

World of reality

i. Things separate

ii. Things all joined

fitly put together

not mathematics

but what is revealed thru mathematics

i.e. how with a dull
Whole - where thought is
dull (save me from heaviness,
objectivity) - to

subjectivity of our part
of parts

MILLER

and post war sydney



all entities
perfectly satisfied
whole

was when
my action
conscious

Front cover

Man and Woman 1954
Newcastle War Memorial maquette
Lyndon Dadswell
collection Penny Zylstra

Reserve Bank maquette 1962
Margel Hinder
(competition model)

Female torso c.1960 - 62
Godfrey Miller
private collection

Unknown Political Prisoner maquette (detail) 1952
Tom Bass
collection of the artist

Title page

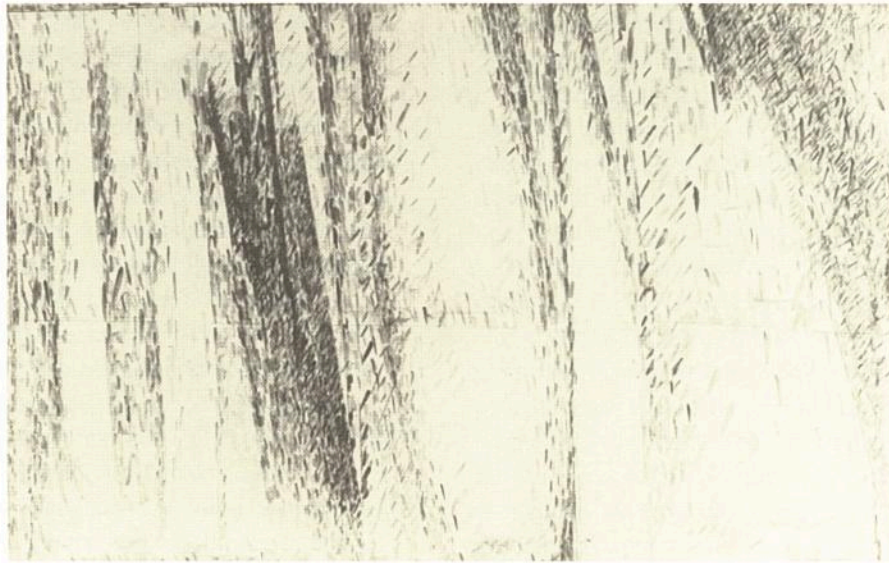
Red Earth Forest Series 1964
Godfrey Miller
private collection

All works unless otherwise stated are by Godfrey Miller


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The Univ



MILLER

and post war sydney

23 MAY - 22 JUNE 1996

Ivan Dougherty Gallery

The University of New South Wales College of Fine Arts

Deborah Edwards approached me towards the end of last year wondering if Ivan Dougherty Gallery was interested in mounting an exhibition of Godfrey Miller's drawings, as the retrospective at The Art Gallery of New South Wales would only include a limited number. She kindly provided a list of potential lenders, amongst them many artists; it unfortunately was not possible to coincide the two exhibitions but the falling through of a project for late May fortuitously allowed our plan to proceed. I decided, after some research, that these private collections, which included writers, former Miller students, acquaintances and mere admirers, could act as the source for an intimate exhibition of remarkable drawings acquired for particular and personal reasons. The second step was to involve Jennifer Hardy as co-curator and we discussed a belief that the drawings shared with the little known sculpture particular relationships, even confluences, that was not evident with the paintings. The presence of the four bronzes, one pewter and a terracotta original reveal the full extent of Miller's known three-dimensional output. They are joined by examples of sculpture, with some related drawings, by other artists close, in one way or another, to Miller's ideas and his era; those included are Tom Bass, Lyndon Dadswell, Margel Hinder, Oliffe Richmond and Wendy Solling.

Today the artists who seem to exert the most influence are those who seek to lend themselves, their lifestyle, and their work most easily to publicity, witness the likes of Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe and Jeff Koons. Almost the reverse was true of Godfrey Miller's era; the three, arguably, most influential artists in this locality were John Passmore, Ian Fairweather and Miller himself, each reclusive, ascetic and dodgers of

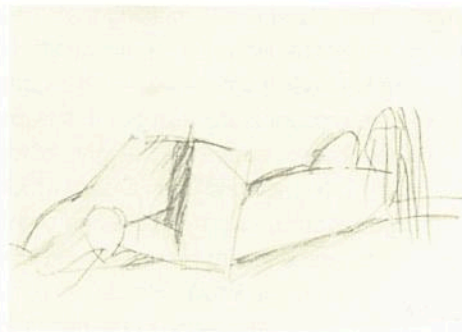


publicity. It takes few conversations with former students to determine the respect, the awe that he inspired during the years from 1945 to 1964 when teaching at the National Art School. The life of the serious artist, as Miller always was, demanded considerable deprivation that included the rejection of conventional society with its materialist base and its disdain for aesthetic values, not to mention its stifling parochialism. Miller, unlike today's aspirants, did not believe in exhibiting prematurely and was well into middle age before he did so. He apparently drew and drew during life classes but hid the

results from his students, placing them securely in his worn Globite suitcase. However, on his death, he was generous enough to leave 100 drawings for his students, a number of which are present in this exhibition. It is enlightening in respect of his teaching to obtain the thoughts of former students such as Robin Lawrence and John Olsen, which also appear in this catalogue. Ken Unsworth recalls one of the very few comments made to him when studying: "Don't draw what you see, draw what you know." He says it was all that was needed, as it freed him from existing conventional practice and opened out the possibility of conceptual responses, as well as the integration of his own experiences. Many others have stories of similar revelation. John Henshaw argues that Miller was a political artist; indeed he was in the sense that the values he brought to his life and work entailed an act of political denial; his life's work was a non propagandist political statement. It was all that he gave up as much as all that he believed in that created this aura.

Anecdotes abound; James Barker recollects Miller saying in a life class, "When Evelyn Docker poses it is like a sonata by Bach." She is present in this collection of drawings; Barker also recalled Miller's extraordinary secretiveness as being part of his charisma; he made it all so mysterious. He even had signs, such as the use of white sheets on his balcony, when a visitor was welcome and conversely would shout to an unwanted arrival, "I'm too busy and am not receiving guests." Ken Unsworth recalls him arriving back at class after a long weekend away in 1960 and when asked where he had been, casually answered that he had seen the Picasso exhibition, in London. James Barker remembers John Brackenreg waxing lyrical about some letters of the alphabet at the side of a particular work, saying that Godfrey's interest in the Golden Section informed his use of these letters. Sometime later Barker was talking with Jean Appleton who looked at the work and realised it was in fact the artist's shopping list. He could also be overly demanding as correspondence with his brother Lewis reveals: "Why did you not inform me years ago that a cheque stub can also serve as a record of payment?" he asked.

The drawings themselves, many swiftly executed, illuminate Miller's ability, in the words of Ted Binder, "to immediately dissect a pose and re-assemble it; he constantly finds the underlying dynamic in an instant." There are many figure drawings in this exhibit, seated, standing, reclining, as well as torsos; what they reveal, at a time when study of the human form is regarded as inessential, is the importance of a continuity of observation in which we, the protagonists, take centre stage. Miller's paintings, without the existence of all his drawings, would appear slightly more rigid, more esoteric and pre-conceived. Miller's drawings, in which he eschews a particular geometry that was the foundation of his painting, celebrate his belief that "things are always changing, everything is in a state of flux." And yet there exists an all pervading unity that ultimately links in one vision the variety of

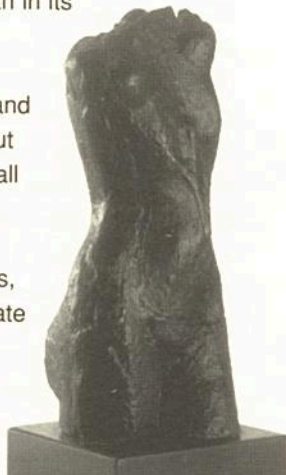


concerns that these drawings, in pencil and wash on paper and in wash, ink and oil on canvas, convey, as does his entire oeuvre. They range from early figure studies, influenced by his time at the Slade in London under Tonks, with a profusion of lines, through nudes that encompass both linear and volumetric form, sometimes with acute sparseness, to bird, boat, horse and other whimsical animals, observations and still lifes, to figures integrated in landscape settings, and extraordinary late works from the Red Earth Forest Series. Miller's was a vision unified by his belief in holistic awareness, via the ideals of Platonic thought, Anthroposophy and Theosophy, the Golden Mean and Fibonacci system and expressed through his ability to forge a creative language that encompassed the most ordinary and accessible object to the most distant mysteries of the firmament.

The sculpture, virtually unseen in Miller's lifetime, though only numbering five works in bronze or pewter and one terracotta, spans a considerable period of time from the late 1930s until shortly before his death; they also articulate, quite remarkably and succinctly, so many of his concerns, from synthetic cubism, to natural form as a basis for digression, the figure as volume, to non-objective invention and intervention. He modelled in clay most of his professional life and though he never presented himself as a sculptor, nevertheless an understanding gained through constant building of three-dimensional shapes sharpened considerably his overall awareness of the world around him and heightened his artistic response to its entirety.

Finally it is the photographs that complete Godfrey Miller's vision; of classical Greece, Corinth in its landscape setting, the ergonomically unsurpassed Alhambra in Granada, the collective formation of trees in both England and Australia; they exist independently but often reappear in the paintings and a small number are in evidence in this exhibition.

There are two works, essentially paintings, that are included because they encapsulate the freedom that the drawings embody. One is an unfinished painting of fruit, the other a linear still life; they exude a



spontaneity that relates to the drawings and extend felicitously the presence of the exhibition.

Many have written with considerable insight and incisiveness about Godfrey Miller, none more so than John Henshaw.

"He never felt that the practise of art could be isolated from the whole content of human experience... His creative forms were not just static, nor did they function as symbols in the commonly accepted sense. They had, above all, the power to mould plastically. Though he knew architecture, and his technique of proportioning with line stems from this, his years of modelling in clay had pushed this into plastic experience. Drawing, especially in later years, is plastic not graphic. It is key to his work, especially in the importance which he placed on that most elusive, subtle, variable and surprising of all forms, the human figure... To disclose the presence of the world of creative forms, which exist outside space or time, but which arrange facts or events through natural or human activity, I believe to be the theme of Godfrey Miller's life's work. (Foreword to *Godfrey Miller Memorial Exhibition* catalogue, Darlinghurst Galleries, Sydney, February 1965, unpaginated).



"Drawing was his experimental search into the unknown, his sacred thread, his fusion of analysis and creation." (*Godfrey Miller - A Life*, in Deborah Edwards, *Godfrey Miller 1893-1964*, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1996, p.109) Deborah Edwards, curator of the Godfrey Miller exhibition at The Art Gallery of New South Wales in March 1996, wrote decisively and with illumination in the major catalogue essay, *Subsiding to the heart of things: Godfrey Miller - the works*.

"It remained Miller's belief that only through a synthesis of intellect and intuition...could one gain a true apprehension of the 'Real' behind the world of appearances." (p.19)

"In his small spectacular sculpture (*Female torso*) c.1938-40, Miller achieved in three dimensions...a fracturing of form along

Synthetic Cubist lines, into a multiplicity of views at once volumetric and linear." (p.31)

"Miller also continued to model small clay studies, in an activity of continual building up and destruction (he re-cycled the clay) which implies an analogous process of experimentation and refinement." (p.38)

"Miller's enormous body of figure drawings elucidate the process, the means by which the artist penetrated to the lucid heart of structures entirely beyond realism, in which only the essence of the figure appears... There is a remarkable range in treatment over time, yet a consistent structuring around a pivotal point which directs the balance of forms, and in all, there is an almost intangible sense of sculpture, coming to life, from within stone or bronze. Executed mostly in soft pencil, and consistently structured to the size and proportions of the sheet, line becomes tremulous, fluid or jerky, emphatic or fugitive; marked as incisively as the lines of the Greek kouros, holding the monumental formality of Egyptian sculpture, the weightiness of a Bourdelle, or the extraordinary rich minimalism of Matisse. Miller's extant sculptures of the period, two monumentally scaled female torsos [(*Female torso*) c.1960-62, (*Female torso*) c.1961-64] encapsulate in solid form, through the dynamic relationship of mass, plane and light, in minutely wrought light-catching surfaces, the same architectonic relationship of form and space as is created in these drawings. In Miller's last drawings, which are pared down to a final core notation, there is a freer execution, a spontaneity - in some sense oppositional to the slow processes of the paintings - which perhaps indicates that in the synthesis of the known and the seen, intuition (the immediate and beyond rational insight) has ultimately assumed primacy." (p.55)

Some words from the artist himself must also be present.

"The greatest error is to think bits, pieces and parts make the whole. Great thinking is to know pieces do, or can make the whole. Greatest thinking is to know something does make pieces into the whole" (extracted from John Henshaw's Foreword, *Memorial Exhibition* catalogue, Darlinghurst Galleries, 1965).

"To know passing things one must know the eternal forms." (Letter to Lewis Miller, 15.5.1935)

"Are (ideas) in nature or are they in man's soul? Plato said in the soul as a separate world (to him the real



world). Kant said no, they are in our world and that only. I prefer Goethe. He says in both. What ideas man has so has Nature." (Letter to Lewis Miller, 10.9.1940)

"I don't want competition with my fellow humans. I happen to be one of those who work best, or can work at all, right outside the competitive element. I do not want to struggle, struggle up to carry things through. It is a matter of subsiding to the heart of things." (Letter to Arthur Fenwick, 18.1.1936)

"A Unity has its own power. A Unity that is not a false one has life in it. It is life."

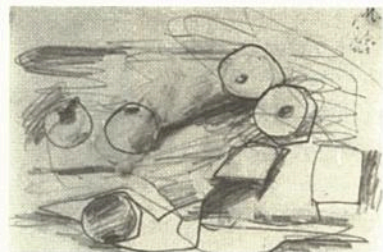
These four passages appear in Deborah Edwards' and John Henshaw's essays in Deborah Edwards, *Godfrey Miller 1893-1964* (cited above), respectively on pages 20, 80, 104.

Nick Waterlow



Female Torso 1961 - 64
private collection

above
Untitled c.1961
private collection



"Drawing is the writing of the spirit, it is truly in drawing that the sculptor's whole personality dwells." ¹



When I first became involved with this exhibition I was aware of Godfrey Miller's paintings, not his drawings. I was intrigued with the sculptural quality associated with many of his drawings and was not really surprised to find that Miller had studied firstly architecture then sculpture, and during his time at the Slade had been nicknamed 'the modeller'. Godfrey Miller has said in relation to still life drawing that it is "...not something in front of us. It is behind us, to left of us, to right, above, under and in us... it is then, it was, it will be."² His drawings and sculpture are indelibly connected and one informed the other, ultimately I feel it was Miller's drawings that found ascendancy in his art making, accompanying his search for the 'Real' behind the world of appearances. Drawing as the expression of a sculptural idea, may form on paper as a maquette or directly in relation to sculpture. Is there such a thing as a sculptural drawing? I think there is, but this is entirely up to the individual. I have focussed on sculptors and their drawings for this exhibition, though this is not to deny that



many painters have the ability to produce sculptural drawing. However, a sculptor experiences drawing three-dimensionally, with a bird's eye view.

The scene is set at the National Art School: Miller had agreed to give life classes in the evening; he began in 1945 and continued to teach still life, life painting and life drawing until his death in May 1964, aged seventy-one. He had left Europe in 1938

disillusioned with the rise of fascism, aggression and nationalism preceding the war: In a printed pamphlet he wrote "Our world is being questioned by the rest of the universe, and found wanting."³

Directly after World War II the National Art School received an influx of mature age students under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (CRTS).



This disillusionment with the brutality and destruction associated with war would have affected many of the students under the Scheme. There was a determination to renew, replenish and create, a reaction to the devastation and violence meted out during the fighting. These ex-service men and women, combined with the younger students, provided a surge of determination and purpose which was to produce some of Australia's most influential sculptors. The sculptures and drawings of Lyndon Dadswell and Margel Hinder, both teachers, Tom Bass and Oliffe Richmond, students from the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, and Wendy Solling, the youngest of the group, are confined in this exhibition approximately to those years that Godfrey Miller was teaching at the College.

The sculpture department under the guidance of Lyndon Dadswell, although still emphasising figurative and symbolic concerns, was urged to experiment, explore and discover. Students and teachers alike attended life modelling classes. Great emphasis was placed on the practical aspects of sculpture production; drawing was of paramount importance within the course. Student drawing classes with Arthur Murch, design studies with Frank Hinder (see illustration) and night drawing classes with Godfrey Miller were always well-attended. Miller had studied sculpture at the Slade School in London and his drawings from that period are modelled and sculptural, the

line sensitive, evoking comparisons with Renaissance drawing. Drawings from the 1940s onwards develop an increasingly subtle line, an entry point into the substance of the artist, his work and his philosophy. Miller's drawings explore space as a dimension of volume, as an atmosphere in which the lines add weight and form. His drawings accompanied his search for unity and the inspiration that directed this search lay in his personal philosophy, a composite of Theosophy, Anthroposophy and the works of Rudolf Steiner, Rabindranath Tagore, Matila Ghyka, Vassily Kandinsky, Plato, Klee, Picasso, Freud and A.G. O'Keefe, an artist who introduced Miller to painting in New Zealand.



Miller never abandoned his sculptor's eye in regard to drawing; his emphasis on shifts of weight, turning planes and the flow from positive to negative across a surface creates a new concept of space with an uncanny interpretation to the very centre of the pose. This sense that he drew from the centre out, as a circle can be determined by the locus, was possibly informed by his clay figure modelling. "To be properly expressed a thing must proceed from within, moved by its form; it must come, not in from without, but out from within."⁴

Godfrey Miller's approach to the teaching of students was not to overtly instruct. A subtle, indirect method was engaged, equated with Eastern philosophical thought, a quiet word here, a gesture there, a reading from some arcane reference. Miller stripped the non-essentials from his 'teaching' as with his art. He was a participant in the life drawing classes, having his own particular spot to work from. Those students I have spoken with hold Miller in great affection and reverence. Tom Bass recalled an incident in class that offered a glimpse into Miller's solitary lifestyle: "One day, it may have been in 1947 or 1948, Godfrey was teaching in the painter's studio at the old National Art School. In the corner of the studio there was a sink where the students washed their brushes and the tap was leaking. One of the students complained to Godfrey that the dripping tap was irritating her and Godfrey replied 'Does that bother you? To me a dripping tap is good company' ".⁵ His best teaching was transferred by example, a few well placed lines captured the essential rhythm and intention of the pose and most classes were conducted in silence. Bill Wright has said that "many (students) understood his aim to educate them in a larger way "and that "Miller urged students to hone to the absolute structural essentials to establish a 'centre' for the work, concerned with weights and

balances, and the placement of form in space."⁶ Miller himself believed that "There can suddenly open within the heart or the mind a realm of experience which is not of the external world (though it may interpenetrate it) and we are then bathed in the light of meaning ... in that light without violence ... in which the hardness of self vanishes. Every experience in that light deeply creates us: it is creating light, transforming meaning and meaning

which shows what we have always known and never had the strength to remember."⁷ Godfrey Miller's integrity and dedication to his art and philosophy has secured the continued loyalty and affection of students, colleagues and friends alike. This quiet, gentle eccentric who believed in the unity of all things "... had opened the door on insight and perception rather than how to paint ".⁸ If Miller's spiritual and life experiences informed and nourished his own work and ultimately that of his students, then Lyndon Dadswell offered the enthusiasm for experimentation with technique and materials and the confidence to pursue such studies. Oliffe Richmond was to applaud Dadswell in his role as teacher for having as his principal concerns " virtuosity, technical brilliance and the aim to instill in the student the idea that the sculptor should be a good all rounder, proficient in every field."⁹ Artistic philosophy alone, however, could not sustain emerging sculptors in Australia in the mid 1940s to 1950s. The world was changing and Australian art was cut off from outside influences, a cultural isolation which frustrated and eventually drove many Australian artists to travel abroad. There was very little direction toward complete abstraction as most sculptors preferred the figure during this period, although Margel Hinder and Robert Klippel were producing non-figurative work.

Margel Hinder wrote in 1958 that "It is difficult for people who live in countries with centuries of art tradition behind them to realise the conditions that confront the artist in Australia. Not only is there a lack of past art to stimulate the artist and student, but also this lack leaves the public unaware of art as a necessity as well as a vital form of expression. In a new country with its energies and financial resources directed towards pioneering, it is understandable that the difficult and



expensive art of sculpture would have little place." ¹⁰ This statement typifies colonial views within Australia during the Menzies era, when Aboriginality was not considered by many to be part of the Australian culture.

Sculpture was regarded as a poor cousin of painting. Sculptors could not survive on their art alone, so many sought opportunities overseas or turned to public sculpture and competitions. Tom Bass's maquette in this exhibition was submitted in the 1953 competition for the Unknown Political Prisoner Memorial, held at the Tate Gallery, London. In 1952 he wrote "In this work I tried to make a totem for twentieth century man, to be an emblem of humanity's struggle to release itself from its imposed imprisonment with all the torment, inner conflict and tragic impotence of it". ¹¹ From a field of some fifty six entrants, exhibited at The Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1952, the sculptors Margel Hinder and Tom Bass were selected to represent Australia in London. Fellow competitors included Alexander Calder, Lynn Chadwick, Reg Butler, Barbara Hepworth and Naum Gabo. Margel was awarded a third prize for her entry, which unfortunately was destroyed.

Margel Hinder found two-dimensional drawing difficult and unsatisfactory, preferring to work in tandem between two- and three-dimensional drawing, using fuse wire, soldering iron and shim to develop an idea spatially, pencil and paper for initial shapes and planes. Her predilection for preliminary drawings in three dimensions offered a more spontaneous and informed method for her working drawings.

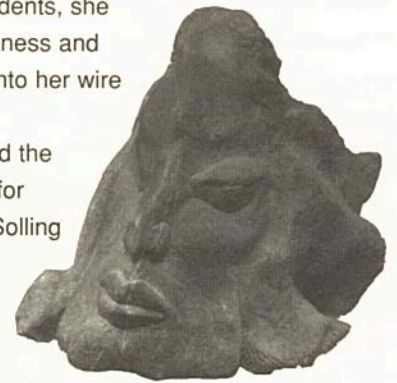
Lyndon Dadswell's drawings in this exhibition attempt to bring about a three-dimensional solidity, allowing the shape to emerge by means of light and shade. The influence of Henry Moore on this period of Dadswell's work is evident.



Interestingly, many of Dadswell's students became assistants to Moore, Oliffe Richmond among them.

Oliffe Richmond's drawings are energetic, the line sensitive and articulate, informing the sculpture which has an alert tension, a vitality within. Donald Brook, the former Sydney art critic, speaks of Richmond's adoption of post-war humanism and describes the common features as "a romantic plasticity like Rodin's; a seductive surface full of textural variety and accident and frequent, irregular changes of plane; and, above all, a central concern with metamorphic human images of disturbing brutality". ¹²

Wendy Solling (now Sister Angela, of St Clare of Assisi, Stroud), was part of the first intake after the war at East Sydney Technical College. She describes those years as being "an exciting and dynamic time". ¹³ Although younger than many of her fellow students, she applied herself with a directness and immediacy that translated into her wire sculptures. Drawing three-dimensionally in wire offered the vitality, breadth and facility for movement she required. Solling said " ... contemplation is about shedding the inessentials and reaching back to the bare bones ... "Hence the decision to abandon plaster, colour and all embellishment and use the unadorned wire's sinuous curves for movement and its cast shadows as shading." ¹⁴



The drawings in this exhibition offer that added insight into the artist's processes and points of departure for sculpture; that inchoate stage when the imagination explores the potentials of an idea, the frontier between inception and actuality. "It is written in the Upanishads that within the heart there is a small chamber, and therein is the 'inner ether', which is co-extensive with space; this is the Atma, the Self, immortal, beyond grief: 'Within this abide the sky and the world; within this abide fire and air, the sun and the moon, the lightning and the stars, all that is and all that is not in This (the Universe)' " ¹⁵

"Drawing is the most direct, closest to the true self, the most natural liberation of man, it may have been the first celebration of man with his secret self - even before song". ¹⁶

Jennifer Hardy

¹ Raymond Martin from W.J. Strachan, *Towards Sculpture: Drawings and Maquettes from Rodin to Oldenburg*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1976. p. 1

² Godfrey Miller letter, from Deborah Edwards, *Godfrey Miller 1893-1964* The Art Gallery of New South Wales 1996 p. 46

³ Godfrey Miller pamphlet, from Edwards, *ibid* p.118

⁴ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Transformation of Nature in Art*, Dover Publications, New York 1956 p. 77

⁵ Tom Bass letter, 1996 Ivan Dougherty Gallery files

⁶ Bill Wright quoted in Edwards endnotes, *op.cit.* p.80

⁷ Godfrey Miller, from John Henshaw essay, in Edwards, *op.cit.* p. 106

⁸ Ruth Faerber letter, 1996 Ivan Dougherty Gallery files

⁹ Oliffe Richmond from Ken Scarlett, *Australian Sculptors*, Nelson Melbourne, p. 561

¹⁰ Margel Hinder from Ken Scarlett, *ibid.* p. 254

¹¹ Tom Bass letter, 1996 Ivan Dougherty Gallery files

¹² Donald Brook, *A Sculpture style that Passed by Australia*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20.6 1968

¹³ Wendy Solling quoted in Susan Steggall entry, from Joan Kerr *Heritage The National Women's Artbook*, Craftsman House 1995 p.452

¹⁴ Wendy Solling, Susan Steggall *ibid* p.294

¹⁵ Chandogya Upanishad VIII 11.3 from Annie Besant *Thought Power* Theosophical Classics Series, Theosophical Publishing House Wheaton, Ill, U.S.A. 1973 p.78

¹⁶ David Smith, from Tony Knipe, *Drawing in Air An exhibition of Sculptors Drawings 1882-1982* Ceolfrith Gallery, England, title page

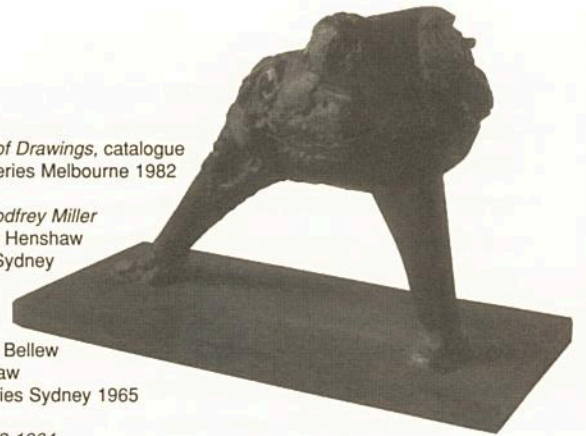
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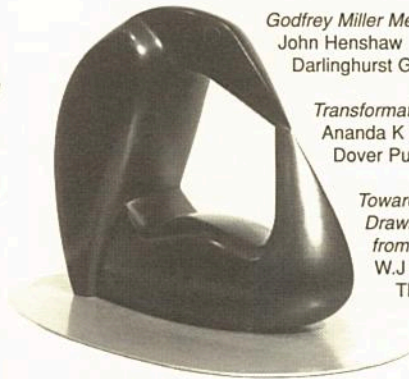
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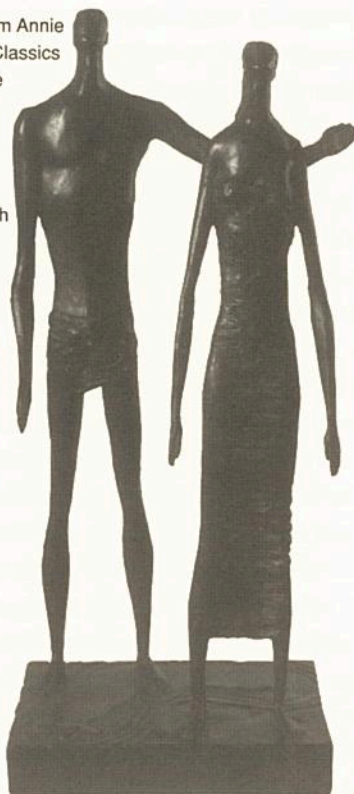
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*The Geeta and the
Ten Principal Upanishads*
Translated by Shree Purohit Swami



left to right

Unknown Political Prisoner Memorial 1952
maquette
Tom Bass
collection of the artist

Man and Woman 1954
Newcastle War Memorial maquette
Lyndon Dadswell
collection Penny Zylstra

Currawongs 1946
Margel Hinder
collection of Lewers Bequest and
Penrith Regional Art Gallery



Ruth Faerber

As a part-time student at East Sydney Technical College in 1953 (I think), I attended Godfrey Miller's still life painting class. It was a small class of 4/5 students, and my main memory is of this shy and gentle man, setting up, in a thoughtful way, typical arrangements of vases, fruit and drapes. He offered little in the way of technical instruction or direction to the class, but somehow created a tranquil and meditative environment for students to become involved in their work.

However, on one occasion, when I was confronting an arrangement which included the purple fruit of the banana tree (his choice), I sought his advice. I complained that the colour of the bloom on the fruit kept changing as I looked at it. How was I to begin? He replied, "Ah that's just like life...things are always changing, everything is always in a state of flux. You just have to make a decision, make up your mind, put it down and keep working." His answer was at that time as enigmatic as the object which had prompted my question, but later when I saw his work in his first show, I realised the truth and honesty of his reply. He had opened the door on insight and perception rather than how to paint.



I never remember him making a judgement about what was good or bad art to a student, or singling out any particular student for praise or encouragement, or even negative criticism. But one day, when I returned from a lunch break, he was standing in front of my easel, discussing the work with another teacher.

Seeing me enter the studio, he asked me why I had directed my brush strokes around the volume of the vase. In mild trepidation at such an unusual show of interest, I replied, "Because I wanted it to go round."

He smiled happily at the teacher and said, "You see." I took it as a rare sign of approval of my work...but it could just as well have been his own satisfaction in proving a point under discussion.

Chris Gentle

This is one of a great number of quick studies from the life model. Despite its apparent sketchiness it indicates in a few exploratory marks the artist's probing eye and understanding of the complexities of his subject. Essentially it epitomises the drawing process and is a reminder of Miller's individualism and dedication. For me it is quietly inspirational.

Bruce Latimer

I was introduced to Godfrey Miller's work by my high school art teacher, Cameron Sparks, who had been a Miller student.

The description of the man implied all that one assumed an artist ought to be - uncompromising, eccentric, heroic and immersed in an arcane philosophy, in his case, the idea of unity in all things, both material and immaterial - at the time, visible to me only as a formal notion.

I bought three of the drawings whilst in high school and art school, both because of their visual appeal, but also in an attempt to gain insight into the deep mystery of his work.

What I've come to see is his unending hunt for the essence - a life long pursuit entailing thousands of works, but playing daily in the comfort of our living room in three lively drawings.

Robin Lawrence

Notes and reflections on the work of Godfrey Miller.

Reclining Nude. The model's name was Iris, and the couch was the old studio couch.

The drawing is one of many that Godfrey made during the mid fifties when he used to 'sit in' our life drawing classes taught by Dorothy Thornhill.

It was during the years when I was teaching in New York that I came to know of Godfrey's connection with the study of Anthroposophy. Suddenly so much was explained - why he used to read Goethe to us in the middle of the studio - why he always spoke of the importance of light and shade and, clearly he wanted us to discover the essential of what was in front of us.

These aspects have been most admirably discussed by Deborah Edwards in the catalogue for the retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of N.S.W.

But apart from realising the importance of our contact as students with Godfrey (we were in awe), I began to understand that he was really imparting to us the great spiritual and philosophical values of western civilisation.

The clear, dry masculine approach done with extraordinary sensibility and strength of true elegance, (a most decidedly incorrect political statement) gives us a breathing space where we can partake of his amazing journey. A respite in this florid and excessively loud and hypocritical end of an era.

Ross Mellick

At the time of a visit to Yosl Bergner in Tel Aviv in 1992, we had a conversation which touched upon the particular character of drawings done by sculptors. He was at the time talking about his friend, Oliffe Richmond. I, however, recall reference was made in passing to the works of Alberto Giacometti as well as Godfrey Miller. Comments were made about a heightened intensity of line and also a sense of smallness and compression.

An excerpt, recently published, of a letter written by Miller in 1937 caused me to associate it with something written by Giacometti in *Minotaure* in 1933. Both texts described the play of the poetic imagination.

Miller wrote:

"...I can count one cardinal time when I was drawing when the figure seemed to associate itself with certain faraway sandhills among which my mind more clearly became engaged, and with certain words that Plato had to say concerning curves and straight lines and with things that the songs of Solomon sing concerning the symbolic likeness of things, and with a young sister of mine, who I remember running across a lawn with disproportion a cardinal character in her little childish figure with shoes too big for her thin legs and with words paired off in opposites such as volume and void..."

The Giacometti text is as follows:

"...When at once an object is constructed I tend to see in it metamorphosed and displaced, facts which have moved me deeply without my realising it and forms which I feel to be close to me - though (which makes them all the more disquieting) I often cannot identify them..."

Giacometti commonly referred to all work in process as object. Although the Miller text is very much more explicit and clear, both are aware of memories quite separate from the work in progress, intruding and infusing the work.

Both experience great intensity in the process of drawing. John Henshaw, who wrote about the drawings of Miller more than 30 years ago, has recently written that Miller described drawing to be a wedge or bulldozer into the unknown. In a letter to his friend, Alan McCulloch, which was published in 1962, Miller described the physical strain involved in the process.

Part of the letter is as follows:

"...I worked on...the skin on my face and body broke...I worked on and I worked while water dripped from my skin...Ultimately I broke my heart even. However I got some drawings..."

Giacometti made no first-hand descriptions, to my knowledge. However, James Lord who sat for a sketched portrait, recorded something of the daily conversations when Giacometti was working.

This is one:

"I'm not afraid", said Lord.

"Of what?", Giacometti asked.

"Of you. Because you are roaring like a wild animal ...".

Lord's account is amusing and revealing. What was initially thought to be a process likely to take only an hour or two, or an afternoon at most, expanded to a period of 18 days. He describes his effort to stop Giacometti erasing each portrait in turn. Giacometti explained during the process that what he sought was to know all about a "head".

A portrait of the head of James Lord did not satisfy his entire concern. It was the idea of a head in the Platonic sense towards which he strained. He also struggled with what might be considered to be its opposite; the phenomenon of likeness. The work therefore shimmered between one sphere of consciousness and another

Whilst Giacometti's focus was upon the idea of head, Miller's was upon torso. He was, however, like Giacometti, straining in the direction of the idea of a torso, of column, of tree and the axis mundi.

Modernism was born from a number of traditional streams of learning and practice, beginning in the Pre Socratic Greek world and at multiple foci of the spiritual from European, Mediterranean, Asian and Oriental sources. The evolution of the modernist project has not erased these multiple sources but has incorporated them and moved on. Not all work produced in the modernist period necessarily relates so clearly to these traditional origins, as does the work of Godfrey Miller. It is, however, a measure of the wonder of the contemporary project in art that there is room for current daily concerns, as well as for the strong presence of ancient living traditions. These fusions, are seen particularly in this historic moment in Australia.

Deborah Edwards wrote that Godfrey Miller "... sought the spiritual as a central reality of his art ..."

The best of his drawings achieve a transparency, such that they become mysterious traces of a process occurring elsewhere, situated between the human mind and the world. They are, therefore, open to an almost symmetrical ambiguity of viewing. That possibility is a measure of their great interest and of the success of Godfrey Miller's quest.

Sources

Deborah Edwards, *Godfrey Miller (1893-1964)*, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1996

John Henshaw, *Godfrey Miller - A Life*, quoted in Edwards, *ibid.*

Alan McCulloch, *"In Memoriam - Godfrey Miller"*, Art and Australia, Sydney, August 1964

James Lord, *A Giacometti Portrait*, Faber and Faber, London, 1981

John Olsen

I remember Godfrey Miller's drawing classes very well; nearly all of his life drawings were made in them. Though I attended few of the classes, I recall the sacred silence a reverential mood.

Miller worked in simple materials - a stub of a 3B pencil - cheap cartridge paper - cut to a desired size, which he would warm in front of the radiator to give the right crispness.

The drawings were rapidly executed, no corrections admitted. They are the absolute contradiction to his painstaking carefully ruled pen lines of his paintings. It was here the lyric side of Miller's personality was extended and a racey catch as catch can, even scribbly pencil lines are evident. Quick decisions are made with remarkable creative invention. I have long admired these drawings - even above his paintings, and place Ian Fairweather and Godfrey Miller the finest draughtsmen of their generation.

Peter Pinson

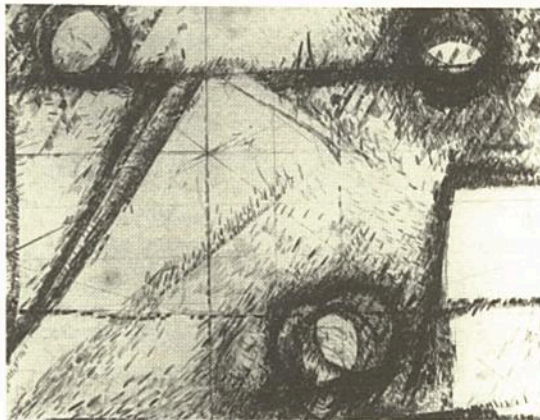
I studied at the National Art School between 1961 and 1963. Neither of the two figures then teaching part time at the NAS who even then enjoyed guru status - John Passmore and Godfrey Miller - taught my class, nor were we aware of their presence on campus. Almost every class was studio-centred and there was little or no formal - or even informal - discussion in class about contemporary Australian painting. Any understanding one developed of the contribution of Miller or Passmore was through one's own reading, or gallery visits.

With one exception. In 1962, the National Art School mounted a brief exhibition in the Cell Block of a small number of Miller's paintings. In *The Sydney Morning Herald*, art critic Wallace Thornton praised the exhibition with a rare fulsomeness. In the vast austere space, the small paintings glistened - small miraculous paintings about universal unity in a building whose walls were impregnated with the echoes of evil, punishment, and suffering. Miller watched the students examining his paintings. He was delighted in the effect the paintings had on the young viewers - they were awed into silence.

A little later, at the Sydney Teachers' College, I learned of Frank Hinder's admiration for Miller. Frank would later tell one of his visits to Miller's house in Sutherland Street. To avoid vacuuming, Miller covered the floor with newspapers. When sufficient time had passed, and sufficient dust had fallen, the vernacular floor covering would be rolled up, and replaced with fresh newspaper. Frank always had to remind himself where the hole in the floor was, lying unseen and dangerous beneath newspaper.

After his death, the Darlinghurst Galleries mounted an estate exhibition. It amounted to a retrospective of his paintings.

A year later a second estate exhibition was held in the same gallery. It was all of drawings on paper with the exception of two canvases that were in a preliminary, drawn condition, devoid of colour at this point. The ruled lines, teasing out underlying structures, and numerous holes where the compass point had pivoted, were clearly apparent. One, saplings tilting into their surroundings, was purchased by The Art Gallery of New South Wales. The canvas in this exhibition, which I purchased, is the other.



Peter Podditch

I always had a hankering for something with class - like a sports car and so around 1970 I got a Godfrey Miller drawing.

Veronica Rowan

I have several Godfrey Miller drawings which belonged to my brother David Strachan. He had a long association with him, from the thirties until his death when David and John Henshaw sorted out his work.



I have been fascinated by his economy of line, from the 1960s when I first came across the book of drawings. This was before I knew he and David had known each other since meeting at the Slade.

Margaret McLellan Spratt

These drawings are marked with an estate stamp (GM) arranged by the executors David Strachan and John Henshaw.

I purchased the drawings from a portfolio of Godfrey's work held by the Artarmon Galleries in 1964. David Strachan organised the viewing of the portfolio.

The drawings I purchased were part of a group executed by Godfrey during life painting classes at the National Art School. They were made on the reverse of students' "test" drawings. While his student during 1962, I recall Godfrey drawing in my life painting class when he and I vied for the same view of the model. He was mostly positioned behind my easel and I seemed to be under close scrutiny.



This contact, during life painting classes in 1962 and being a close neighbour in Paddington, led to our friendship during the time I left college at the end of 1962 continuing into 1963 and 1964.

I respected him and admired his work. I valued his friendship...even today.

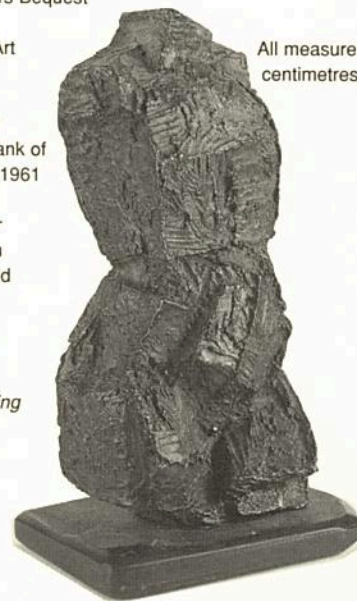
Jean Whitehouse

Lew Miller, Godfrey Miller's brother, was a neighbour and friend of mine and because of him I attended several art exhibitions in Sydney. One was a special one arranged by John Henshaw after numerous drawings were discovered in Godfrey Miller's home in Paddington after his death.

It was one of these drawings that I purchased. It's a quick pencil sketch of a sailing ship - just a small drawing but simple and full of action.

List of Works		17	Untitled c.1933 pencil on paper 19 x 7.5 cm private collection	33	Seated Nude pencil on paper 24.3 x 18.5 cm private collection	48	Untitled (standing figure) 1960 pencil on paper 25 x 19 cm private collection
Godfrey Miller Drawings							
1	Still Life Study c.1958-60 pencil on paper 10.0 x 15.0 cm collection Murray Bail	18	Untitled c.1961 pencil on paper 18.5 x 25.5 cm private collection	34	Lying Figure 1964 oil on canvas 67.2 x 100 cm private collection	49	Untitled pencil on paper 25 x 18 cm private collection
2	Red Earth Forest Series 1964 oil, pen and ink on canvas 60.2 x 100.15 cm private collection	19	Untitled c.1961 pencil on paper 18.7 x 25.5 cm private collection	35	Trees c.1936-38 black & white photograph 51 x 33.3 cm private collection	50	Still Life Study c.1958-60 pencil on paper 10 x 15.4 cm image private collection
3	Seated Figure c.1955 pencil on paper 36 x 25 cm private collection	20	Untitled c.1958 pencil on paper 38 x 28 cm private collection	36	Saplings c.1936-38 black & white photograph 50.7 x 33.3 cm private collection	51	Untitled c.1955-60 pencil on paper 25 x 18 cm private collection
4	Untitled 1961 pencil on paper 24.5 x 18 cm private collection	21	Untitled c.1960-61 pencil on paper 25 x 19 cm private collection	37	Coast - Asia Minor 1938 black & white photograph 24.4 x 37.8 cm private collection	52	Untitled c.1955-56 pencil on paper 18 x 25 cm private collection
5	6 Studies c.1939-44 pencil on paper (double sided) 21 x 26 cm collection Jacqualyne Boon	22	Untitled 1964 oil, pen and ink on canvas 66.5 x 99 cm private collection	38	Untitled c.1960-63 two pencil drawings (displayed in one frame) top 9.0 x 14.0 cm lower 9.0 x 13.9 cm collection Robht Hirschmann	53	Untitled c.1955-61 pencil on paper 25 x 18 cm private collection
6	Compote Series oil and pencil on canvas 51 x 61 cm private collection	23	Untitled c.1959-60 watercolour, pen and ink on canvas 66.5 x 99 cm private collection	39	Still Life oil on canvas 25 x 25 cm collection Ray Hughes	54	Untitled pencil on paper 25 x 17.5 cm private collection
7	Reclining Figure c.1955 pencil on paper 10.9 x 20.5 cm private collection	24	Untitled c.1961-62 pencil on paper 25.2 x 18.4 cm private collection	40	Two Horses two pencil drawings (displayed in one frame) 10 x 15 cm each collection Ray Hughes	55	Untitled pencil on paper 23.5 x 17.5 cm private collection
8	Untitled pencil on paper 25.5 x 19 cm collection Ruth Faerber	25	Untitled c.1961-62 pencil on paper 29.8 x 18.4 cm private collection	41	Reclining Figure pencil on paper 18 x 25 cm collection Ray Hughes	56	Nude Study c.1960-61 pencil on paper 38 x 28 cm private collection
9	Untitled c.1962-63 pencil on paper 26 x 18.5 cm collection Chris Gentle	26	Untitled c.1961-62 pencil on paper 24.8 x 18.4 cm private collection	42	Untitled 1958 pencil on paper 25.5 x 19 cm private collection	57	Nude Study c.1954-61 pencil on paper 38 x 28 cm private collection
10	Untitled 1961 pencil on paper 27 x 37 cm collection James Gleeson	27	Figure study c.1961-62 pencil on paper 18.4 x 24.1 cm private collection	43	Untitled pencil on paper 25.0 x 17.5 cm collection Bruce Latimer & Betsy Baker	58	Seated Female c.1960-63 pencil on paper 25 x 18.5 cm collection Idris Murphy
11	Nude Figure c.1948 pencil on paper 35.5 x 25.5 cm private collection	28	Untitled two pencil drawings (displayed in one frame) 10.2 x 15.1 cm each private collection	44	Untitled c.1961-62 pencil on paper 37.0 x 21.0 cm collection Bruce Latimer & Betsy Baker	59	Untitled 1963 pencil on paper 25 x 18.5 cm collection Idris Murphy
12	Study for a Crucifixion pencil on canvas 36 x 28 cm collection Geoffrey Hassall	29	Untitled c.1961-63 pencil on paper 26.4 x 37.6 cm private collection	45	Untitled pencil on paper 25.0 x 17.5 cm collection Bruce Latimer & Betsy Baker	60	Figure c.1962-64 pencil on paper 25 x 18.5 cm collection Idris Murphy
13	Untitled c.1961 pencil on paper 25.5 x 19 cm private collection	30	Untitled c.1961-62 pencil on paper 18.8 x 24.6 cm private collection	46	Reclining Nude c.1955-58 pencil on paper 24 x 9 cm private collection	61	Untitled 1963 pencil on paper 24 x 18 cm collection John Olsen
14	Untitled c.1961 pencil on paper 25.5 x 18.7 cm private collection	31	Untitled pencil on paper 24.8 x 18.4 cm private collection	47	Untitled Landscape c.1940 pencil and wash on paper 22 x 32.5 cm private collection	62	Untitled pencil on paper 24 x 17.5 cm collection Karin Oom
15	Untitled late 1950s pencil on paper 28 x 38 cm private collection	32	Untitled c.1960 pencil on paper 27.5 x 26.5 cm private collection			63	Untitled c.1960s pencil on paper 10 x 15 cm private collection
16	Untitled c.1961						

- 10 x 15 cm each
private collection
- 65 *Untitled* c.1962-64
oil, pen and ink on canvas
66 x 84 cm
collection Assoc. Prof. Peter
Pinson
- 66 *Untitled*
pencil on paper
18.5 x 25 cm
collection Peter Powditch
- 67 *Untitled* 1956
pencil on paper
18 x 25 cm
collection Anne Robertson-
Swann
- 68 *Untitled* 1956
pencil on paper
18 x 25 cm
collection Anne Robertson-
Swann
- 69 *Seated Female* c.1955-58
pencil on paper
24.5 x 18 cm
private collection
- 70 *Standing Female* c.1960-61
pencil on paper
24.5 x 18 cm
private collection
- 71 *Standing Female, Leg Forward*
c.1960-63
pencil on paper
38 x 28 cm
private collection
- 72 *Study For Nude And The Moon*
pencil on paper
27.2 x 37.5 cm
private collection
- 73 *Standing Female leaning to the
left* c.1953-56
pencil on paper
24.5 X 18.5 cm
private collection
- 74 *Floating Figure - Female*
c.1938-40
pencil on paper
23.5 x 33 cm
private collection
- 75 *Tree Series* c.mid 1940s
watercolour and pencil on paper
24 x 26 cm
collection Roy Sinclair
- 76 *Untitled* c.1956-60
pencil on paper
25 x 18.5 cm
collection Margaret McLellan
Spratt
- 77 *Untitled* c.1960-64
pencil on paper
38 x 27.8 cm
collection Margaret McLellan
Spratt
- collection Dr. Susan Stevens
- 79 *Untitled* c.1962
pencil on paper
25 x 19 cm
collection Dr. Susan Stevens
- 80 *Untitled (seated figure)*
pencil on paper
25.5 x 19 cm
private collection
- 81 *Untitled (standing figure)*
pencil on paper
24.5 x 18 cm
private collection
- 82 *Untitled (reclining figure)*
pencil on paper
13.5 x 24.5 cm
private collection
- 83 *Back View* c.1954-57
pencil on paper
17.5 x 16.5 cm
collection Romy & Nick
Waterlow
8. *Untitled*
pencil on paper
37.5 x 26.5 cm
collection Frank Watters
- 85 *Untitled* c.1949-54
pencil on paper
18 x 24.5 cm
collection Frank Watters
- 86 *Untitled* c.1961-63
pencil on paper
10 x 14.5 cm
collection Jean Whitehouse
- The drawings are listed in lender order
alphabetically and therefore not
chronologically.
- Godfrey Miller Sculpture**
- Female torso* c.1938-40
bronze
19.5 x 7.5 x 7 cm
private collection
- Female torso* c.1950-54
bronze
17.2 x 7 x 6 cm
private collection
- Female torso* c.1960-62
bronze
22.7 x 9.5 x 9 cm
private collection
- Female torso* c.1961
pewter
18.5 x 8.5 x 4 cm
private collection
- Female torso* c.1961-64
bronze
33 x 11.5 x 9 cm
private collection
- Female torso* c.1961- 64
terracotta
31.8 x 11.5 x 10 cm
private collection
- Seated figure* c.1960
quill and ink on paper
37 x 25 cm
collection of the artist
- Standing Figure* c1949
quill and ink on paper
37 x 25 cm
collection of the artist
- Unknown Political Prisoner* 1952
Memorial maquette
bronze
50 x 11 x 15 cm
collection of the artist
- Lyndon Dadswell**
- Working Drawing for Reclining Female*
1949
ink, crayon on paper
21 x 26 cm
collection Penny Zylstra
- Figure Study* 1949
pen and crayon, from the artist's
sketchbook
26.5 x 21.0 cm
collection Penny Zylstra
- Untitled Drawing* c.1950
pen on paper
10 x 14 cm
collection Penny Zylstra
- Man and Woman* 1954
Newcastle
War Memorial maquette
bronze
45.5 x 21 x 14 cm
collection Penny Zylstra
- Reclining Female* 1949
bronze
25 x 41 x 20 cm
collection Penny Zylstra
- Margel Hinder**
- Small ball II (Flight of Birds)* c1962
copper, shim and solder
14.0 cm diam.
private collection
- Currawongs* 1946
black shale on aluminium base
25 x 27 x 11cm
collection of Lewers Bequest
and
Penrith Regional Art
Gallery
- Preliminary model
for the Reserve Bank of
Australia, Sydney* 1961
Preliminary model
Copper and solder
33 x 19.6 x 9.1 cm
courtesy Bloomfield
Galleries
- Oliffe Richmond**
- Man's head, Looking
down* c1958
pencil on paper
31.5 x 16.2 cm
private collection
- 75 x 37 cm
collection Geoffrey Hassall
- Untitled* c.1960
pen on paper
66 x 52 cm
collection Geoffrey Hassall
- Untitled* 1960
pen on paper
24.5 x 20 cm
private collection
- Four sketches including *Sea urchin*
1954
watercolour on paper
26 x 20 cm
The University of
New South Wales Art Collection
- Mirror Figure* 1967
bronze
28 x 24.5 x 12.5 cm
The University of
New South Wales Art Collection
- Standing Figure* c1965
bronze
38 x 17 x 11 cm
courtesy of Watters Gallery
- Defender II* 1965
bronze
25 x 37 x 17cm
courtesy of Watters Gallery
- Wendy Solling**
- The Sheep shearer* 1950
wire
30 x 30 x 20 cm (approx)
private collection
- Wood chopping* 1950
wire
90 x 45 x 25 cm
private collection
- Face of the Land* 1955
wood
45 x 23 x 16 cm (approx)
private collection
- The Wind* 1948
Red sandstone
60 x 50 x 45 cm (approx)
private collection
- All measurements are in
centimetres, height x width x depth



Female torso c.1960 - 62
private collection

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Godfrey Miller note written in 1956
Godfrey Miller
Foreword by Peter Bellew
editor John Henshaw
Darlinghurst Galleries Sydney 1965, unpaginated

man has within him a structure of principle
a realm of Truth a Consciousness of the Cosmos
In Nature when he goes out ^{there} he finds nothing
of his Cosmos: at most it is a series of
units. Between the units he finds emergences
and differentiations, — and the subtle verbs.
At the times when he paints or otherwise create
— he must on, or onto Nature, or what he
writs from nature implant his Principles
insert his beliefs — even to the extent
of seeing just how far these Principles can
apply. He sees. Tho his will. When further
he paints — he must induce others to see
and behold through his Will: see power of,
The Order of, ~~has~~ his Willing
6/1/56.

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