its narrative order.

Cause is inferred from the perceived effect and then inferred to intention. In our eagerness to not only read in terms of intention but to actually efface the deferrals of the signification which makes that reading possible, we reverse the phenomenal or perceptual order, placing Degas' action as prior to our perception of it in the image.

In this way what would first appear as the magical immediacy of the drawing is in fact a property of the descriptive system to which it is here made subject. That this so readily escapes our awareness, that it is always Degas we seek at the expense of our reading, is sure testimony to the to the all-pervasive conventions which operate to construct drawing for us in a way that is founded upon their own disappearance.



Francesco Guardi (1712-1793; Italian). *The Visit*.
Pen and Sepia and Sepia wash on yellowish paper, 5 x 6 inches approx.

3.

96-7(i) 'Much of the charm of 'The Visit' (Figure 4-18) results from the way in which the handwriting on the back of the page works with the animated texture of the drawing to create a shimmering totality.'

(ii) This piece has sought to find a way of writing upon drawing in the conviction that to do so is no different from writing on drawing as though it were some subject external to that process: To treat drawing as some Other to be addressed in writing is, as has become apparent, a project doomed to difficulty for the very reason that drawing is conventionally defined by its capacity to actually escape such writing. Mendelowitz's text seeks to overcome that one by accepting the terms that would be imposed upon writing by drawing-as-speech, with the result that his figures may be reinscribed with 'Drawing', understood as a textual construct. So approached the text may be examined for those moments when it inadvertently gives itself away, when it indirectly admits the 'nature' of the writing which would appear otherwise to be so transparently deferential.

I want to conclude with one of the best of these - the illustration reproduced here. It is with a gleeful flourish that I here introduce Mendelowitz's Figure 4-18, 'The Visit', attributable to the proper name 'Francesco Guardi.' As reproduced here, it has probably lost quite a bit of that alleged 'shimmering totality', but it's not important, you don't always need the original to make the point.

To metaphorically constitute this chance encounter of writing and drawing within a simultaneity of surface as a 'shimmering totality' is to give the game away. It's an instance of that Barthesian 'stupidity' which is as revealing as it is 'touching'. Quite inadvertently, Mendelowitz grants us here an 'image' of drawing in addition to the drawing itself. It is an image that is quite literally constituted as a pure metaphor, a veritable visual analogue for that 'Drawing' which we find everywhere to be constituted in and by his text.

340(i) '...and each artists style had its textural character.'

(ii) I.M. Atherton
Winter 1987



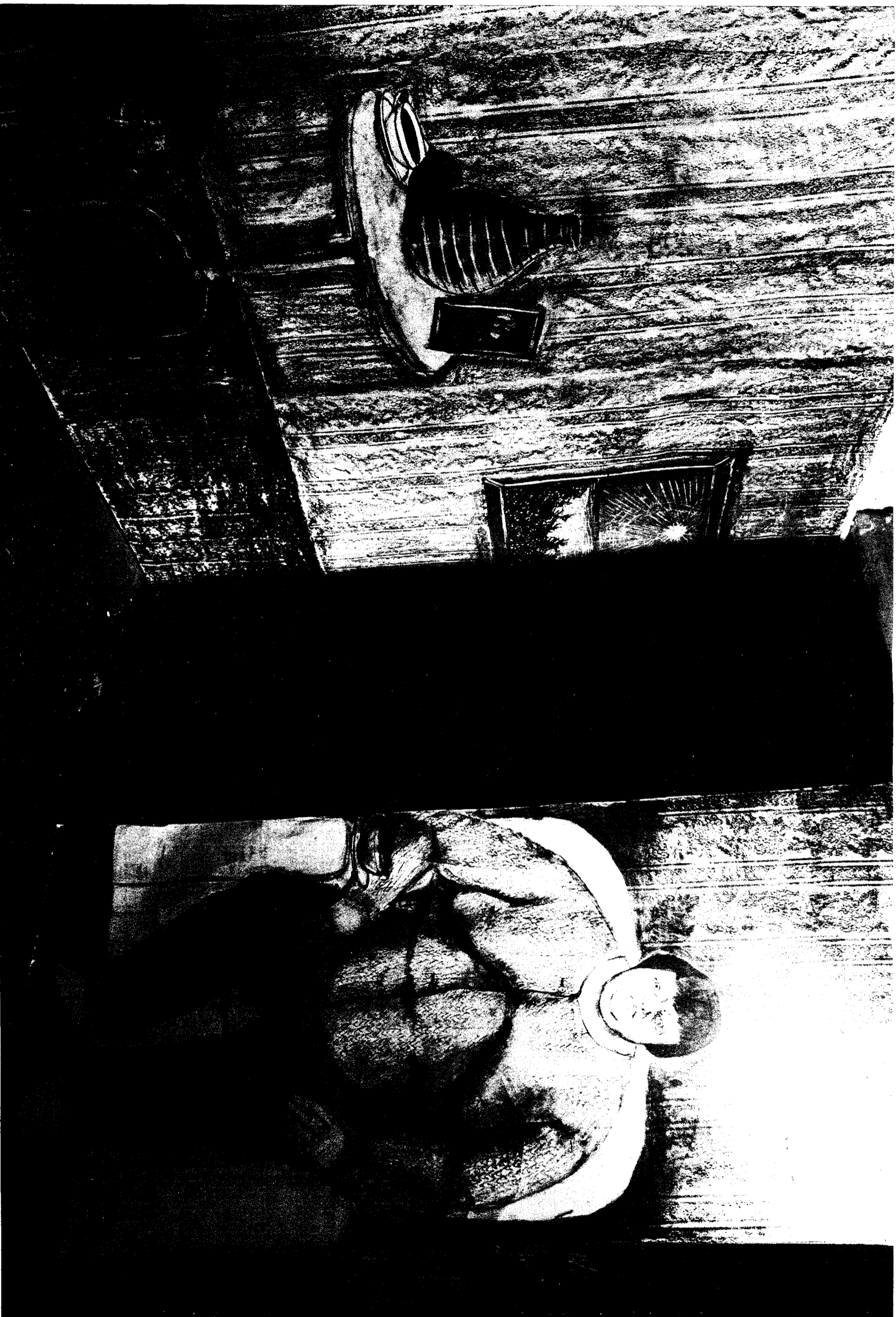
CATHERINE WAINING B.F.A. Painting



JULIAN HALLS B.F.A. *Printing*



ANNETTE MYLREA B.F.A. Painting



SARAH EPSKAMP B.F.A. Sculpture

MANUEL DUHARTE B.F.A. Printmaking AND ROBERT BELLCHAMBERS B.F.A. Painting







CHRISTOPHER LENNARD B.F.A. *Painting*



PERRY FOWLER B.F.A. *Painting*



KATARINA SIRANI B.F.A. *Painting*

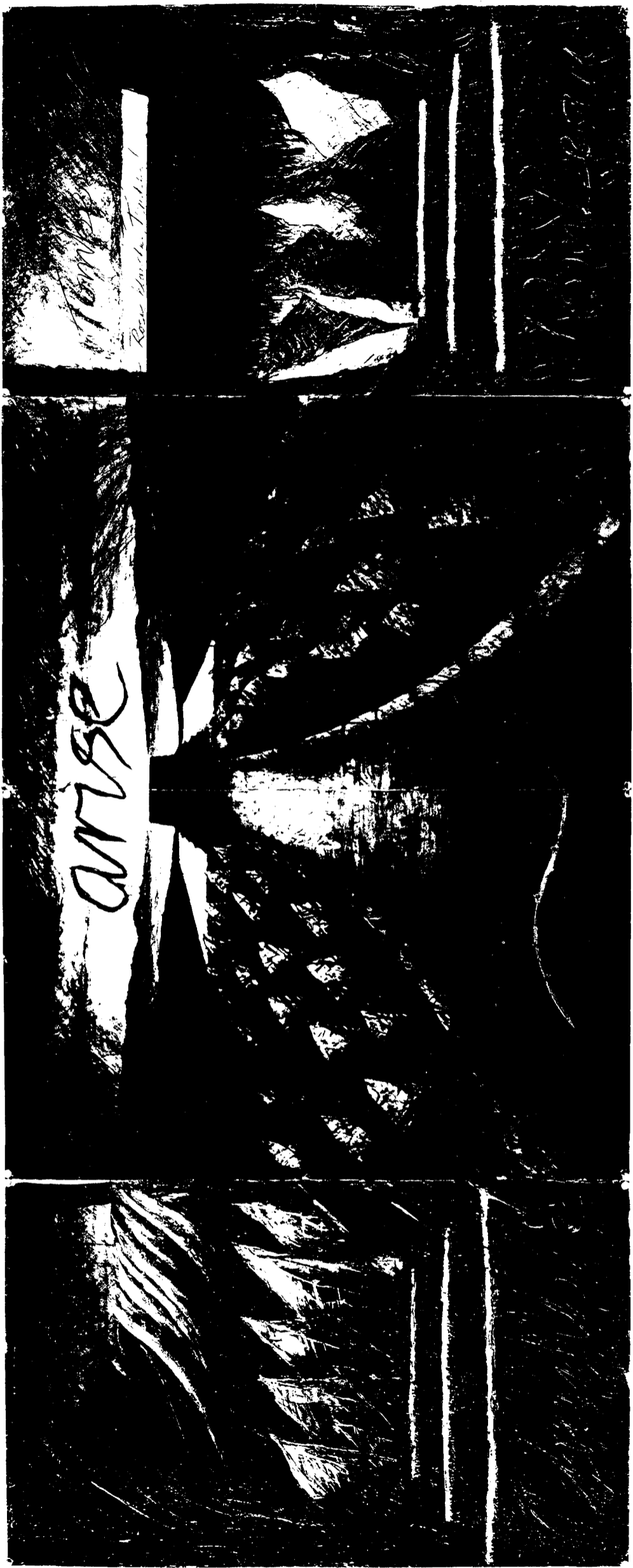


RICHARD FOGG B.F.A. Painting





PHILIP WOLFHAGEN B.F.A. Printmaking



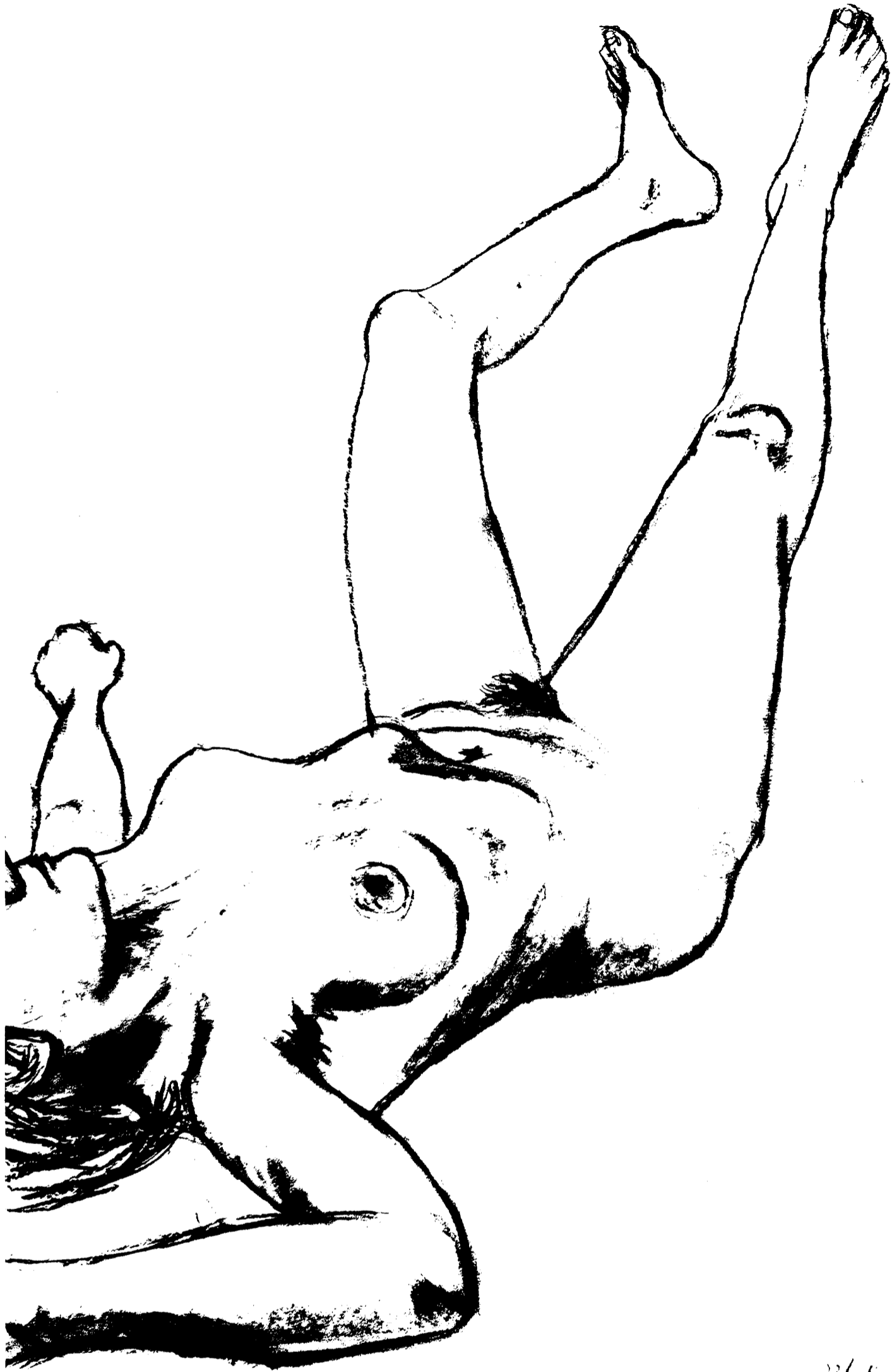
DAVID McDOWELL B.F.A. Printmaking



MARY GROVER B.F.A. *Painting*



CLAIRE ROSENDALE Associate Diploma *Photography*



23/10/96

ANNA BERGER B.F.A. *Painting*





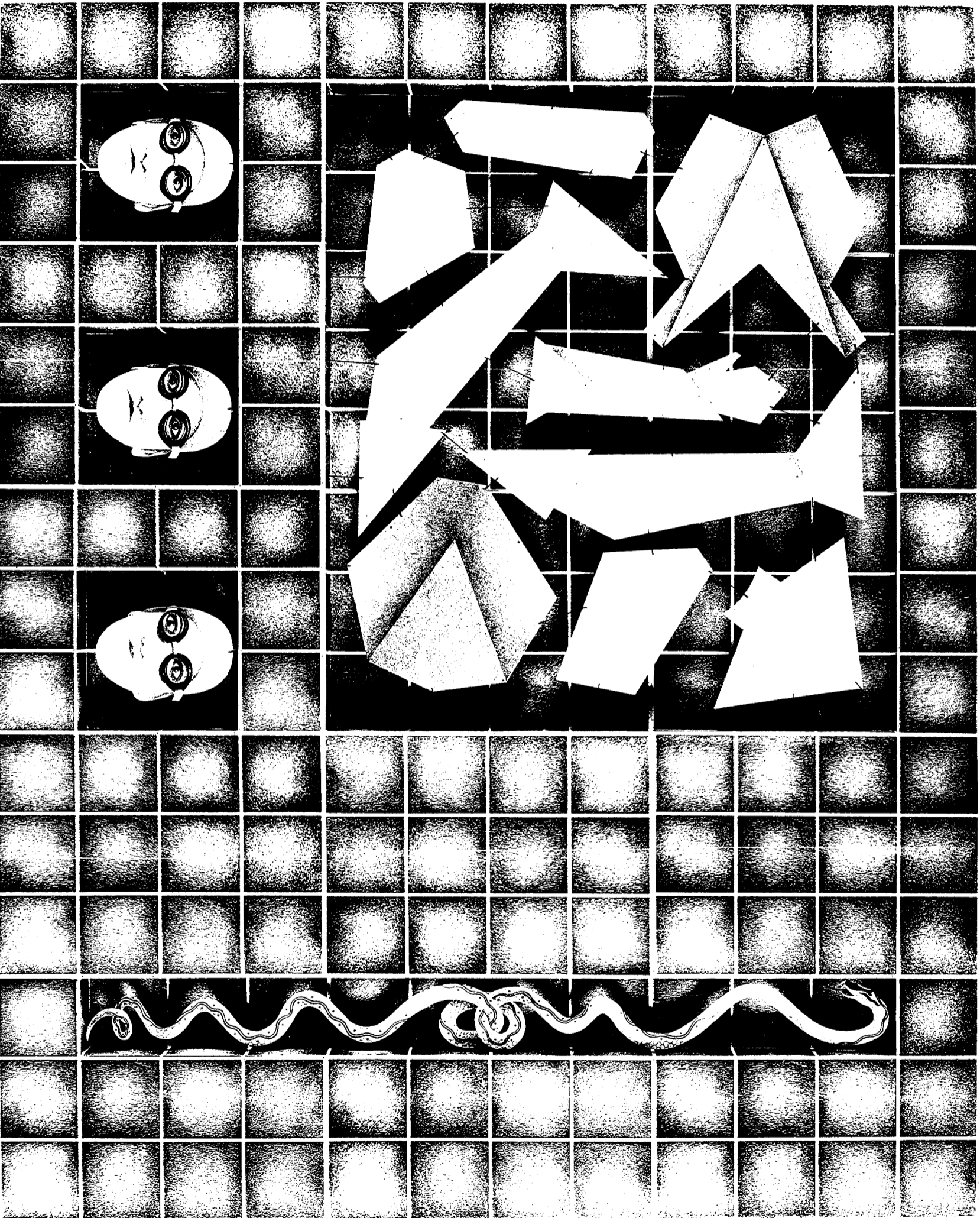
ANNIE

CHERI KINGSTON B.F.A. *Painting*

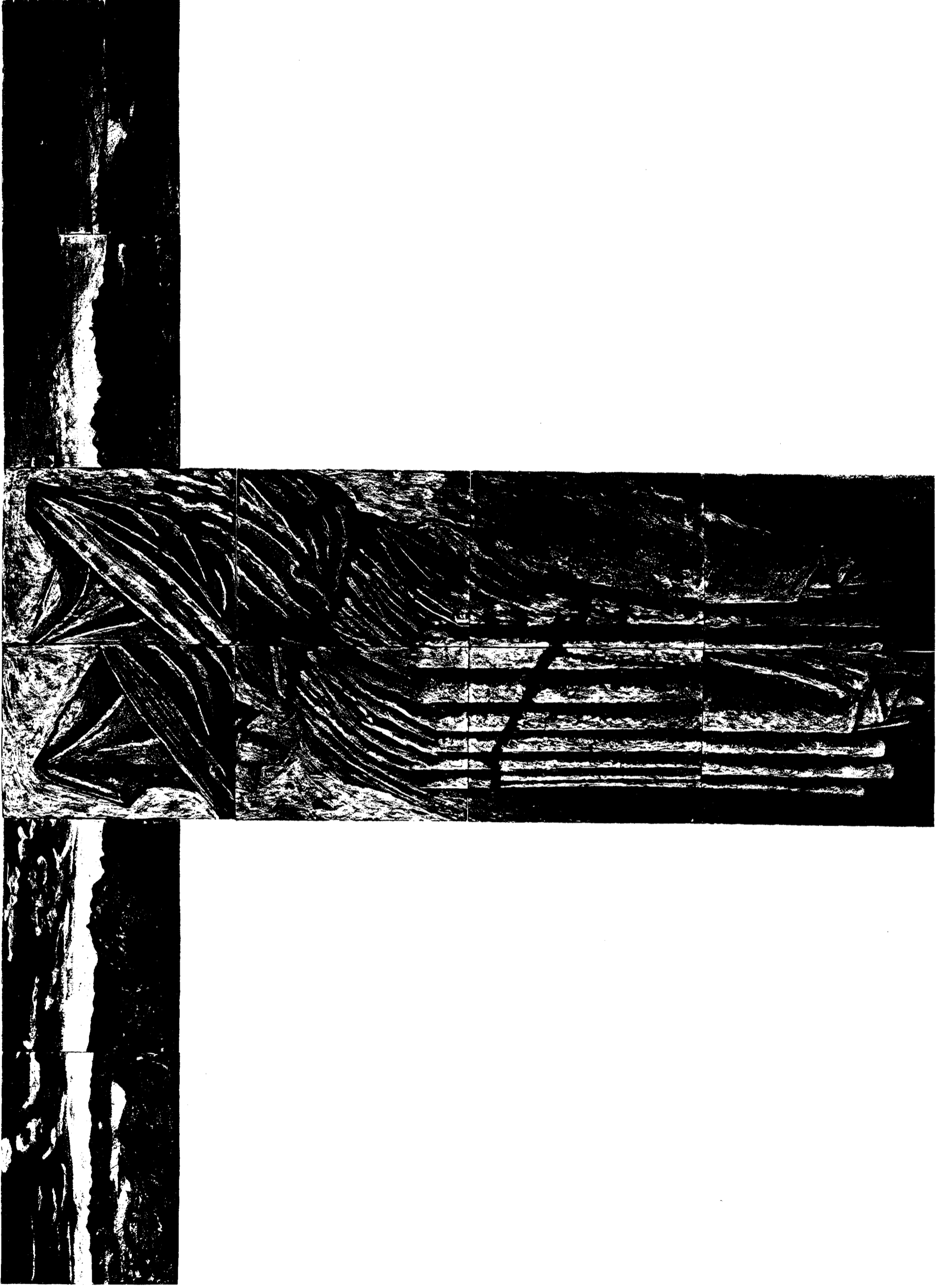


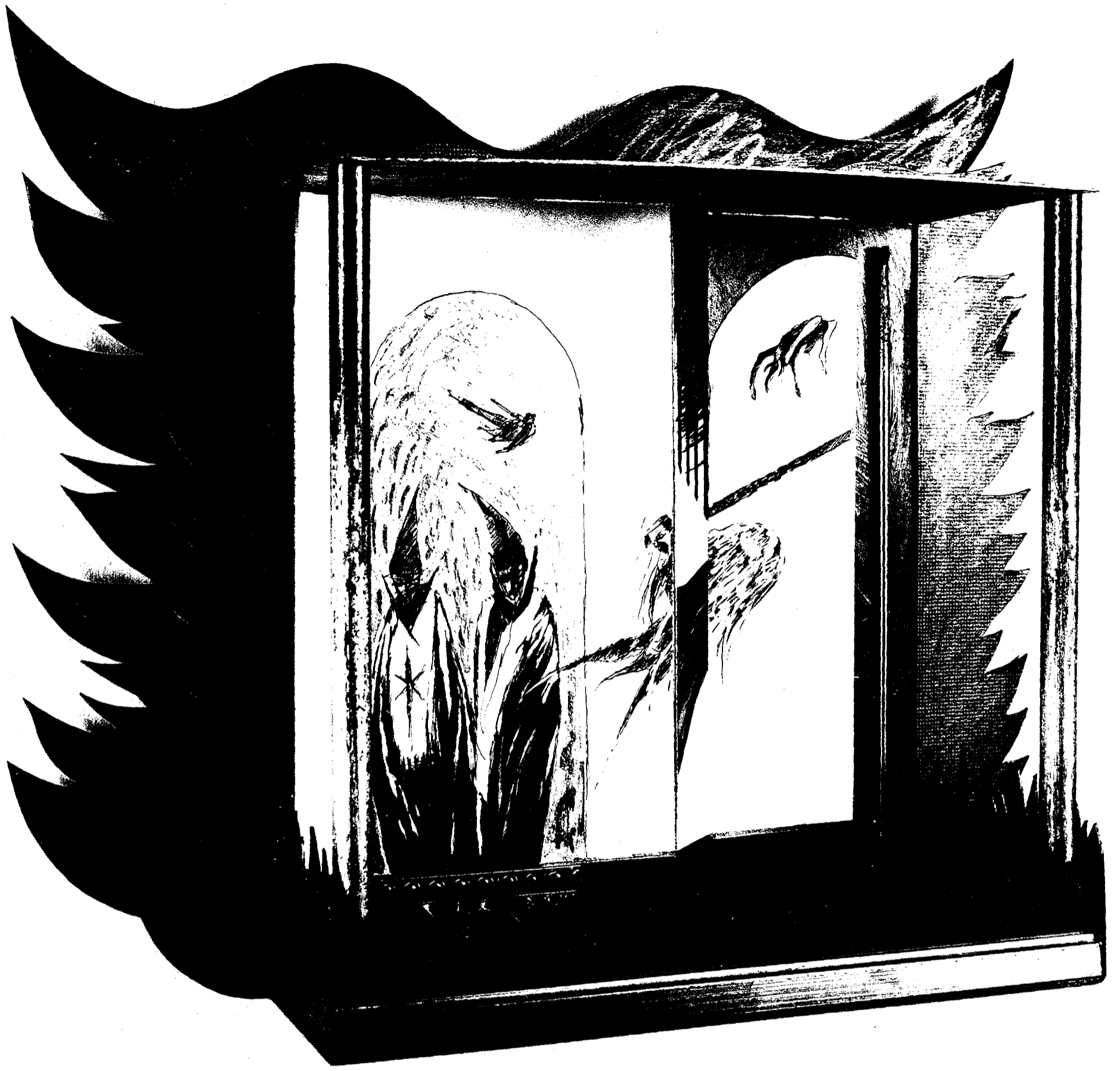
CATHERINE McCARTHEY B.F.A. *Printmaking*

MARY SCOTT M.F.A.



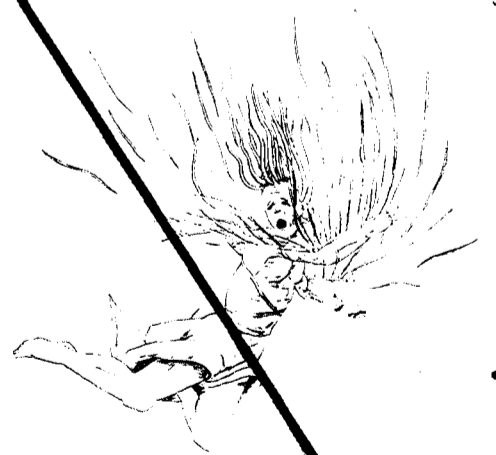
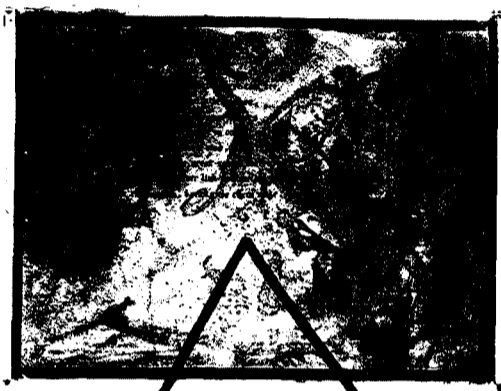
RUTH PROPSTING M.F.A.





SEAN KELLY M.F.A.

CHARLES WATKINS M.F.A.



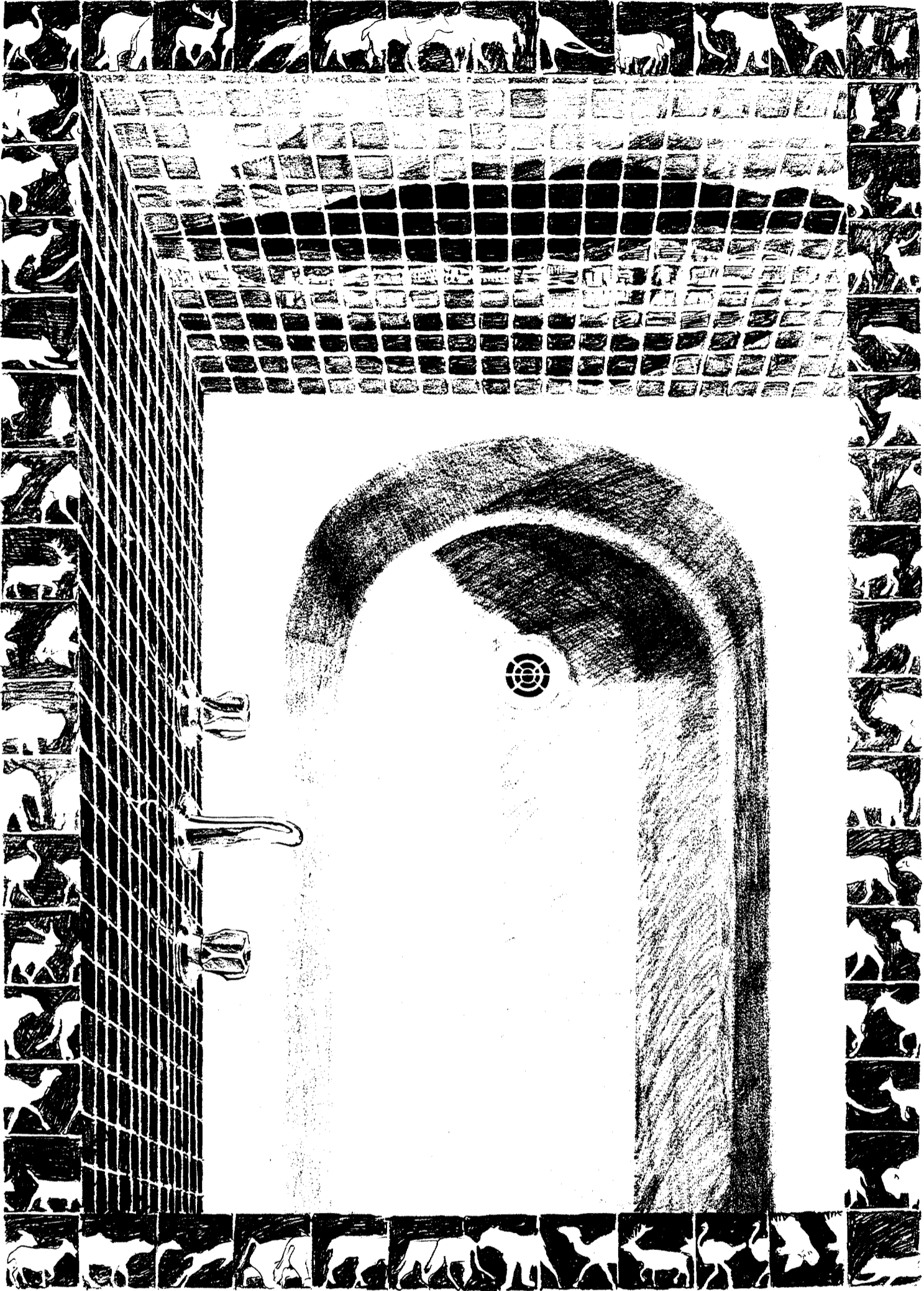
The Monster of Gevaudan. "This beast is the size of a young bull and is given to attacking women and children. It drinks their blood, then cuts off and carries away their heads. A reward of 27,000 livres awaits anyone who kills the animal." Text and engraving of 1770.





DEBORAH ST. LEGER M.F.A.





ALEX WANDERS M.F.A.

A commitment to drawing is, of course, not new in the history of art, or for that matter, in the history of Australian art but the current commitment to it as an important and expressive vehicle in its own right has never been surpassed.¹

Drawing has been seen to have taken over the lead among the arts in recent years. Having emancipated itself from merely serving other artistic disciplines it has won an autonomous and leading position. Imre Pan writes:

The renaissance freed pictures from walls; the avant-garde has now freed drawing from pictures. As a slight exaggeration, we could even say, that modern drawing is the shroud of traditional painting.²

Hans Albert Peter's³ reply to this claim describes the development of drawing less gloomily. He suggests that drawing has freed itself completely from its former link with painting but in doing so it has absorbed painting, giving it the chance of surviving in drawing. Schmied⁴ confirms that for a long time we have been seeing painting acquire more and more the character of drawing or signs.

So what are the underlying reasons for these developments?, asks Schmied, as do I. Why are artists becoming more and more interested in simplifying the means they employ to present their ideas? I agree with Schmied⁵ that we can still understand drawing as a way of finding one's bearing in the world and making it one's own, as a way of gaining awareness, of taking up a position, of making statements about oneself and about mankind, as a visual discourse about the contexts in which mankind recognizes itself, the nature out of which it exists and the spirit which determines the forms of the visible world. So what has changed? These aspects of drawing seem to suggest, by their elementary nature, 'a reference to earlier epochs in the history of the human mind, (and, I would add, to the development from childhood of the human mind), in which systems of drawing or the understanding of drawings played a central role in the coming to terms with reality.'⁶ As a means of recognising, understanding and defining nature, drawings were scratched or copied in code-like abbreviations on rock walls, and these can be seen as the beginning of all art.⁷ Drawing was not then separated conceptually from other phenomena of life. Instead it was considered a natural human activity.

I by no means wish to convey the idea of a linear and unified progression of the history of drawing in the following essay. On the contrary, it would appear that just such a tendency for history to be written as a linear and unified progression obscures the role that drawing has had to play in visual arts practice over the centuries. As Una Johnson writes:

Interpretations have always varied with inclinations of the present. And certainly accounts of recent art history, which ought to provide a proper perspective for the present, are riddled with distortions as a result of what was omitted and what was emphasized.⁸

In order, however, to place the present status of drawing in some historical context I will briefly trace its historical construction.

As already mentioned, the full force of drawing as graphic communication is first found in the wall art of prehistoric caves with their superimposed linear profiles capturing shadows of reality. Interest in the profile extended to the mythic origins of classical art. Early Greek painting, like much of the Egyptian art before it, was founded on linear outline. Later sophistication and patronage of Greek art led to a special taste for the monochromatic, linear drawing.⁹

According to Western graphic tradition, few drawings in the contemporary sense of the term, have survived from the Middle Ages, and Medieval artists' drawings, at least those few still known today, tend to be 'confined within the divine diagram of God's will, or else its demonic opposition.'¹⁰

Drawing since the early Renaissance, however, returned to a position of central interest and was seen as a measure of the artist's virtuosity and as a means of inventing and creating forms. The Renaissance artist saw himself occupying a special role as the agent of 'disegno', the Italian word for drawing divided into *disegno interno*, the intellectual or spiritual process, and *disegno esterno* the practical fulfilment of the idea. Giorgio Vasari, a major art historian of the sixteenth century, continued the tradition started in the early Renaissance that drawing was the basis of the three arts; architecture, sculpture and painting. It was apparently Baldassare Castiglione who first wrote, in his **Book for the Courtier** of 1527, that both painting and sculpture derive from *disegno*.¹¹ Vasari and his contemporaries saw *disegno* (drawing) as central to the achievements of their century (eg., Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Tintoretto, Titian etc.) and elevated the notion of drawing conceptually. Frederico Zuccare, in his **Idea** of 1607, furthermore, evoked a divine connection for *disegno* with his suggested etymology of the word: *segno di Dio*, or 'Sign of God'.¹² Indeed, the awareness of the individual, a vital part of Renaissance thinking, and the concept of extraordinary talent, or genius, epitomised the feeling of the sixteenth century. The Renaissance artist came to be idealised as representative of free and truly expressive activity because of the sharp contrast initially between the conditions of artistic work and other types of work in an increasingly industrialised and capitalist society. Hence the introduction of one of the great myths of western culture; the divine nature of the artist-as-genius. Drawing was central to the process leading to works of such genius. The human agent, endowed with special mastery of technique, was elevated by a guiding spirit (genius) that enabled him to materialize his miraculous, visionary insights.¹³ Zuccare wrote:

We are all draughtsmen in the eyes of the Lord...all of us have an inner idea in whatever art or science we are concerned with, but a transposition of interior design, into externalized form is the special gift of the artist.¹⁴

The notion of the artist as transcendental, ahistorical genius is reinforced.

Although the sixteenth century saw drawing as the conceptual and practical basis of the arts, it seems also to have implicitly seen it as the precursor of painting, sculpture, and architecture, as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, despite recognition of its immediate aesthetic value. Copies were made from antiquity and from nature, and sketches were used to develop ideas and compositions for more 'finished' works (eg. paintings). Examples of drawings valued explicitly for themselves are rare.¹⁵

The drawing, like the king's secret minister, is forbidden to present itself as that source and as deserving of autonomous praise.¹⁶

Drawing was seen as preliminary, as a trial run in order to perfect one's ideas before undertaking the final project. It seems that Michaelangelo's sixteenth century drawings were the first to be considered by patrons as art objects in themselves. However, he regarded them as preliminary, transient steps and, according to Vasari, destroyed many of them because his involvement was with the finished product. He was reluctant to draw attention to the steps, the stress and possibly the stasis involved in making art.¹⁷

In the seventeenth century drawing was apparently important and abundant. However few if any of the era's greatest painters left any securely documented drawings which suggests to me that, as in the previous century, drawing was seen as important yet preliminary and therefore not autonomous. For example, Poussin's drawings were small-scale and deliberately tentative and would never be considered finished substitutes for the ever-monumental painting.¹⁸

The notion of the artist as creator and genius was strengthened during the Romantic era, and special attention was devoted to drawing as evidence of this creative genius. Kaspar David Friedrich, for example, always signed his studies of reality in nature, but never his paintings.¹⁹

Drawing again becomes important for the artist at the beginning of the modern period with, for example, Seurat, Cezanne, van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec and Redon. Nonetheless, Robert Herbert²⁰ notes that although Seurat was acknowledged as one of the greatest masters of black and white, his drawings have never been given a full study. Drawing's status, at this time, seems based on apparent contradictions. It became seen as work complete in itself, and on the other hand it was seen as valuable in its incomplete, spontaneous nature since it was considered to be closest to the creative impulse.²¹ Later in the twentieth century, draughtmanship also commanded considerable interest among artists now concerned more with form than with content. At this point I think it is appropriate to switch to the Australian scene and to consider the historical context of the development of drawing more locally.

It is interesting, though not surprising, to note that the drawing collections of most Australian public galleries tend to follow closely the history of painting in their general outline. For example, the Newcastle Region Art Gallery has a collection of drawings the majority of which are made by artists whose primary creative activity is painting.²² The hierarchical structure of the visual arts is again evident, with painting supreme, and the history of drawing is channelled accordingly.

Dominating the history of drawing in Australia in the first three decades of this century was G.W. Lambert who expressed the view that linear drawing stands at the beginning of all art, both historically and practically. Art, he believed, should be treated like any other trade with certain skills to be acquired first; drawing being the most important of these. These views were shared by Lionel Lindsay.²³

In the 1920's the magazine **Art in Australia** reproduced many pencil drawings by Lambert and others artists such as Adelaide Perry and Thea Proctor reflecting the trend in the 1920's to produce finished drawings 'for their own sake', a phrase often appearing in the criticism of the time. For example, Thea Proctor, interviewed in 1922, spoke of 'a revival of drawing as a thing in itself, not just a means to an end.'²⁴

Figure drawing, an important activity in the training of artists this century, marks a point of divergence between the histories of painting and drawing in the twentieth century. The history of Australian painting has been seen as the development of a landscape tradition whereas in the history of drawing figurative treatments are more common. Art history, following the history of painting as the dominant art form, tended until recently, therefore, to omit the work of those artists for whom figurative drawing was a major art form.

Drawing was, however, considered an important basis for landscape painting. Hans Heysen, for example, produced preliminary drawings which he later worked up into paintings in the studio.²⁵

In the 1930's international modernism began drifting in to Australia from Europe and England. Drawing was apparently affected by this phenomenon in two ways. Some artists were influenced towards using drawing as a means of abstracting form, while others sought to treat drawing primarily as an expressive medium.²⁶ The teaching of Rah Fizelle, Grace Crowley and Frank Hinder in Sydney and the teaching of George Bell in Melbourne, in the thirties, of which the former drawing is typical, emphasized design and linear abstraction. The process of abstraction was worked through in drawing, an activity of importance in these institutions just as it was in the more traditional schools. Traditionalist critics however, such as J.S. Macdonald and Lionel Lindsay, sought to halt the rise of 'modernism', the weakness of which they felt originated in the 'disdain and flight from drawing.'²⁷

At the same time in the 1930's-40's, and in contrast to the non-political artistic climate of Sydney, Melbourne's Contemporary Art Society was divided by political and aesthetic differences, into two groups: the social realists and the expressionist-surrealist group. Both groups, however, failing to be seen as working in the mainstream of modernist art practice at the time, have until relatively recently, been largely omitted from written art history. Janet McKenzie notes that:

Until recently, figurative drawing was considered to have been in the 'wilderness', or an 'underground' or 'subsurface activity', and activity in exile from the ruling artistic concerns.²⁸

It was possibly for these groups that drawings were considered most important as autonomous art works. I think, here, particularly of Joy Hester, who used drawing as her most important expressive means. In her work, drawing is liberated from painting. Similarly independent of painting are the drawings of Sidney Nolan and Arthur Boyd. With the recent revival (late seventies-eighties) of interest in drawing there has been an ironic resurgence and re-appraisal of these older artists. Gott also notes the drawings of Diana Mogensen and Pam Hallandal as:

...[I]mportant testimony to the kind of 'underground' activity that persisted through Australian drawing's lean years, the eras of dominant conceptual, abstract and minimal art forms.²⁹

We can only wonder whether there have been other artists working primarily in a drawing medium who have not been picked up by the mainstream of written or exhibited art history.

The rise of the notion of spontaneity in art gained ground from the post war period until the 1960's and this also affected the relationship between painting and drawing. Painting was approached more directly, and correspondingly, the importance of preparatory studies declined. Rees³⁰ wrote in a 1940 article that the work of a modern artist, 'often emphasises drawing as an essential and visible part of the structure of the picture, and not merely a partly hidden foundation.' This tendency possibly encouraged the general decline, occurring in the next few years, in interest in drawing as an autonomous art form. Indeed by 1975 drawing classes in art schools across the country were gradually downgraded within the curriculum, sometimes even eradicated. Hierarchical prejudice (eg. favouring painting as valid art) and financial pressure, led to a reluctance, by galleries, to exhibit works on paper and collectors were wary. Public acceptance of drawing also suffered a decline.³¹

*There was a general feeling that the mainstream had moved on, that progressivist tendencies no longer incorporated pencils on paper.*³²

The present decade has seen a significant revival of drawing. Drawing shows and exhibitions of works on paper are now characteristic of the eighties. John Lethbridge's work seems to exemplify this shift in the status of drawing. Gott³³ notes that by 1976 Lethbridge became 'a self-confessed 'closet' drawer, reluctant to show his graphic activity in the exclusivist cerebral circles in which he found himself.' When he joined the staff of the Sydney College of Art in 1977, drawing had become an outmoded non-issue and was no longer part of the curriculum of the Sydney College of Art.

A variety of factors in the late seventies, early eighties tend to be pointed to as contributing to a reversal of this earlier move away from drawing: economic considerations, alternative aesthetic ideologies such as feminism, the changing import market for paper, a shift away from the mid-seventies conceptualism back to neo-expressionist and figurative artistic modes, a return to 'academic' life drawing in many of the art schools and the resurrection of 'craft' to a position 'alongside the 'modernist' godhead of idea.'³⁴

Jenny Watson³⁵ presents a hit list of events that she claims took their toll on Australian art prior to the late seventies. These were Formalism which she describes as a spiritually bereft American import, Conceptual art which was intellectually mind-bending and 'took the art within art arguments to the nth degree and failed', then Super-realism, historically inevitable following conceptualism, since it gave value for money and things to look at. Paper as an immediate support was set for a comeback, she suggests, with the re-emergence of imagery and awareness of social conditions such as feminism, provincialism, economic depression and the simple need to return to humanism and self-analysis.

Feminism, for example, encouraged a new receptivity to paper and thus drawing as an acceptable mode and medium for artists and was an inevitable response to the demise of the institutionalized male icons of abstract expressionism. The primacy of oil and canvas in, for example, abstract expressionism, was questioned as a distinctly male-orientated medium for mark-making. Examples of the move away from these modes of mark-making are, amongst others, Elizabeth Gower's paper constructs of the late seventies, Lesley Dumbrell's pastel drawings exhibited in 1979 and Davida Allen's self-exploratory drawings of the late seventies, early eighties.³⁶

It is claimed that an increased variety and availability of papers, from the late seventies, encouraged artists to experiment more widely with the medium, which in turn encouraged the import market. Diana Mogensen³⁷ confirms this when she states that it was very difficult to be an artist who worked only on paper until the late seventies.

As well, the return to a central importance of drawing has been encouraged by an apparent change of attitude of many art school teachers and students and a new 'post-modernist' restructuring of curricula. Peter Booth, for example, is quoted as saying:

*Drawing from life when you are young opens up reality rather than closing it off by encouraging you to use all that visual phenomena that flow through your brain... Let's take the analogy of a tree - if the root system is not sound then the tree falls down. There are just certain skills artists must have.*³⁸

After a decade in which drawing departments in art schools in Melbourne, dwindled and then folded, Pam Hallandal in the mid-seventies, helped initiate a return to looking at drawing as a mode of mark-making applicable to all styles and genres at the Prahran College of Advanced Education. By 1975, this College introduced Melbourne's first degree permitting students to specialise in drawing and in doing so it confirmed the discipline's equal status with painting and sculpture.³⁹

So it seems that a shift in mainstream interests has led to a changed appreciation of drawing. Schmied,⁴⁰ however, claims that finding reasons for drawing's recent revival, requires looking beyond a mere reaction to trends in related disciplines. The origins of the enhanced status of drawing are due rather to the dynamic force underlying this development. He points to an increased role of the viewer and a changed understanding of the artist's own task. The artist is seen more as a giver of stimulus or as the initiator of processes (or discourse), which mobilize our consciousness and our sensibilities as well as our intellect. To communicate such a conception, drawing could not be a more appropriate medium.

Current sociological analysis of art dealing, amongst other things, with the demystification of myths such as that mentioned earlier of the transcendental, ahistorical 'artist-as-genius' also serves to enhance the status of drawing, and that of the viewer/reader. For example, drawings when viewed as preliminary and/or source material alongside the culminating art work(s), can be viewed in a demystificatory role, breaking down the transcendent authority of the final work. They enable the viewer to grasp how the final art work has been constructed, not from a given, natural 'genius,' but through a process of steps. These 'draw' from numerous historical sources and events, a variety of learned skills and an amount of intellectual effort. **The Source**,⁴¹ a local (Hobart) exhibition in 1986 of source material (preliminary drawings and studies, sketches, doodles, photographs, found objects and images, earlier work, experiments, notes and souvenirs) alongside completed art work, demonstrated this point precisely. In another exhibition shown in Hobart in 1986, **Slouching Towards Bethlehem: An Exhibition of Preparatory and Informal Drawings**, Geoff Lowe writes:

*Drawing can, and at its best does show the hand and does not disguise it. Shows intent without purifying it. Drawing can show where things begin and end, where one genre falls into another and most importantly, how fragile meaning and representation can be.*⁴²

Lou Klepac⁴³ similarly notes that a drawing makes more obvious the subjective and personal elements which are the source of the artist's activity and which are later eliminated in a finished work. Whistler's⁴⁴ statement that 'a picture is finished when all traces of the means used to bring about the end has disappeared' harks back to Michelangelo's reluctance to reveal the steps, the stress and the stasis indicated by his preliminary drawings to his paintings, a reluctance in keeping with Renaissance thinking which sought to promote the idea of the artist as transcendental, ahistorical genius. On the contrary, such drawings can be seen, today, as helping to reveal the myth of this idea and act rather as a kind of internal documentation, as a supplemental discourse to the final art work, removing the distance between the producer and the viewer.

Although, no doubt, the dialogue between drawing as preliminary and as autonomous art work continues, there has, in recent years, been an expansion in the understanding of the function of drawing. Drawing has increasingly come to be seen as a way of operating a visual discourse in its own right. Rather than being seen as merely subservient to some other 'major' art work, it can be seen as a direct medium for developing imagery for a complex visual language. By its nature, being technically simple and most accessible to the realm of ideas, drawing has lent itself to the expression of the wide range of attitudes and ideas current in art practice. Paul Boston, for example, states that:

*Paper keeps up with the movement of your mind. You can use it as a way of clarifying what is just vaguely in focus. With painting you have to have such a resolved idea. Paper allows you to make major shifts, to be daring and exploratory.*⁴⁵

As a succinct and concluding summary of the advantages for the use of the drawing medium I refer to Wieland Schmied who states:

*...[I]t is pliable and flexible; it is suitable for giving even gentle impulses; it is reserved and sparing; it demands attention and promotes concentration; it is least bound with regard to its material; and it runs the smallest risk of becoming entertaining, opulent and monumental.*⁴⁶

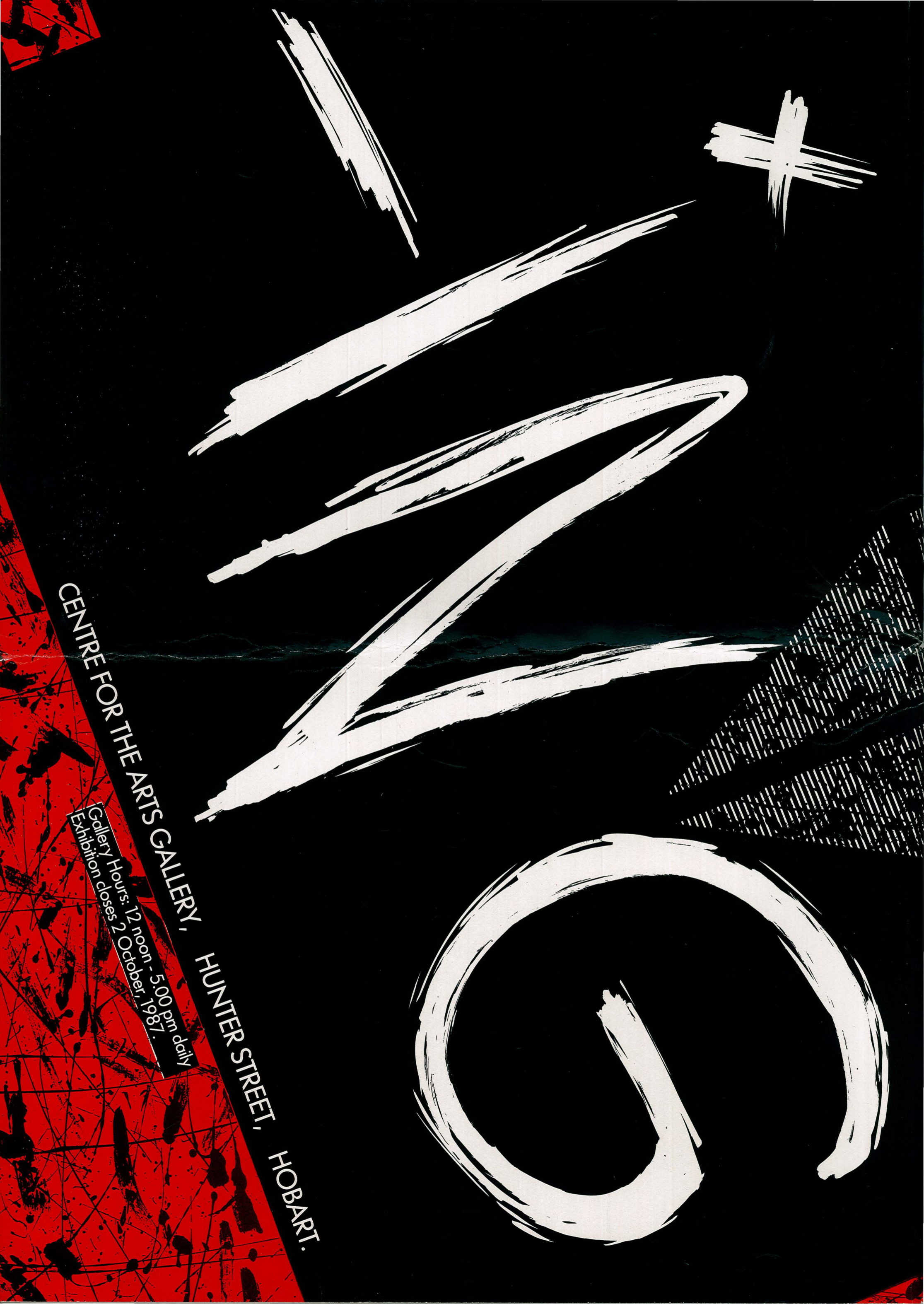
This exhibition by students of the Tasmanian School of Art is a convincing example of the new recognition of the depth and the breadth, as well as the potential and power of information that can be expressed through the drawing medium.

Rosalind Burgess, August, 1987.

Notes

- William Kelly, foreword in Janet McKenzie, **Drawing in Australia**, Melbourne, MacMillan, 1986, p.vi.
- Imre Pan, **Third International Exhibition of Drawing**, Darmstadt, 1970, cited by Wieland Schmied, in 'Recent European Drawing', **European Dialogue: Biennale of Sydney**, Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1979, n.p.
- Hans Albert Peters, **Drawing Now**, Baden-Baden, 1976, cited in Schmied, op cit.
- op cit., Schmied
- ibid.
- ibid.
- ibid.
- Una E. Johnson, **Twentieth-Century Drawings, Part 1: 1900-1940**, New York, Sharwood, 1964, p.14.
- Eisler, **C.A Treasury of Great Master Drawings**, New York, Harper and Row, 1975, p.2.
- ibid.
- Alison Carroll, **Leonardo, Michelangelo and the Century of Genius: Master Drawings from the British Museum**, Adelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia, 1980, p.6.
- op cit., Eisler, p.6-7
- op cit., Carroll, p.8.
- op cit., Eisler, p.5.
- op cit., Carroll, p.7.
- Elke M. Solomon, **American Drawings 1963-1973**, New York, Whitney Museum of Modern Art, 1973, p.5.
- ibid., p.6.
- op cit., Eisler, p.5.
- op cit., Schmied.
- Robert L. Herbert, **Seurat's Drawings**, London, Studio Vista, 1965, p.3.
- op cit., Schmied.
- Andrew Sayers, **Australian drawings in the Newcastle Region Art Gallery**, Newcastle, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, 1982, p.5.
- Lionel Lindsay, 'Drawing and Drawings in Australia', in **Art in Australia**, 2nd series, 1, February, 1922, p.46, in Sayers, ibid., p.5.
- Hans Heysen, 'Some Notes on Art', **Art in Australia**, 3rd series, 44, 1932, ibid., p.6.
- ibid.
- Lionel Lindsay, **Added Art**, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1942, p.36 in Bridget Whitelaw, **Australian Drawings of the Thirties and Forties**, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, 1980, p.7.
- Janet McKenzie, **Drawing in Australia**, Melbourne, MacMillan, 1986, p.vi.
- Ted Gott, **Backlash: The Australian Drawing Revival 1976-86**, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, 1986, p.71
- Lloyd Rees, 'What is good drawing', **Art in Australia**, 3rd series, 78, February, 1940, p.27, in Sayers, op cit., p.7.
- op cit., Gott, p.7,69.
- ibid., p.7.
- ibid., p.8.
- ibid., p.7.
- Jenny Watson, 'Urgent Images', **Art and Text**, 14, Winter, 1985, p.72.
- op cit., Gott, p.21.
- Interview with Diana Mogensen, 1986, ibid., p.17.
- Interview with Peter Booth, 1986, ibid., p.33.
- ibid., p.69.
- op cit., Schmied.
- Elizabeth Gower, **The Source**, Hobart, University of Tasmania 1986.
- Geoff Lowe, **Slouching Towards Bethlehem: An Exhibition of Preparatory and Informal Drawings**, Melbourne, Gertrude Street Artists Spaces, 1986.
- Lou Klepac, **Contemporary Drawing**, Perth, University of Western Australia Press and The Western Australian Art Gallery, 1977, p.7.
- James McNeill Whistler, **The Gentle Art of Making Enemies**, Heineman, 1890, p.115, ibid., p.8.
- ibid., p.74.
- op cit., Schmied





CENTRE FOR THE ARTS GALLERY,
HUNTER STREET,
HOBART.

Gallery Hours: 12 noon - 5.00 pm daily
Exhibition closes 2 October, 1987.