A Fine Line—
Drawings from the Collection
18 June—2 October 2016

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Images—
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Cover—Elsie Struss, Head Study c.1929-33, pencil on paper, 28 x 24cm, donated from the estate of the artist, 1976
1—Elsie Struss, Untitled c.1929-33, charcoal on paper, 110 x 89cm, donated from the estate of Wemyss Struss, 2016
2—Arthur Read, Portrait of Elsie Struss executed, pencil on paper, 39 x 22cm, donated from the estate of Wemyss Struss, 2011
3—Ray Crooke, Girls on the Verandah, 1970, crayon on paper, 38 x 30cm, donated from the estate of Patricia Marie White, 2013
4—Dave Higgott, Moon Along the Edge, 1981, pencil on paper, 37 x 42cm, donated from the estate of the artist, 2014
5—Jan Senbergs, Portrait of Elsie Struss, 1970, charcoal on paper, 76 x 117cm, donated by Georges Australia Ltd from the Georges Art Prize, 1970
6—John Pratt, Swimmer, 1985, ink and chalk on paper, 48 x 40cm, donated from the estate of Patricia Marie White, 2013
7—Jennifer Wray, Drawing 1994-95, pastel and charcoal on paper, 76 x 51cm, purchased 1994
8—Ray Crooke, Through the Forest, 1970, charcoal and pastel on paper, 27 x 37cm, purchased 1970
9—Arthur Markham, Banksia serrata II, 1988, pencil on paper, 54 x 36cm, purchased, 1988
10—Kevin Lincoln, Singing Off—Gippsland 1995, watercolour and charcoal on paper, 3 panels, each 38.5 x 140cm, donated by the artist, 1995
11—Euan Heng, Through the Forest, Through the Trees, 1970, charcoal on paper, 76.5 x 51cm, purchased 1970
12—John Wolseley, Locust II, 1978, watercolour and pencil on paper, 27 x 37cm, purchased 1978
13—Owen Piggott, Moon Along the Edge, 1983, pencil on paper, 37.5 x 6.7cm, purchased 1983
14—John Leslie OBE, Gallery Patron

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Recalled in interview: an individual style. As artist Lesley Dumbrell was required before one could contemplate understanding of perspective and draftsmanship the next level of creative endeavour. An essential through direct life drawing or from the study of artists were taught to study the human form, either publicly, almost as a source of shame. For centuries something to be kept in the studio and not spoken of acceptable for public consumption. It was, instead, always been regarded as exhibition worthy in itself, or is beyond question and has almost always formed motives and effects. While the pedigree of drawing the large and gestural, it covers a range of methods, year history. Spanning from the small and intimate to the large and gestural, it covers a range of methods, in its elemental state drawing has the power to exude, move and delight with the simplest of gestures and the most basic of means. As the most humble form of making it is not always the most enduring test of an artist's skill and daring. While the Gippsland Art Gallery has never set out to acquire drawings as a focus, it has inevitably accumulated a representative collection over its 50-year history. Spanning from the small and intimate to the large and gestural, it covers a range of methods, motives and effects. While the pedigree of drawing is beyond question and has almost always formed motives and effects. When I taught at Prahran in the late 60s, I set up the reverse … There were to be no rules, nothing to react towards or against. The result of this approach to teaching art (of which Dumbrell was merely a symptom) was that a generation of artists did not learn how to draw. In time the pendulum swung back, and by the late 1970s and early 1980s, the skills of drawing returned in force. Moreover, artists were ready to bring their drawings out of the closet and reveal them publicly. Jim Sienberg was one of many, who having regarded drawing ‘as something both private and strictly for their own information’, developed a new awareness of graphic work on paper as a ‘self-sufficient artistic endeavour’. He describes his early drawings as his ‘stumbling attempts’ to gather ideas together for paintings, in a role strictly subordinate to painting, but in time his new, more direct approach, demanded an unshakable means of expression.

In 1970s and early 1980s, the skills of drawing returned in force. Moreover, artists were ready to bring their drawings out of the closet and reveal them publicly. Their advocacy of allegory was shared by Bronwyn Pigot in her Untitled (2) charcoal drawing of 1974, but on a larger scale. Pigot’s excavation of facades towers in a hostile, stigman environment conforms, in its way, to the fondoading expressionism that characterised much art of this period. The same graphic intensity invades Euan Heng’s drawing of the following year: in his Through the Forest, Through the Trees (10), the Scottish émigré artist employs his medium in a measured and calculated manner. In its pronounced graphic definition the work strongly recalls Heng’s primary influence, Ferdinand Léger. More broadly, it attests to Heng’s slightly elusive summation of his works, that ‘they could be about the experience of leaving one’s country and of crossing a border to somewhere else’. While these artists have employed drawing in the service of the imagination, the art of drawing is most commonly associated with

We were told that to become an artist [in the early 1960s] you had to draw the figure and paint the figure. So we did figure drawing, head drawing, costume drawing, even drawing after plaster casts—at least two days a week. Such drawings are in evidence here by Elaine Storm (Cover, r & l), executed while a student at the National Gallery School between 1932 and 1933. These drawings, while impressive today, are entirely representative of the period—part of the necessary requirement to prove one’s basic skill as an artist. By the time Dumbrell had finished her degree and became an artist teacher herself, some thirty years after Storm, the mood of rebellion that characterised the 1950s had infected the art schools:

When I taught at Prahran in the late 60s, I taught abstract drawing. We were reacting to our fairly rigid art school training, and set up the reverse … There were to be no rules, nothing to react towards or against. The result of this approach to teaching art (of which Dumbrell was merely a symptom) was that a generation of artists did not learn how to draw. In time the pendulum swung back, and by the late 1970s and early 1980s, the skills of drawing returned in force. Moreover, artists were ready to bring their drawings out of the closet and reveal them publicly. Jim Sienberg was one of many, who having regarded drawing ‘as something both private and strictly for their own information’, developed a new awareness of graphic work on paper as a ‘self-sufficient artistic endeavour’. He describes his early drawings as his ‘stumbling attempts’ to gather ideas together for paintings, in a role strictly subordinate to painting, but in time his new, more direct approach, demanded an unshakable means of expression.

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observation. In this John Maluish (9) and Arthur Marsham sculpt markedly, the former in the rendering of a locust, and the latter in a bonsai samure (10). Jennifer Wray (8), meanwhile, sees the rich blacks of her charcoal and pastel to magnify the looming monumentalism of an early water tower, such as that still-visible today in Bal’s Victoria Park. The final work here is also the most recently completed—Burnley QE Gippsland (21) by Kevin Lincoln (1997). Through his expert manipulation of the point and the long edge of the charcoal stick, Lincoln evokes a spacious field of landscape, its dreamy smoke haze eliminating detail to elicit a sombre mood. Drawing continues to walk ‘a fine line’ in contemporary art practice. No longer just a means of learning and preparation, it now holds its own against other methods and materials. The artist who ‘draws’ works without affection—they must confront the blank sheet head on, every mark and gesture attesting to their virtuosity. In this act of drawing is in the end to be the ultimate means of expression. \n
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