

# Matter and Ghost

Master of Arts by Project  
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Portfolio of Design and Social Context  
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# Matter and Ghost

An exploration of the idea of the sacred in ordinary things



# Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Honor Bradbeer

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Proposal









# Summary

The focus of this project will be to explore notions of the sacred through the study of functional, unadorned forms and the processes by which I translate them into drawn images. My objective is to observe and represent what I see as visually essential to ordinary objects such as bowl, egg and rag. My intention is to engage aspects of archetypal simplicity, providing a visual starting-point for contemplation in the viewer.





# Brief Description

My art practice draws on forms from the manifest world to symbolise inchoate aspects of liminal consciousness, that is – areas of the imagination that are just beyond the reach of rational comprehension, but are nonetheless compelling and meaningful. The apprehension of the sacred is one of these liminal territories that are difficult to define verbally, but possible to approach through art. I wish to explore the apprehension of the sacred beyond its usual association with defined religious orientations.

Central to this project is the concept of archetype, or original matrix, in the psychological make-up of humanity. I regard the experience of the sacred as belonging to this primal, transpersonal aspect of our imagining.

My choice of subject matter will be limited, for this project, to forms which have evolved, or are built, according to their environment or functional purpose, and which are not adorned by ornamentation or artifice that is extraneous to their

functionality. In other words, forms that approximate the generic, without the distraction of culturally encoded styling.

Detached from specific liturgical contexts, the notion of 'sacredness' is not necessarily anchored by traditional icons. The logic behind the austerity of my 'generic' subject matter is to make a visual connection to the otherwise formless concept of a primal imprint of human consciousness, to anchor my exploration of the sacred. Such subject matter could include common household objects, such as bowl, cup, rag; and organic, inanimate forms, such as plants and eggs.

My objective is to observe and record what I see as visually essential to the recognition of familiar objects, and to become attuned to the intrinsic structure of such forms as bowl, cup, rag and leaf. This will benefit from the refinement of my drawing method to approach realist figuration. However, I also intend to afford more presence to the abstract elements arising from the drawing process. The

pursuit of intangible concepts through tangible forms presents an invitation to emphasise this binary relationship through the integration of abstract and realist forms of representation.

I aim to discover a position between abstraction and figuration that can communicate what I see as elemental to the subject of each drawing, concentrating the arena for contemplation within the bounds of the form depicted. By subduing contextual narrative in this way, I intend to amplify the tiny events of light, line and texture within the drawn form.

I work primarily with ink on heavyweight paper, using a process of erasure to reclaim passages of light from ink-stained surfaces. The nature of this method is alternately abrasive and caressing, destructive and reparatory, as the paper is by turns blackened, scratched, rubbed, repainted, soaked, washed and burnished. These qualities echo stages of the conceptual research, and leave a visible history of process. The physical enactment of delving for buried 'light' provides a useful metaphor to embody the elusive, metaphysical search for the sacred.

Technical challenges may involve experimentation with the use of colour, and with different applications of ink; and finding effective spaces and systems for installation of the work.

The outcome will be a series of ink drawings that give visual presence to notions of the archetypal sacred in human imagining through the considered representation of unadorned forms.



# Rationale

In 1998, the National Gallery of Victoria presented *Beyond Belief – Modern Art and the Religious Imagination*<sup>1</sup>, curated by Rosemary Crumlin. The exhibition brought together works by over seventy international artists, all dealing with issues of spirituality. Although many of these works are explicitly religious, or make use of familiar religious narrative and symbols, many others, such as Mark Rothko, Lee Krasner, Francis Bacon and Daniel Goldstein, demonstrate the breadth of possible forms outside religious narrative that can be vessels for the numinous aspects of our imagining.

My project centres on trying to convey the conceptually elusive, but vividly apprehended experience of sacrality through drawings of ordinary things.

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<sup>1</sup> Crumlin, R., (ed) *Beyond Belief: modern art and the religious imagination (catalogue)*, NGV, Melbourne, 1998

It is important to acknowledge that various notions of the sacred have been the focus of artists and art movements worldwide, throughout history. One ancient example is the totemic embodiment of spirits in the plants and animals of native Australian art.

However, the artistic pursuit of sacrality in *detachment* from specific religious contexts is most common to the multifarious artistic manifestations of spiritual disorientation in the modern, particularly Western, consciousness.

It is a relevant and important area of research at a time when increasing globalisation and mutual cultural awareness is challenging existing cultural metaphors and belief systems.

The works of Andrew Wyeth frequently engage the use of everyday

forms for the purpose of referencing or anchoring nebulous areas of consciousness, as do the urban interiors painted by Chinese-born Melbourne artist, Zai Kuang. Both artists make effective use of objective realism in their pursuit.

In a different genre, 1999 film *American Beauty* (Mendes/Ball) also raises the possibility of apprehending the sacred in ordinariness. This is most explicitly described when a young man is moved to tears by a plastic bag animated by the wind.

In contrast, Andy Warhol's images of Campbell's soup tins and Brillo boxes make a similar leap between the everyday and the iconic. However, his project is to deliberately satirise the notion of the sacred, binding it to consumer culture and mass-production so that it loses currency.

My interest in locating what is elemental to forms through abstraction will benefit from the study of Western artists who have pursued a similar

objective, such as Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso (especially in their Cubist period), Giorgio Morandi and Alberto Giacometti. I will also research Eastern – particularly Chinese – ink/brush painting traditions, which reference notions of the sacred through the use of symbolic abbreviations of familiar forms. Artists such as Shih-T'ao (Chinese, 17<sup>th</sup> Century) and contemporary Korean artist Song Changae, amongst many others, exemplify this tradition.



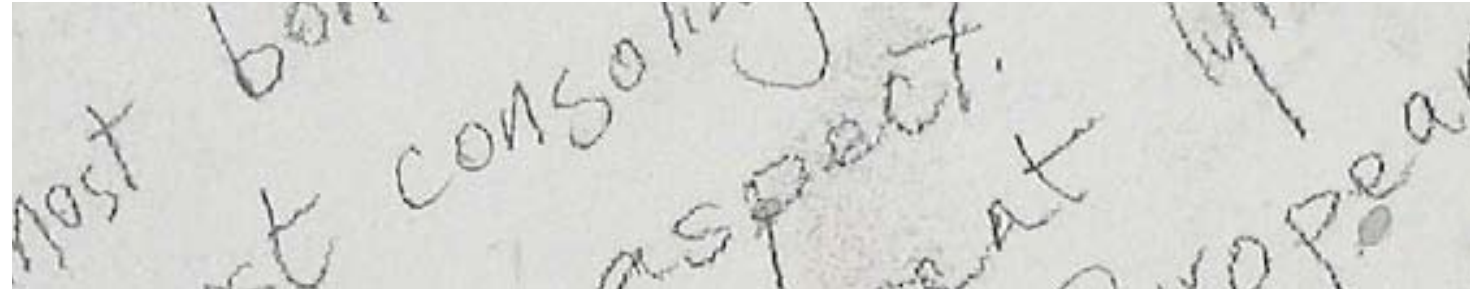


# Research Questions

1. In what ways can I identify, and give visual presence to, ideas of sacredness in human imagining through the representation of unadorned forms?
2. In what ways can I employ aspects of realism and abstraction to communicate the generic, elemental nature of certain objects through ink drawings?
3. What visual elements activate a sense of the sacred in our apprehension of ordinary things, and how can these elements be translated into drawn images?



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Page	Image (All works are ink on paper)	Page	Image	Page	Image
2 – 3	<i>Urchin</i> , detail	72 – 73	<i>Blackened</i> , 34 × 68cm, 2006	120 – 121	<i>Garments II</i> , 35 × 70cm, 2007
12 – 13	Studio wall and floor (photograph)		<i>Folded</i> , 34 × 69cm, 2006		<i>Boots</i> , 35 × 70cm, 2007
28 – 29	Detail, pile of drawings, dimensions variable	74 – 75	<i>Trunk</i> , 65 × 80cm, 2005		<i>Brushes</i> , 35 × 70cm, 2007
30 – 31	<i>Head studies</i> , various dimensions as specified, 2005		<i>Shoes</i> , 40 × 58cm, 2006		<i>Glass Bell</i> , 35 × 70cm, 2007
32 – 33	Selection of sketches from dancers, dimensions variable, 2006	76 – 77	<i>Cloth</i> , 34 × 69cm, 2006	122 – 123	<i>Nail Dish</i> , 35 × 70cm, 2007
34 – 35	<i>Nude Diptych</i> , 32 × 38cm, 2005		<i>Bowl</i> , 34 × 69cm, 2006		<i>Jar and String</i> , 35 × 70cm, 2007
	<i>Figure Sketches</i> , various dimensions as specified, 2005	78 – 79	<i>Coat and Cardigan</i> , approx 150 × 100cm, 2006	124 – 125	<i>Red, Blue</i> , 104 × 112cm, 2007
36 – 37	<i>Rain Figures</i> , each 30 × 18cm, 2005	80 – 81	<i>Paper Plane I</i> , 104 × 66cm, 2006		<i>Tidy</i> , 104 × 112cm, 2007
38 – 39	<i>Four Bowls</i> , each 40 × 30cm, 2005		<i>Paper Plane II</i> , 104 × 108cm, 2006	126 – 127	<i>Treasures</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007
40 – 41	<i>Apple</i> , 30 × 35cm, 2006	82 – 83	<i>2006 Pieta</i> , 104 × 80cm, 2006	128 – 129	<i>Clips, Cloth</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007
	<i>Rag I</i> , 35 × 65cm, 2006		<i>Dove</i> , 35 × 29cm, 2005		<i>Knot</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007
42 – 43	<i>Rag II</i> , 35 × 69cm, 2006	84 – 85	<i>Garden II</i> , 34 × 65cm, 2006	130 – 131	<i>Urchin II</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007
	<i>Bowl</i> , 35 × 72cm, 2006		<i>Garden I</i> , 34 × 69cm, 2006	132 – 133	<i>Bowl, Cloth</i> , 104 × 154cm, 2007
44 – 45	<i>Rag III</i> , 35 × 69cm, 2006		<i>Immersion</i> , 104 × 208cm, 2006		<i>Shoes II</i> , 104 × 140
	<i>Rag Pile</i> , 35 × 65cm, 2006	86 – 87	<i>Immersion</i> , detail	134 – 135	<i>Shoes</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007
46 – 47	<i>Kate's Urchin</i> , 35 × 55cm, 2007	90 – 91	<i>Strawberry Hulls</i> , detail		
	<i>Urchin, Stones</i> , 104 × 190cm, 2007	92 – 93	Stages of process, <i>Knot</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007		
48 – 49	<i>Large Cloth</i> , 104 × 190cm, 2007	94 – 95	Stages of process, <i>Duck Eggs II</i> , 25 × 32cm, 2007		
	<i>Hammer</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007	96 – 97	Stages of process, <i>Strawberry Hulls</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007		
	<i>Stud</i> , 104 × 98cm, 2007	100 – 105	Installation photographs from exhibition: <i>The New Breed II</i>		
52 – 61	Selected photographs of studio interior:	108 – 109	<i>Shoes II</i> , detail		
64 – 65	Exhibition Window (photograph)	110 – 111	<i>Pitcher, Cloth</i> , 104 × 112cm, 2007		
66 – 67	<i>Paper Boat</i> , 25 × 30cm, 2006		<i>Brushes II</i> , 104 × 86cm, 2007		
	<i>Folded Rag</i> , 25 × 32cm, 2006	112 – 113	<i>Urchin</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007		
	<i>Paper Bag</i> , 25 × 30cm, 2006	114 – 115	<i>Studio Essentials</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007		
68 – 69	<i>Duck Eggs</i> , 25 × 30cm, 2006		<i>Strawberry Hulls</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007		
	<i>Nestled I</i> , 25 × 30cm, 2006	116 – 117	<i>Garments</i> , 104 × 96cm, 2007		
	<i>Nestled II</i> , 25 × 30cm, 2006	118 – 119	<i>Studio Floor</i> , 35 × 70cm, 2007		
70 – 71	<i>Folded I</i> , 34 × 68cm, 2006		<i>Bike Bottle</i> , 35 × 70cm, 2007		
	<i>String and Bottle</i> , 34 × 69cm, 2006				

# List of Images

In Gestation







Three head studies, ink on paper, each 75 x 35cm, 2005



Two head studies: ink on paper, dimensions variable, 2005



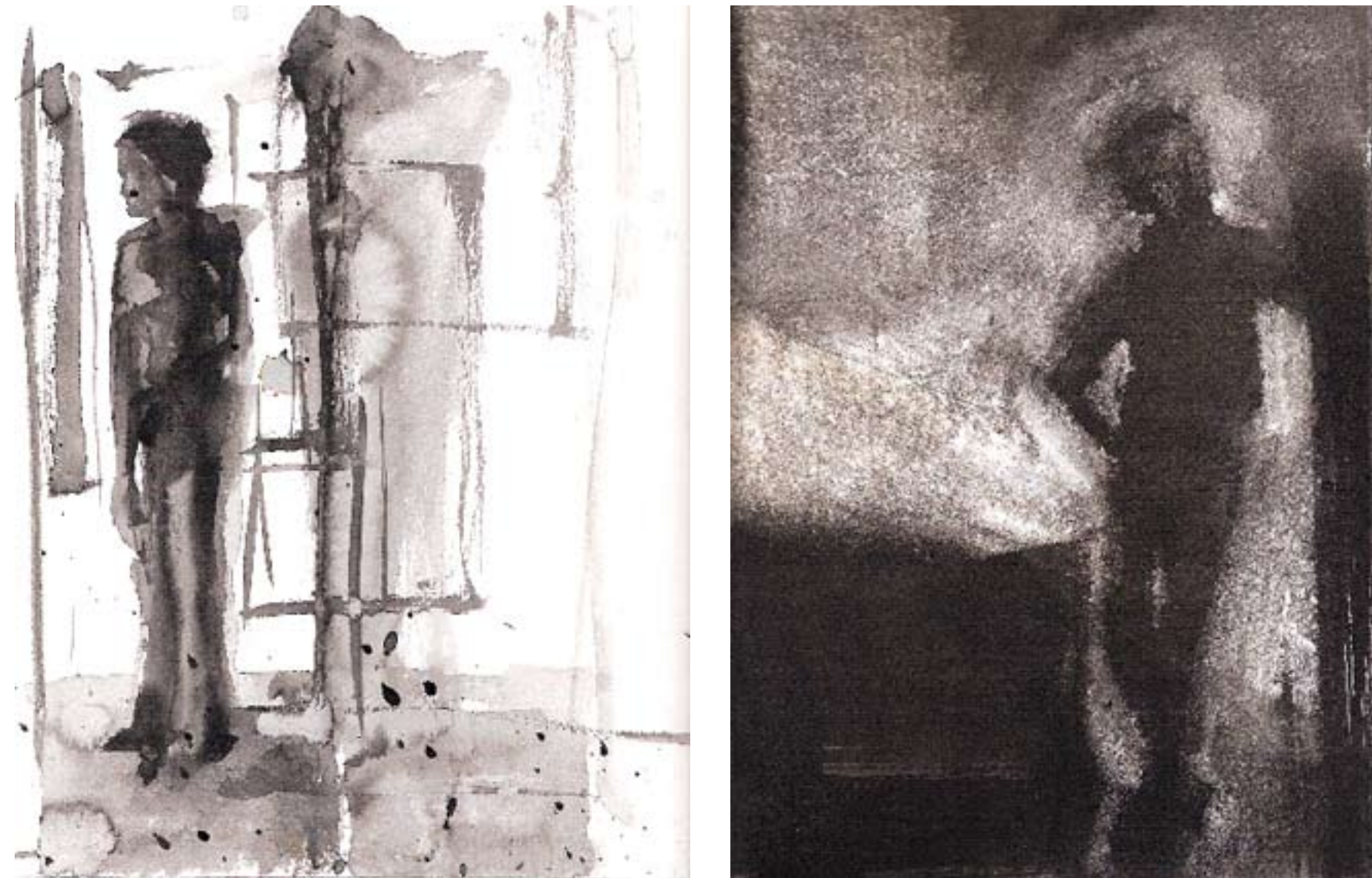


*Selection of sketches from dancers. ink on paper, dimensions variable, 2006*





*Nude diptych, ink on paper, 32 x 38cm, 2005*



*Figure sketches, ink on paper, left: 25 x 27cm, 2005, right: 33 x 22cm, 2005*





### A Note on the Figure Drawings:

My initial intention was to include the human figure amongst the "ordinary" subjects of my drawings, treating it as a form of no greater or lesser consequence than a paint brush, a folded shirt or a sea-urchin.

In past projects, the human subject has been integral to my inquiry. However, with the opening of my 2006 exhibition, *The Dust You Seldom See*, which contained object, figure and landscape drawings, it became apparent that a natural and immediate identification with the human form, for myself and for viewers, had the tendency to derail the central emphasis of this particular project, and engage us instead with narratives and associations quite at odds with the experience of "*luminous silent stasis*" which had become pivotal to the project.

Although I remain interested in representing the human form in such a way that it does not induce a clamouring plethora of mental associations, such a challenge presents its own discrete set of concerns, and would be better attempted in a separate project.

With this realisation, I turned my full focus upon inanimate objects, and abandoned my concern with the human figure.

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<sup>1</sup> James Joyce, cited in Campbell, J, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, p.131

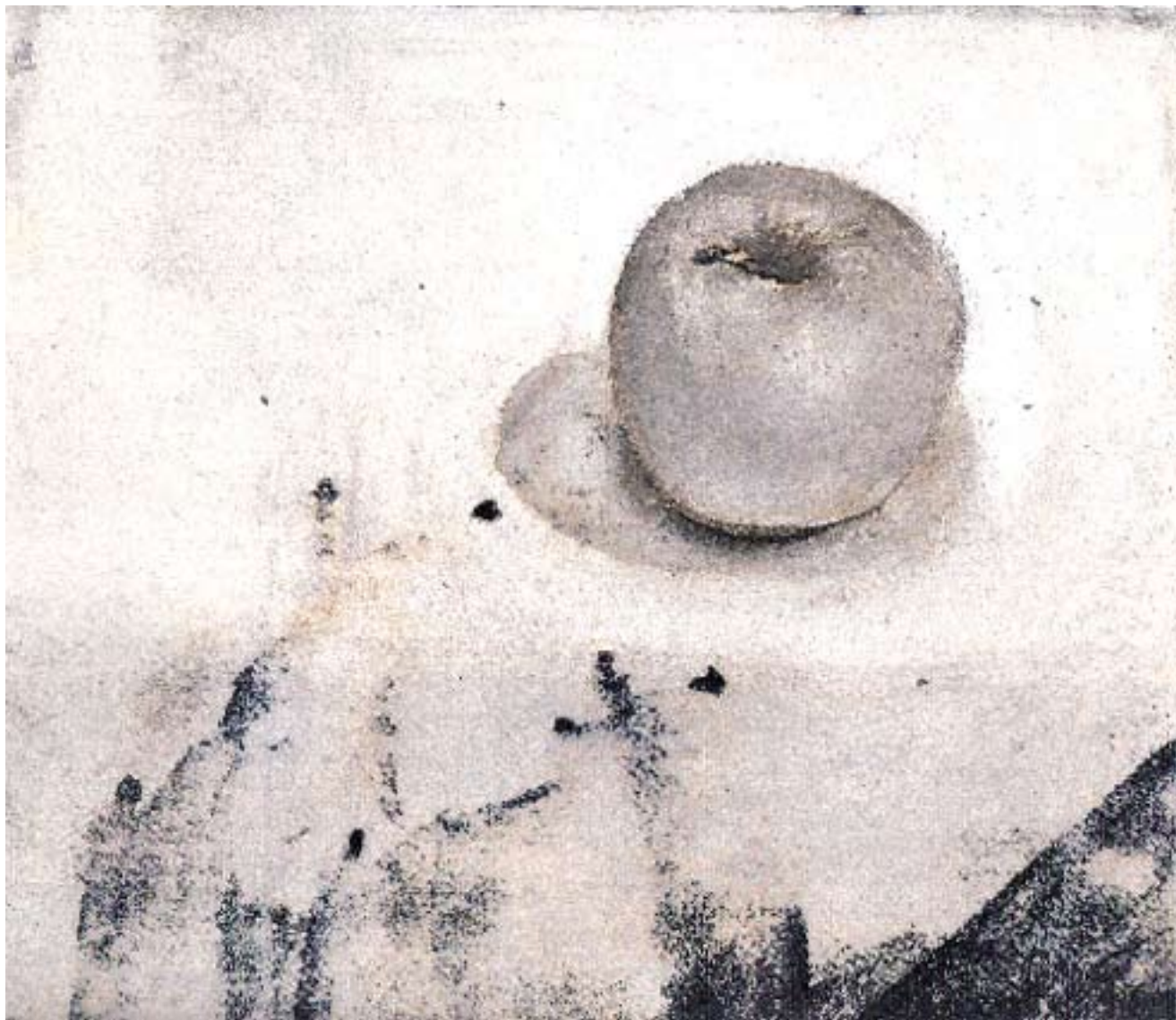






*Four bowls, ink on paper, each 40 x 30cm, 2005*





*Apple, ink on paper, 30 x 35 cm, 2006*



*Rag I, ink on paper, 35 x 65cm, 2006*





*Rag II, ink on paper, 35 x 69cm, 2006*



*Bowl, ink on paper, 35 x 72cm, 2006*



*Rag III, ink on paper, 35 x 69cm, 2006*



*Rag Pile, ink on paper, 35 x 65cm, 2006*





### Colour and Scale

After my exhibition *The Dust You Seldom See*, I began to use coloured ink in addition to the black ink I had been using almost exclusively.

I kept the palette minimal, in order not to overwhelm the simple visual communication of forms. I introduced only primary red and blue, which, along with black, could be mixed to produce a varied but limited range of colours.

At the same time, I began to increase the scale of the drawings to accommodate the full gesture of my arm and to reflect, in my mark-making, the movement of my whole body. This enabled a closer conceptual connection between myself and the objects with which I was engaged. An almost human scale emphasised the analogy between the nature of the still object and the nature of the viewer.

Both the change in scale and the addition of colour demanded a greater physical effort. The act of erasure was more difficult and less precise. The materiality of the paper surface became a stronger visual component, as abrasions, torn patches, and textural variations were more visible and frequent. This activated a change in my approach to understanding the objects themselves: the changes in my method did not lend themselves to meticulous realism, and I was obliged to approach each object at a more fundamental level; as a formal mass incorporating an interior as well as a surface, and surfaces apart from that which I could see. I began to use line to acknowledge structures and masses invisible to the eye: concealed, imagined, *felt*.

In this way, I began to translate into drawing, not only the appearance of the object, but the way it inhabited its physical space and its place in my consciousness.



Top: Detail from *Urchin, Stones*

Bottom: *Kate's Urchin*, ink on paper, 35 x 55cm, 2007

Opposite: *Urchin, Stones*, ink on paper, 104 x 145cm, 2007





*Large Cloth, ink on paper, 104 x 190cm, 2007*

“In its own space, the object or composition is set apart as a thing of beauty in its own nature, which [can be] experienced as akin to that of the witness.”

– Joseph Campbell<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, J., *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, p.132



*Top: Hammer, ink on paper, 104 x 96cm, 2007*  
*Bottom: Stud, ink on paper, 104 x 98cm, 2007*

Studio









### The Studio and its Contents

My studio provided parameters by which I could delimit the broad themes of sacrality and ordinariness for this project.

Acting not only as location and materials for making drawings, but also as the core subject matter for my inquiry, the space and its contents became pivotal to my research.







Studio interior. Clockwise from top left: brushes and work in progress; rolls of drawings; Urchin II in progress; more rolls

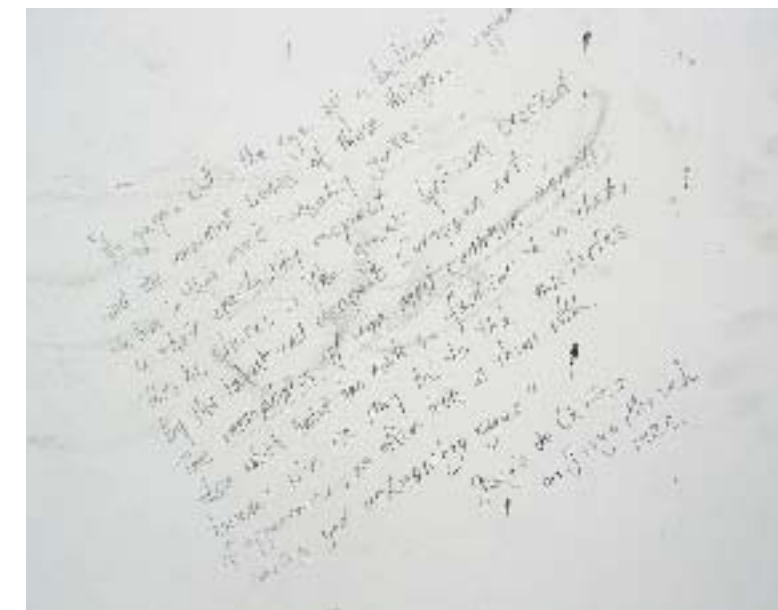




“He gazes with the eye of a believer, and the innermost bones of these things... appear to him in their most consoling guise: in their everlasting aspect. Thus he shares in the great lyricism created by the latest and deepest European art: The metaphysics of the most common objects; those which habit has made so familiar to us that, however wise we may be to the mysteries of appearance, we often look at them with seeing yet unknowing eyes.”

– Giorgio de Chirico on Giorgio Morandi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Klepac, L., et al, *Giorgio Morandi*, p.1



Studio walls. Clockwise from top left: completed drawings on wall; De Chirico on Morandi; works in progress; drawing wall. Opposite: Coat and Cardigan on studio wall





Studio interior.  
Above and right: studio paraphernalia and materials  
Opposite: sketches and experiments



# Part One

The Dust You Seldom See

Solo exhibition at Hogan Gallery, Collingwood, 2006



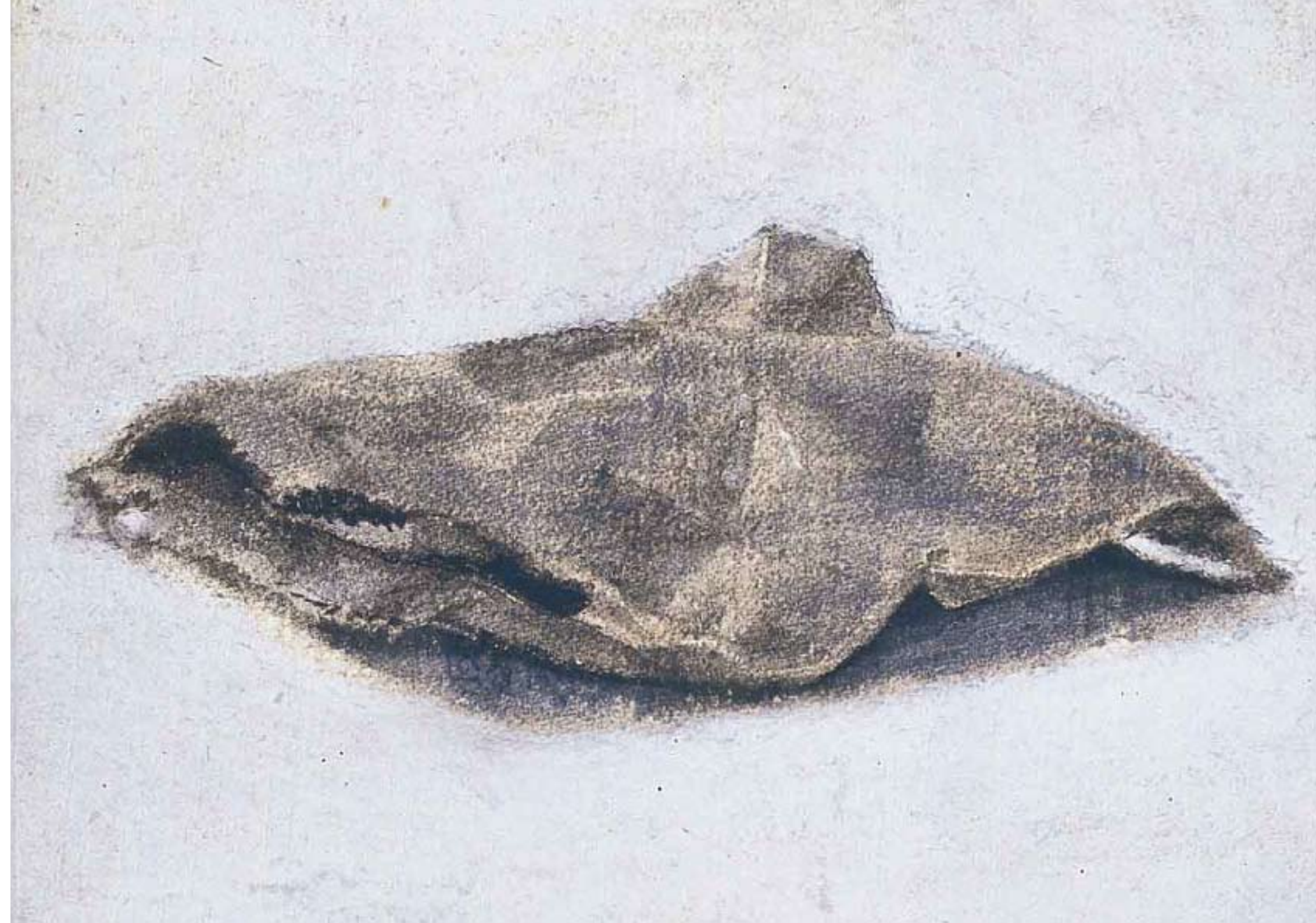


the dust you  
seldom see

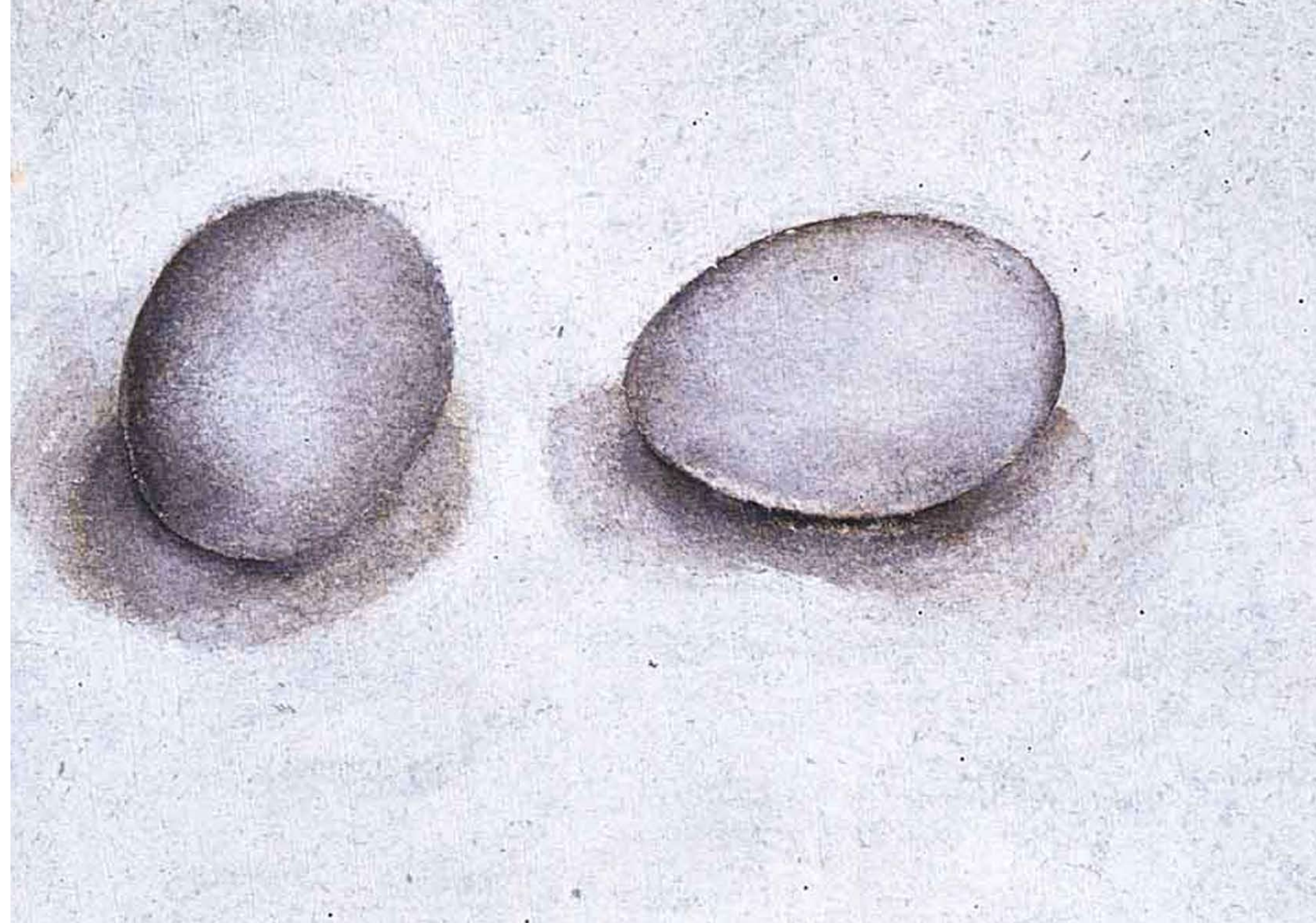
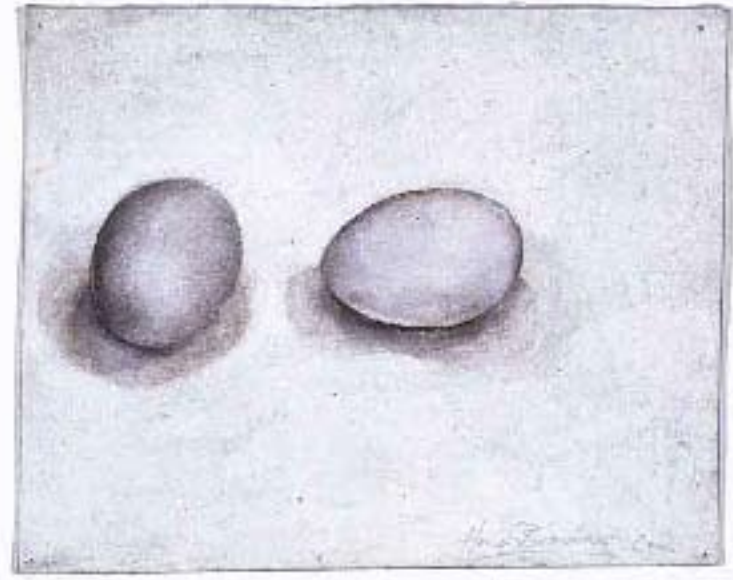




Top: Paper Boat; ink on paper, 25 x 30cm, 2006  
Above, left: Folded Rag, ink on paper, 25 x 32cm, 2006  
Above, right: Paper bag, ink on paper, 25 x 32cm, 2006  
Opposite: Detail, Paper Bag







Top: Duck Eggs, ink on paper, 25 x 30cm, 2006  
Above, left: Nestled I, ink on paper, 25 x 32cm, 2006  
Above, right: Nestled II, ink on paper, 25 x 32cm, 2006  
Opposite: Detail, Nestled II





Top: *Folded I*, ink on paper, 34 x 68cm, 2006  
Bottom: *String and Bottle*, ink on paper, 34 x 69cm, 2006  
Opposite: *Detail, String and Bottle*







Top: *Blackened*, ink on paper, 34 x 68cm, 2006  
Bottom: *Folded II*, ink on paper, 34 x 69cm, 2006  
Opposite: *Detail, Folded II*







Top: Trunk, ink on paper, 65 x 80cm, 2005  
Bottom: Shoes, ink on paper, 40 x 58cm, 2006  
Opposite: Detail, Trunk







Top: Cloth, ink on paper, 34 x 69cm, 2006



Bottom: Bowl, ink on paper, 34 x 69cm, 2006

Opposite: Detail, Cloth







Above: *Coat and Cardigan*, ink on paper, approx 150 x 100cm, 2006  
Opposite: *Detail, Coat and Cardigan*







Left: *Paper Plane I*, ink on paper, 104 x 66cm, 2006  
Opposite: *Paper Plane II*, ink on paper, 104 x 108cm, 2006







Left: 2006 Pietà, ink on paper, 104 x 80cm, 2006  
Opposite: Dove, ink on paper, 35 x 29cm, 2005







Top: *Garden II*, ink on paper, 34 x 65cm, 2006  
Bottom: *Garden I*, ink on paper, 34 x 69cm, 2006  
Opposite: *Immersion*, Ink on Paper, 104 x 208, 2006  
Overleaf: *Detail, Immersion*









# In Progress

“By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else, yet it continues to remain itself, for it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu. A sacred stone remains a stone; apparently... nothing distinguishes it from all other stones. But for those to whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transformed into a supernatural reality.”

— Mircea Eliade









*Stages of Process*  
*Knot, ink on paper, 104 x 96cm,*  
*2007*





*Stages of process  
Duck Eggs II, ink on paper, 25 x 32cm,  
2007*





Stages of process:  
Strawberry Hulls  
ink on paper, 104 x 96cm,  
2007



# In Situ

Installation photographs from *The New Breed II*, a group exhibition held at Dickerson Gallery, Richmond, in February 2008.

Exhibited: *Strawberry Hulls*, *Studio Essentials*, *Shoes*, *Garments*, *Brushes II* and *Urchin* in the main gallery, and *Nail Dish*, *Glass Bell*, *Studio Floor*, *Jar and String*, *Garments II* and *Brushes* in The Paper Room (not pictured).



***THE NEW BREED II***











# Part Two

Matter and Ghost

Final collection for Masters exhibition,  
School of Art Gallery, RMIT

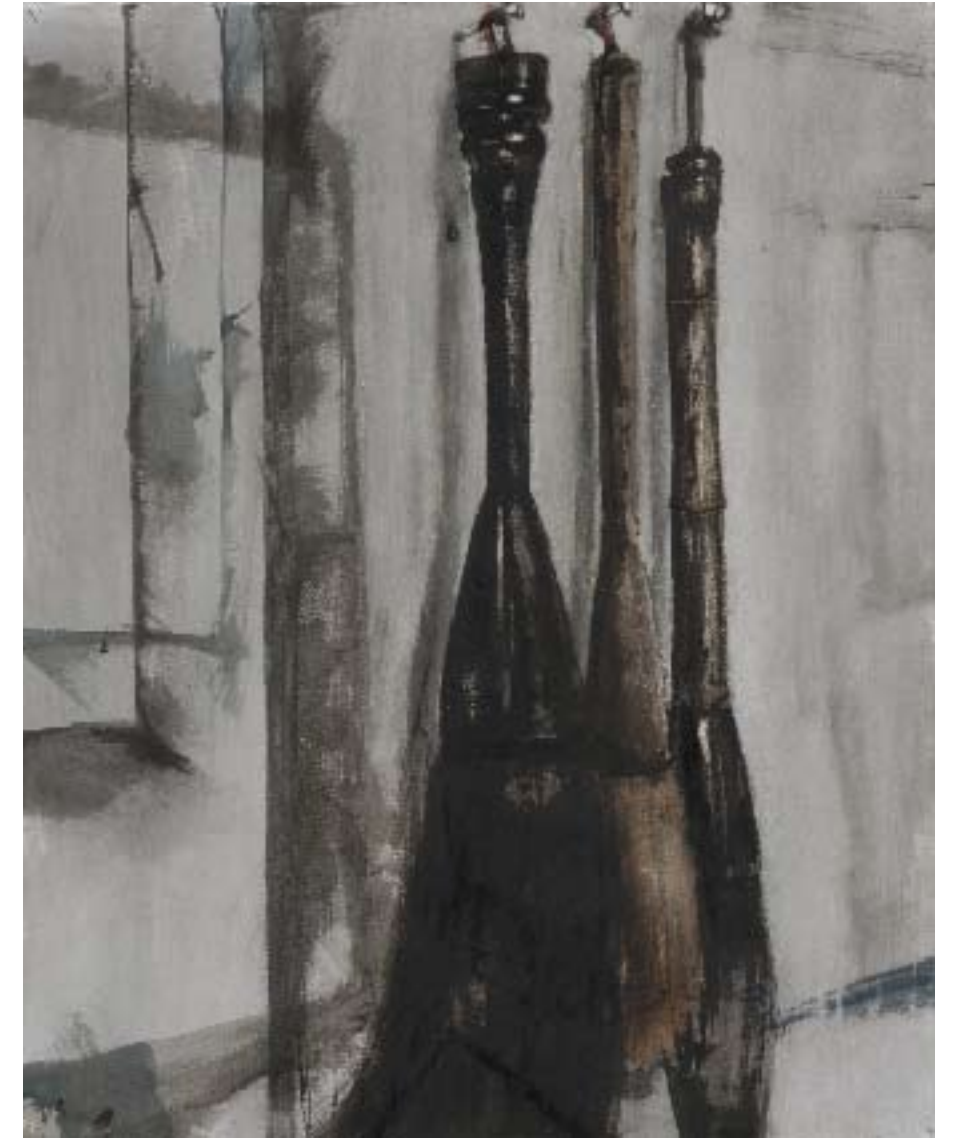








*Pitcher, Cloth, ink on paper, 104 x 112cm, 2007*



*Brushes II, ink on paper, 104 x 86cm, 2007*





Above: *Urchin*, ink on paper, 104 x 96cm, 2007  
Opposite: *Detail, Urchin*







*Studio Essentials, ink on paper, 104 x 96cm, 2007*



*Strawberry Hulls, ink on paper, 104 x 96cm, 2007*





Above: *Garments*, ink on paper, 104 x 96cm, 2007  
Opposite: *Detail, Garments*







Top: Studio Floor, ink on paper, 35 x 70cm, 2007  
Bottom: Bike Bottle, ink on paper, 35 x 70cm, 2007  
Opposite: Detail, Studio Floor





Top: *Garments II*, ink on paper, 35 x 70cm, 2007  
Bottom: *Boots*, ink on paper, 35 x 70cm, 2007



Top: *Brushes*, ink on paper, 35 x 70cm, 2006  
Bottom: *Glass Bell*, ink on paper, 35 x 70cm, 2007







Top: Nail Dish, ink on paper, 35 x 70cm, 2006  
Bottom: Jar and String, ink on paper, 35 x 70cm, 2006  
Opposite: Detail, Nail Dish







*Red, Blue, ink on paper, 104 x 112cm, 2007*



*Tidy, ink on paper, 104 x 112cm, 2007*





Above: *Treasures*, ink on paper, 104 x 96cm, 2007  
Opposite: *Detail, Treasures*





*Clips, Cloth, ink on paper, 104 x 96cm, 2007*



*Knot, ink on paper, 104 x 96cm, 2007*





Above: *Urchin II*, ink on paper, 104 x 96cm, 2007  
Opposite: Detail, *Urchin II*







*Bowl, Cloth, ink on paper, 104 x 154cm, 2007*



*Shoes II, ink on paper, 104 x 140cm, 2007*





Above: Shoes, ink on paper, 104 x 96cm, 2007  
Opposite: Detail, Shoes







# Curriculum Vitae

## Education

2004 – 08	M.A. (Fine Art) by research RMIT University
2003	B.A. (Fine Art) (Honours) RMIT Completed with High Distinctions
2000 – 02	B.A. (Fine Art) RMIT. Completed with High Distinctions
2001	Intensive Oriental Painting Course, SangMyung University, Seoul.
1999	Short Course in Drawing and Painting, L'Accademia Italiana, Florence.
1988 – 98	Chinese Brush Painting and Calligraphy, Mangala Studios, Melbourne

## Relevant Employment

2008	Life Drawing Instructor, RMIT Fashion Design dept. Drawing Instructor, LaTrobe College of Art and Design, Melbourne. Drawing Instructor, Summer Intensive Drawing Course, RMIT
2007	Drawing instructor, Summer Intensive Drawing Course, RMIT
2006	Drawing Instructor, Summer Intensive Drawing Course, RMIT
2005	Second Year Life Drawing Instructor, Drawing Dept., RMIT
2002	English-speaking representative for Keumsan Gallery (Seoul) at the Melbourne Contemporary Art Fair

## Awards and Prizes

2003	Winner, Smorgon Contemporary Art Prize Finalist, Robert Jacks Drawing Prize
2001	Exchange scholarship to SangMyung University, Seoul

## Solo Exhibitions

2006	The Dust You Seldom See. Hogan Gallery, Collingwood, Melbourne
2002	Draw Us Near Moor Street Art Gallery, Fitzroy, Melbourne
2001	How The Light Gets In Moor Street Art Gallery, Fitzroy, Melbourne
1997	Seventeen Prints and Pastels, Kensington Gallery, Melbourne

## Group Exhibitions

2008	New Breed II, Dickerson Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne
2006	Omnium Gatherum, Dante's Upstairs Gallery, Fitzroy, Melbourne
2002	Four Point Perspectives, Cattle Depot Artist Commune, Hong Kong Robert Jacks Drawing Prize Exhibition, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo Gaze and Graze, RMIT Drawing Dept., Melbourne Smorgon Contemporary Art, Williamstown Festival, Melbourne
2003	End of Year Salon Show, Moor Street Art Gallery, Fitzroy, Melbourne Surface, Span Galleries, Melbourne Anatomy of Drawing, Synergy Gallery, Northcote, Melbourne Gaze and Graze, RMIT Drawing Dept, Melbourne
2001	End of Year Salon Show, Moor Street Art Gallery, Fitzroy, Melbourne
2000	Wimbledon Exchange Exhibition, Wimbledon School of Art, UK

## Commissions

2000 – 08	Twenty-five portrait commissions for private collections in Australia and the USA.
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## Publications

2004	Soul Cry, Call Song, Poetry Paul Mayfield, Artwork Honor Bradbeer
2003	Four Point Perspectives, Catalogue published by Artist Commune, Hong Kong
2002	Surface, Exhibition catalogue published by RMIT Drawing graduates



