



JOY HESTER
REMEMBER ME

Joy Hester: Remember Me
30 June to 4 October 2020
Heide Galleries
Curator: Kendrah Morgan

Please note that in this exhibition checklist
the works are arranged chronologically, then
alphabetically by title.

The exhibition publication is available in
the Heide Shop.

Introduction

This exhibition marks the centenary of the birth of Joy Hester (1920–1960), one of Australia's most original modernist artists who used drawing as a vehicle to explore the complexity of the human condition. Working almost exclusively in brush and ink or watercolour, Hester created intuitive images that express the myriad ways in which we respond to experiences and the world around us. She freed herself from conventional methods and means and brought a powerful female sensibility to subjects considered provocative during her lifetime including love, sex, birth, and death.

Hester was an integral figure in the progressive creative group today referred to as the Angry Penguins or the Heide circle, who looked to the European avant garde for new ways of articulating the pressing issues of the era. However, almost from the outset her work was distinct from that of her predominantly male peers due to her chosen medium, which at the time was considered inferior to painting. While her socially conscious imagery of the early 1940s aligns with that of other Heide circle artists such as her first husband Albert Tucker, Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd and Danila Vassilieff, by the end of the decade Hester had taken an alternative, more personal path that focused on making manifest emotional and bodily experience. Emphasising the figure and face—and in particular the eyes—as a means to probing the depths of the psyche, she experimented with diverse stylistic modes and gradually found her own voice.

After a cancer diagnosis in 1947 and the beginning of a new relationship with artist Gray Smith, Hester strengthened her ties with Heide founders and modern art champions John and Sunday Reed, who adopted her son Sweeney and remained her close friends and supporters. Heide Museum of Modern Art is thus a fitting venue for this exhibition, which traces her creative trajectory, from early student exercises and formative depictions of transitory city life, to powerful responses to the oppressive climate of war, psychological portraits and later, authentic investigations of human intimacy and the theme of childhood. Although her art remained largely unrecognised until many years after her untimely death in 1960, today Hester is regarded as key figure in the development of Australian modernism.



1
(Antique bust) c.1937
charcoal on paper
64 x 48.5 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of anonymous
donor 2013



7
(Sculptural nude) c.1939
pen and ink, brush and ink and pencil
on paper
25.4 x 38.4 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2014



2
(Head of a man) 1938
pencil on paper
37.2 x 28.4 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Purchased 1992



8
(Female nude) c.1941
brush and ink and pencil on paper
34.4 x 24.3 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
On long-term loan from the Albert &
Barbara Tucker Foundation



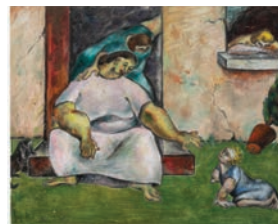
3
Study of a Woman (Student head)
c.1938
charcoal on paper
36.3 x 26 cm
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Purchased 1976



9
(Man's head) c.1941
pen and ink, brush and ink and pencil
on paper
33.4 x 26.6 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
On long-term loan from the Albert &
Barbara Tucker Foundation



4
(Female nude) c.1939
conté and pencil on paper
38.1 x 32.3 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of Barrett Reid 1990



10
Mexican Woman c.1941
brush and gouache and pencil
on cardboard
35.5 x 45.3 cm
Private collection, Melbourne



5
Head of a Man c.1939
pencil and watercolour on paper
23.2 x 19.6 cm
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Purchased 1980



11
(Street scene) c.1941
brush and ink and pen and ink
wash on paper
27.3 x 30.8 cm (irreg.)
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Purchased 1980



6
(Reclining nude) c.1939
brush and pen and ink on paper
38.4 x 25.3 cm
Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



12
(Two girls in a street) c.1941
brush and ink and
watercolour on paper
28.2 x 38.8 cm
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Purchased 1980



13
Woman in a Street – Rubber Co. c.1941
 brush and ink and pencil on paper
 24.6 x 19.4 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1980



19
Woman with Harmonica c.1942
 ink and watercolour on paper
 37 x 32 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



14
(Young girl) c.1941
 pen and ink and brush and ink on
 paper
 24.6 x 19.5 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 On long-term loan from the Albert &
 Barbara Tucker Foundation



20
Worker c.1942
 ink on paper
 74.2 x 54.7 cm
 Parliament House Art
 Collection, Canberra



15
(Crouching figure) c.1942
 ink and gouache on paper
 18.6 x 27.5 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Barrett Reid 1990



21
(Seated woman) 1943
 24.5 x 29 cm
 brush and ink on paper
 Private collection, Melbourne



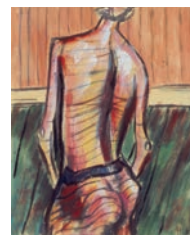
16
Mad Girl c.1942
 oil on beaten tin
 44.5 x 57.2 cm
 Art Gallery of Western
 Australia, Perth
 Purchased through the Sir Claude
 Hotchin Art Foundation, Art Gallery of
 Western Australia Foundation 2013



22
Woman Resting 1943
 ink on paper
 23.9 x 30.1 cm
 Private collection, courtesy of Smith
 & Singer Fine Art, Melbourne



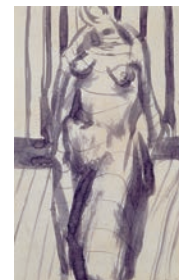
17
(Street scene) c.1942
 ink and wash on paper
 49.5 x 39.5 cm
 Private collection



23
(Figure with scarred back) c.1943
 brush and ink, gouache, watercolour,
 pastel and oil on paper
 29.8 x 24 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Barbara Tucker 2014



18
(Two women in a room) c.1942
 oil on composition board
 38.5 x 46.4 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of the Albert & Barbara Tucker
 Foundation 2019



24
(Nude) c.1943
 brush and ink on paper on cardboard
 31.8 x 20.2 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 On long-term loan from the Albert &
 Barbara Tucker Foundation



25
(Nude with socks) c.1943
 brush and ink on paper
 25.5 x 20.5 cm
 Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



31
(Seated girl) c.1944
 brush and ink on paper
 31.6 x 20.2 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 On long-term loan from the Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



26
(Pink nude) c.1943
 watercolour on paper
 40 x 50 cm
 Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



32
(Three figures in a chair) c.1944
 pen and ink and watercolour on paper
 26.4 x 20.8 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 On long-term loan from the Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



27
(Seated figure) c.1943
 brush and ink on cardboard
 19.6 x 31.2 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Bequest of John and Sunday Reed 1982



33
Waitress at the Hotel Australia c.1944
 brush and ink on paper
 22.5 x 22.5 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



28
(Two women in a room) c.1943
 brush and ink, watercolour and pencil
 on paper
 27.6 x 37.4 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



34
(Woman with skull-like head) c.1944
 brush and ink and pencil on paper
 25.9 x 20 cm
 On long-term loan from the Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



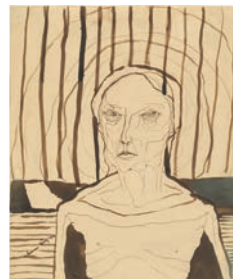
29
Death Will Find Me c.1944
 brush and ink, watercolour, pencil and
 coloured pencil on card
 22.8 x 22.8 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 On long-term loan from the Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



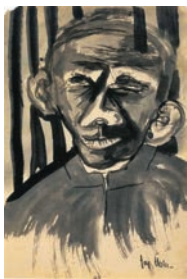
35
A Frightened Woman 1945
 brush and ink and wash
 on paper
 31.4 x 20.4 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 2001



30
(Nude man in a chair) c.1944
 brush and ink and pen and ink on
 paper
 20.8 x 26.5 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 On long-term loan from the Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



36
A Human Being 1945
 brush and ink and pen and ink on
 paper
 50.6 x 40.5 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1976



37
Prisoner 1945
brush and ink on paper
33.5 x 23 cm
Private collection, Melbourne

Please note: this work has been removed from display and replaced with

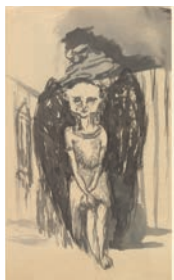
Man c.1944
brush and ink and watercolour on paper
31.5 x 20 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
On long-term loan from the Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



38
Self Portrait 1945
brush and ink and gouache on paper
31 x 23.9 cm
Private collection



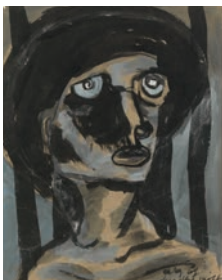
39
(Angel) c.1945
brush and ink and gouache on paper
31.6 x 20.2 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased 1980



40
(Angel) c.1945
brush and ink and pen and ink on paper
31.6 x 20.2 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1980



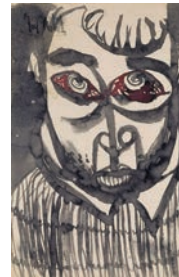
41
Amor Vincet Omnia (Love Conquers All) c.1945
brush and ink, water-colour and pencil on card
22.8 x 21 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of the Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation 2019



42
City of Dreadful Night c.1945
brush and ink and gouache on paper
30.8 x 24.4 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1976



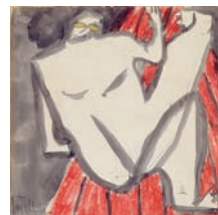
43
(Figure with square eyes) c.1945
brush and ink on paper
31.9 x 20.3 cm
Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



44
Frightened c.1945
brush and ink and wash on paper
31.9 x 20.3 cm
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Purchased 1993



45
I Fleed in Terror of the Night c.1945
brush and ink on paper
19 x 22.5 cm
Collection of Alan and Wendy Gerloff



46
Jumping Figure c.1945
brush and ink, pen and ink, watercolour and pencil on card
22.8 x 22.8 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of the Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation 2019



47
Lamentation Over the Dead Christ c.1945
brush and ink and pastel on paper
20.2 x 31.6 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
On long-term loan from the Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



48
Mother and Child c.1945
brush and ink on paper
29.6 x 24 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2007



49
(Naked figures and angels) c.1945
 brush and ink on paper
 26.8 x 29.9 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Barbara Tucker 2014



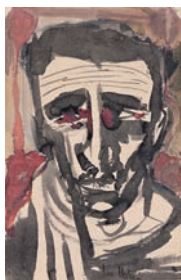
55
(Two huddled women) c.1945
 brush and ink and watercolour
 on paper
 25.4 x 29.3 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 On long-term loan from the Albert &
 Barbara Tucker Foundation



50
Of War c.1945
 brush and ink on paper
 20.2 x 31.6 cm
 Art Gallery of New South Wales,
 Sydney
 David George Wilson Bequest 2015



56
Victim c.1945
 brush and ink on paper
 29.7 x 24 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Ken Fletcher 2002



51
Portrait of Albert Tucker
 c.1945
 brush and ink on paper
 31.5 x 20 cm
 Port Phillip City Collection,
 Melbourne
 Purchased 2015



57
(Victim by fence) c.1945
 brush and ink on paper on cardboard
 20.8 x 31.6 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Tom Lowenstein 2002



52
Screaming Man c.1945
 ink and pencil on paper
 29.8 x 24 cm
 Private collection, courtesy
 of Lauraine Diggins Fine Art,
 Melbourne



58
(Woman in yellow top) c.1945
 brush and ink, gouache and crayon on
 paper
 29.6 x 24 cm
 Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



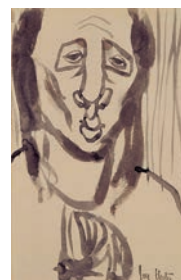
53
(Startled man) c.1945
 brush and ink and pencil on paper
 29.6 x 24 cm
 Albert & Barbara Tucker Foundation



59
Woman in the Street, Fitzroy c.1945
 ink on paper
 63 x 49 cm
 Newcastle Art Gallery,
 New South Wales
 Purchased 1982



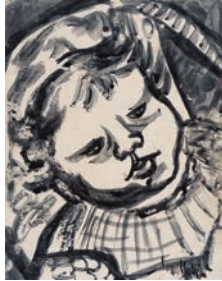
54
Stunned Man c.1945
 brush and ink and watercolour and
 pencil on paper
 29.4 x 26 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Barbara Tucker 2014



60
(Woman with square eyes) c.1945
 brush and ink on paper
 31.5 x 20 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 On long-term loan from the Albert &
 Barbara Tucker Foundation



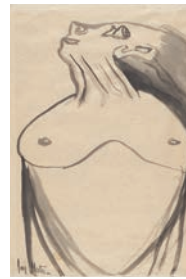
61
(Woman with stalk eyes) c.1945
 ink on paper
 30 x 24 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne
 Courtesy of Lauraine Diggins
 Fine Art, Melbourne



62
Blue Sweeney 1946
 brush and ink and pencil on paper
 27.8 x 22 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Barbara Tucker 2007



63
(Face) c.1946
 brush and ink on paper
 28 x 23.5 cm
 Collection of Alan and Wendy Gerloff



67
From an Incredible Night Dream c.1946
 brush and ink on paper
 35.8 x 24 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1976



68
From an Incredible Night Dream c.1946
 brush and ink on paper
 35.5 x 24.5 cm
 Private collection, Sydney



69
Fun Fair c.1946
 brush and ink, watercolour, coloured
 chalk and pencil on paper
 20.2 x 25.2 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Barbara Tucker 2007



64
From an Incredible Night Dream c.1946
 brush and ink and wash on paper
 24 x 31.5 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



70
Gethsemane c.1946
 gouache and ink on paper
 25.3 x 31.2 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Bequest of John and Sunday Reed
 1982



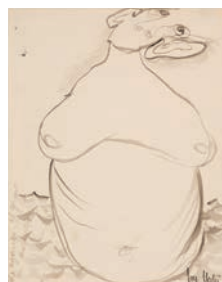
65
From an Incredible Night Dream c.1946
 brush and ink and wash on paper
 23.5 x 30.5 cm
 Private collection



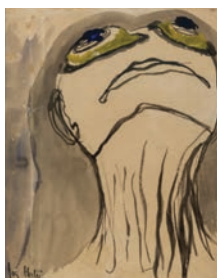
71
Gethsemane V c.1946
 ink and gouache on paper
 24.5 x 30.5 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Barrett Reid 1990



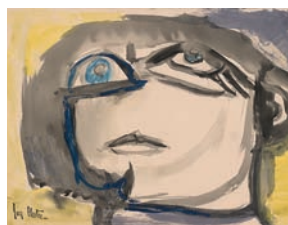
66
From an Incredible Night Dream c.1946
 brush and ink, wash
 and gouache on paper
 25.1 x 31.5 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Barrett Reid 1990



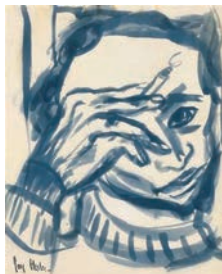
72
The Agonies of Christ in Ascension c.1946
 brush and ink and wash on paper
 31.4 x 25.1 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Barrett Reid 1990



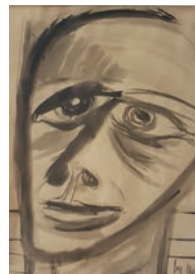
73
Face I 1947
 brush and ink and gouache on paper
 31.5 x 24 cm
 Moreland Art Collection
 Donated through the Australian
 Government's Cultural Gifts Program
 by Simon Payne and Stephen Hewitt



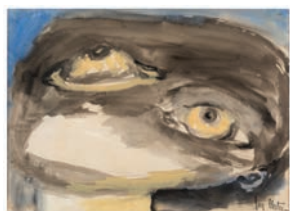
79
(Face) c.1947
 brush and ink, wash,
 watercolour and oil
 on paper
 27.6 x 37.6 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 Purchased 1976



74
Gray Smith 1947
 brush and ink on paper
 31.5 x 25 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



80
(Face) c.1947
 brush and ink and wash
 on paper
 36 x 27 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Purchased with funds
 donated by Vivienne and Richard
 Reed 2018



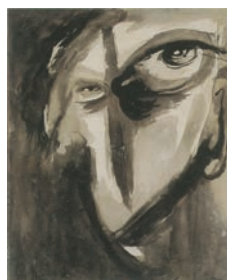
75
Face c.1947
 brush and ink on paper
 16 x 36 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



81
Face c.1947
 brush and ink and wash
 on paper
 31 x 25 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Stephen Davies 2004



76
Face c.1947
 brush and ink on paper
 35.9 x 26.9 cm
 Albert & Barbara Tucker
 Foundation



82
Face II c.1947
 brush and ink and wash on paper
 30.5 x 24.2 cm
 Collection of Janine Burke



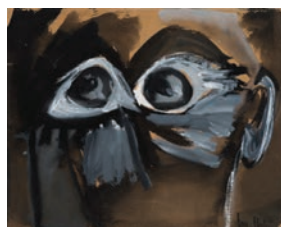
77
(Face) c.1947
 ink and watercolour on paper
 26 x 36.5 cm
 Private collection, courtesy
 of Menzies Fine Art
 Auctioneers, Melbourne



83
Face VI c.1947
 brush and ink and wash on paper on
 cardboard
 31.2 x 24.8 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Bequest of John and Sunday Reed
 1982



78
(Face) c.1947
 brush and ink on paper
 30.5 x 25.5 cm
 Private collection. Melbourne



84
Face (In close up) c.1947
 brush and ink and wash and gouache
 on paper
 24.7 x 31 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Purchased 1992



85
Face (With eye on a stalk) c.1947
 brush and ink and wash on paper
 31.6 x 25.2 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Barrett Reid 1990



91
Sleep 1948
 brush and ink and
 watercolour on paper
 28 x 31.1 cm
 Frenkel Collection



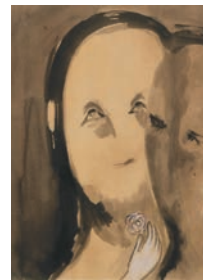
86
Face (With yellow background) c.1947
 brush and ink and gouache on paper
 27.6 x 37.6 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Gift of Barrett Reid 1990



92
Child of the High Seas c.1948
 brush and ink and pen
 and ink on paper
 20.2 x 31.6 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1976



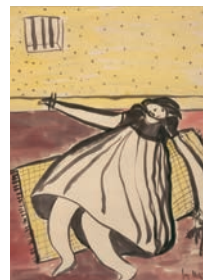
87
John Reed c.1947
 brush and ink on paper
 31.5 x 25 cm
 Collection of Kenneth, Berta and
 Petille von Bibra



93
Faces c.1948
 ink and pastel on paper
 47.5 x 34.5 cm
 Cbus Collection of Australian Art as
 advised by Dr. Joseph Brown AO OBE
 Latrobe Regional Gallery, Morwell,
 Victoria
 Purchased 2000

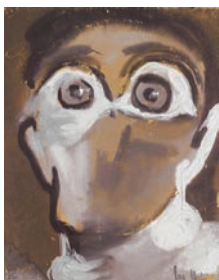


88
No. 37 (from the Faces series)
 c.1947
 ink and watercolour on paper
 23 x 30 cm
 Private collection, courtesy of Smith
 & Singer Fine Art, Melbourne

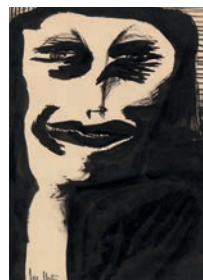


94
(Figure with doll) c.1948
 watercolour
 48 x 38.6 cm
 Cruthers Collection of Women's Art
 Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery,
 University of Western Australia, Perth

**Please note: this work has been removed
 from display and returned to the lender for
 inclusion in another exhibition**



89
Self Portrait (from the Faces series)
 c.1947
 ink and watercolour on paper
 30 x 24 cm
 Private collection, courtesy of Smith
 & Singer Fine Art, Melbourne



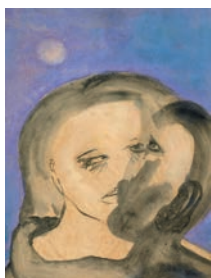
95
(Woman in black) c.1948
 brush and ink on paper
 37.2 x 26.9 cm (irreg.)
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 Purchased 1976



90
Face III 1948
 brush and ink and gouache on paper
 36.8 x 27.9 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1976



96
Love 1949
 brush and ink and wash on paper
 20 x 20 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Bequest of Barrett Reid 2000



97
Love 1949
 brush and ink, watercolour and pastel
 on paper
 30 x 23.5 cm
 Private collection, courtesy of Smith
 & Singer Fine Art, Melbourne



103
Love V 1949
 gouache on paper
 55.8 x 38.6 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Purchased from John and
 Sunday Reed 1980



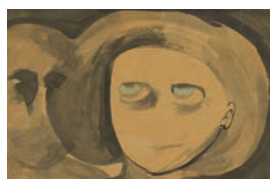
98
Love 1949
 brush and ink and pastel
 on paper
 31.6 x 25.2 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 Purchased 1976



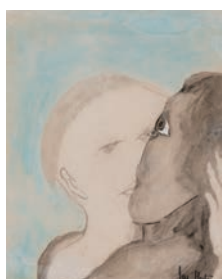
104
Face 2 c.1949
 brush and ink and wash
 on paper
 37.4 x 27.7 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Bequest of John and Sunday Reed
 1982



99
Love 1949
 brush and ink and pastel on paper
 29.5 x 24.5 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



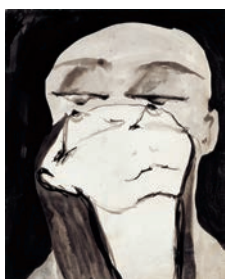
105
(Girl with blue eyes) from the *Lovers*
 series I c.1949
 brush and ink, wash and gouache on
 paper
 27 x 42.4 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1972



100
Love 1949
 charcoal, brush and ink, pastel, and
 gouache on paper
 31.4 x 25.3 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



106
Love c.1949
 brush and ink and pastel on paper
 54 x 36.3 cm
 TarraWarra Museum of Art Collection,
 Melbourne
 Gift of Eva Besen AO and Marc
 Besen AC
 Donated through the Australian
 Government's Cultural Gifts Program
 2015



101
Love 1949
 brush and ink on paper
 30.5 x 24.5 cm
 Private collection, courtesy of Gould
 Creative, Melbourne



107
Love c.1949
 brush and ink, gouache and pastel on
 paper
 37.5 x 27.5 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



102
Love I 1949
 brush and ink on paper on cardboard
 38 x 35.5 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Purchased with funds
 donated by Nancy Underhill 2018



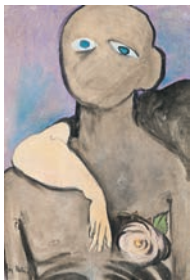
108
Love (Heart group) c.1949
 brush and ink on paper
 37.6 x 50 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Gift of Mrs Robert Dulieu 1981



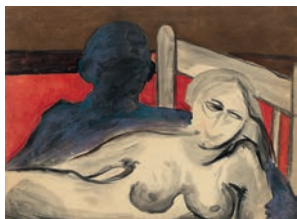
109
Love (Heart group) c.1949
 pen, ink and wash on paper
 35.6 x 40.1 cm
 Gallery at HOTA, Queensland
 Acquired through the Burchill
 Fund 1988



110
(The embrace) from the *Love* series I
 c.1949
 chalk, ink and wash on
 paper on board
 37.9 x 27.2 cm
 The University of Western Australia
 Art Collection, Perth
 McGillivray Bequest Fund



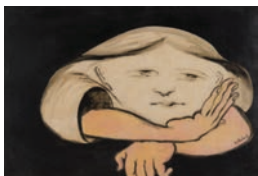
111
(Lovers with rose) c.1950
 watercolour, pastel, brush and
 Chinese ink on paper on card
 54 x 36.5 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



112
Man and Woman in Bed c.1952
 brush and ink, ink wash
 and pastel on paper
 55.6 x 76.2 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 Purchased 1976



113
The Bouquet 1955
 ink and wash on paper
 72 x 47.5 cm
 Private collection



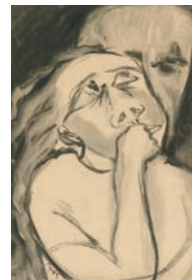
114
Boy with Pink Arms (Sweeney) 1955
 pastel, ink and wash on paper
 38 x 55.4 cm
 Newcastle Art Gallery,
 New South Wales
 Purchased 1982



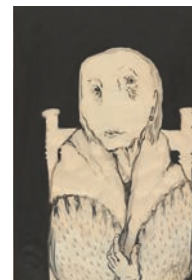
115
(Head of a woman with hat) 1955
 gouache, wash and crayon on paper
 on cardboard
 75.4 x 50.4 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 Purchased 1965



116
Lovers [I] 1955
 brush and ink on paper
 36.8 x 31.7 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1973



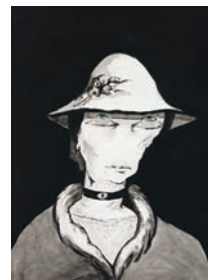
117
Lovers [IV] 1955
 brush and ink and wash
 on paper
 54.5 x 36.5 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 2001



118
Mother 1955
 brush and ink and gouache
 on paper
 75.2 x 49.2 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1976



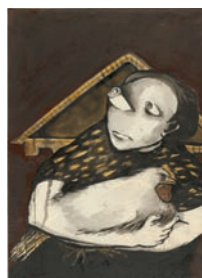
119
Mother and Child 1955
 brush and ink on paper
 75.4 x 55 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1976



120
Old Woman 1955
 brush and ink and crayon on paper
 74 x 54.5 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



121
Portrait of John and Sunday
 Reed 1955
 brush and ink on paper
 25.5 x 15 cm
 Collection of Michael and
 Kylie Rayner



127
Girl with Hen 1956
 brush and ink, watercolour and oil on
 paper
 75.6 x 55.3 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1976



122
Woman 1955
 brush and ink and watercolour on
 paper
 71.5 x 46.5 cm
 TarraWarra Museum of Art Collection,
 Melbourne
 Gift of Eva Besen and Marc Besen AO
 2001



128
Lovers 1956
 brush and ink and watercolour
 on paper
 49 x 36 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



123
Boy 1956
 brush and ink and watercolour
 on paper
 75.2 x 49.6 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1976



129
Lovers [III] 1956
 brush and ink and colour
 wash on paper
 76.2 x 49.9 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Gift of Mrs Robert Dulieu 1981



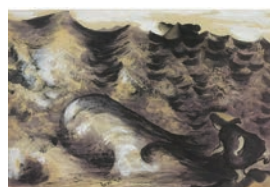
124
(Girl gazing upwards) 1956
 brush and ink and watercolour
 on paper
 36 x 26.9 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Gift of Mrs Robert Dulieu 1981



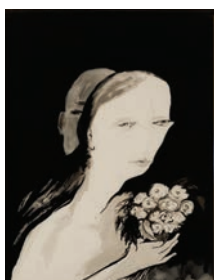
130
Child in Blue c.1956
 brush and ink and gouache
 on paper
 26.8 x 36.2 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



125
Girl Holding Flowers 1956
 brush and ink, watercolour
 and pastel on paper
 35.8 x 27.1 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 Presented through The Art
 Foundation of Victoria from the
 Bequest of Violet Dulieu,
 Founder Benefactor 1997



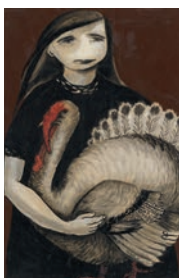
131
Child of the High Seas 1957
 brush and ink and gouache on paper
 37.2 x 55.4 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



126
Girl with Flowers 1956
 brush and ink and wash on paper
 74 x 54 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



132
Girl 1957
 brush and ink on paper
 49.9 x 75.5 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 1972



133
Girl Holding Turkey (Vera) 1957
 synthetic polymer paint, brush and
 ink and gouache on card
 74.8 x 49.8 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 Presented through The Art
 Foundation of Victoria from the
 Bequest of Violet Dulieu,
 Founder Benefactor 1997



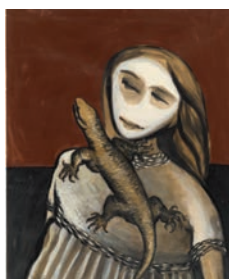
134
Girl in Corner 1957
 brush and ink and gouache on paper
 63.5 x 50.8 cm
 Cruthers Collection of
 Women's Art
 Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery
 University of Western Australia, Perth



135
Girl with Dog 1957
 watercolour and ink on paper on
 board
 55.5 x 75.5 cm
 Private collection, Brisbane



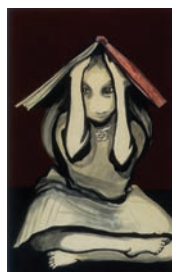
136
Girl with Fish 1957
 brush and ink, gouache
 and watercolour on paper on board
 55 x 75 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



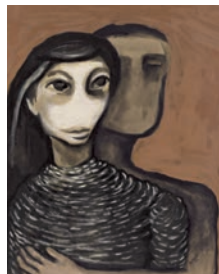
137
Girl with Goanna 1957
 brush and ink and gouache on paper
 62.3 x 49.5 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 2008



138
Girl with Hat and Far Away 1957
 synthetic polymer paint, brush and
 ink, pencil, watercolour and gouache
 on card on composition board
 47 x 73 cm
 TarraWarra Museum of Art Collection,
 Melbourne
 Gift of Eva Besen and Marc Besen AO
 2002



139
Little Girl with Book on Head 1957
 enamel and watercolour on card
 99 x 62 cm
 The Wesfarmers Collection
 of Australian Art, Perth



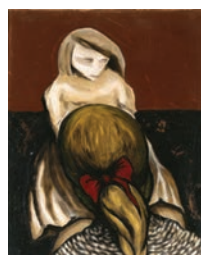
140
Lovers 1957
 gouache and brush and ink on paper
 62 x 48.5 cm
 Private collection, courtesy of Smith
 & Singer Fine Art, Melbourne



141
Portrait of a Girl 1957
 oil on canvas on board
 101.5 x 75 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



142
Standing Girl 1957
 enamel and gouache on
 paper on board
 144.5 x 47 cm
 Private collection, Melbourne



143
Two Girls in the Street 1957
 synthetic polymer paint, brush and
 ink and watercolour on card
 63.4 x 50.6 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 Presented through The Art
 Foundation of Victoria from the
 Bequest of Violet Dulieu,
 Founder Benefactor 1997



144
The Lovers c.1958
 gouache, brush and ink and synthetic
 polymer paint on card
 101.5 x 63.4 cm
 Art Gallery of South Australia,
 Adelaide
 South Australian Government Grant
 1972

Student works



From 1937 to mid-1938 Hester attended art classes at Melbourne's National Gallery School. The academic studies she produced there reveal her considerable ability in traditional drawing exercises and give no indication of the radical direction of her future work. After finding the course too conservative she abandoned it for the less formal learning environment of life classes at the Victorian Artists Society, where her approach quickly became looser and more expressive.

Street scenes



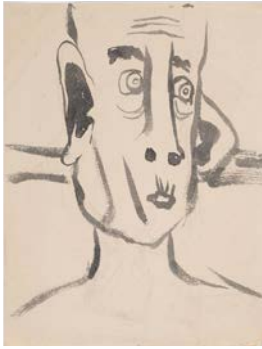
In 1938 Hester began a relationship with the painter Albert Tucker and lived with him intermittently at his studio in Little Collins Street. She developed an interest in depicting life on the streets, taking her cue from the lively inner city scenes of Russian émigré artist Danila Vassilieff, whose spontaneous approach and disregard for convention provided a liberating example. Unlike the playful energy of Vassilieff's street scenes, however, Hester's observations of urban life are often permeated with a sense of unease and alienation that perhaps owes something to the urban drawings of George Grosz, one of several German expressionists whose work she and Tucker studied in publications.

Interiors with figures



In numerous works from 1942 and 1943 Hester focused on the motif of a solitary seated or reclining figure in an empty room, often with a distant door that appears to suggest the possibility of escape. The images reflect both Hester's experimentation with a variety of styles and media and a distinct psychological shift, with the figures projecting a sense of vulnerability, internal disquiet and sometimes claustrophobia. Related to troubling works about war and mental anguish produced by Tucker and other Heide circle artists such as Sidney Nolan and Arthur Boyd, these drawings use psychological unrest as the basis for artistic expression—an idea radical in Australia at the time. Hester was to push the concept further in subsequent depictions of heads that represent heightened or extreme states of emotion.

Drawing



Hester's preference for drawing over painting was well-established by the mid-1940s. Though her affinity for the medium was partly born of necessity due to financial constraints it may also be attributed to the immediacy it afforded. In her own words, drawing was crucial to capturing 'the psychological and psychic aspect of a moment, or not even a moment but a split flash that half a moment can give'. This desire for immediacy is reflected in her spontaneous method of working—especially during her early career—unselfconsciously in front of and while interacting with others, quickly recording her ideas with whatever materials were to hand.

Psychological portraits



During the early 1940s Melbourne's cultural landscape was shifting in response to the unsettling climate engendered by World War II. Hester, along with other progressive artists, followed the example of the European avant garde in distorting or deconstructing the human figure and face as a metaphor for the fragmented state of the social body and the existential crisis generated by war. Her powerful 'psychological portraits' characterised by agitated or stunned expressions and crazed or vacant eyes suggest the prevalence of fear and anxiety in this period of collective uncertainty. Many of these works are reminiscent of the haunting woodcuts by German Expressionists such as Emil Nolde, while the elemental, mask-like structure of others indicates Hester's cognisance of so-called 'primitive' art as a source for European modernism.

Victims of war



Towards the end of the war Hester viewed newsreel footage of the Allied liberation of the Nazi concentration camps and felt compelled to respond to the exposed atrocities in a number of confronting depictions of Holocaust victims and religious images on the themes of betrayal, sacrifice, grief and release. In some of these works the emaciated victims of the death camps are transformed into angels or depicted under the protection of heavenly hosts, lending pathos to the artist's hallucinatory visions.



From an Incredible Night Dream

In the later 1940s Hester's work became increasingly personal and concerned with articulating individual, and often specifically female, emotional and bodily experience. She dispensed with naturalism in favour of a 'haptic' approach that allowed her to describe how the body feels to those who inhabit it, rather than how it appears externally or how it can be emblematised. The *Incredible Night Dream* drawings from this period probably derive in part from her experience of the fevers and nights sweats that signalled the onset of Hodgkin lymphoma, a cancer of the lymph nodes. Hester's disturbing images of limbless bodies in torsion, with their ambiguous associations of pain and pleasure, were also inspired by Jean Cocteau's phantasmal illustrations for his account of his withdrawal from opium addiction in *Opium: The Diary of His Cure*, 1930.



Faces

When diagnosed with cancer in early 1947 Hester left Tucker for the artist Gray Smith, with whom she had begun a passionate affair. She placed her two-year-old son Sweeney in John and Sunday Reed's care and travelled with Smith to Sydney, where she underwent radiation treatment. Her powerful series of *Faces*—defined by the disquieting motif of disparate, often protruding eyes—was produced at this difficult time, the images externalising her sense of fear and vulnerability as she confronted the possibility of death. Hester was rattled by the raw intensity of the works and after pinning them up on the wall took them down again, finding them 'frightening things' to contemplate for extended periods. They are now considered among her most remarkable creative achievements.

Love and Lovers



Hester embarked on the *Love* series of 1949–50 when she went into remission from cancer. Compared to the harrowing imagery of the *Faces* they suggest an emotional recalibration and new focus on life-affirming experiences as she and Smith consolidated their relationship and began a quiet rural existence in Hurstbridge on Melbourne's outskirts. The *Love* drawings are characterised by the recurrent motifs of an ethereal female figure and darker, sometimes shadowy male presence embracing, overlapping, merging into and consuming one another, often with a shared eye as the point of intersection. The device of two blended faces to symbolise sexual union has antecedents in the work of Picasso, Nolde and the symbolist artist Edvard Munch, whose spectral representations of love, illness, death and emotional states form an important source for Hester's later work. At the same time Hester's interrogation of the sensory and emotional conditions of deep connection and physical intimacy is uniquely her own, and one of her most important contributions to Australian art. She included the *Love* series, along with the *Faces* and *Sleep* series, and related poems, in her first solo exhibition at Melbourne Bookclub Gallery in 1950s, but critics found them too 'personal' and their meaning 'lost in obscurity' and not a single work sold.

Childhood



The complex world of childhood, often infused with anxious undercurrents and the idea of threatened innocence or viewed through the lens of nostalgia, formed an abiding interest for Melbourne artists of the 1950s. For Hester, children and motherhood had always been natural and unforced subjects, and this continued after she and Smith had their son Peregrine in 1951 and daughter Fern in 1954. During 1956, however, she embarked on a more ambitious exploration of childhood that suggests a conscious statement, perhaps in anticipation of a planned solo exhibition at the Gallery of Contemporary Art in April 1957. She produced large, portrait-like representations of children, alone or in pairs—and in several instances accompanied by a domestic or native animal—executed primarily in brush and ink, watercolour and gouache in a palette of rich brown tones, black, burnt umber and deep reds. Often interpreted as expressions of Australian rural identity, these painterly pictures are interspersed with references to country life and are as close as Hester's mature work gets to anecdote or narrative.

Late Portraits



During the 1950s Hester was involved in the revitalised Contemporary Art Society, through which she engaged with a new generation of artists, including John Brack, Robert Dickerson, Laurence Hope, and in particular Charles Blackman. The bolder technique and increased scale of her late work is often linked to her friendship with Blackman, for whom drawing was a similarly important and independent expressive tool and who also emphasised female experience in the creation of his imagery. In the summer of 1955 Blackman and his wife Barbara rented a cottage next to where Hester and Smith were then living at Avonsleigh and he introduced Hester to process black—an oily black ink used in lithography—in an effort to make her drawings ‘sterner’. Her late monochromatic portraits, often of women with flowers, suggest the productive interchange between the two artists and a cross-fertilisation of approaches and ideas.

Remember Me



In 1956 Hester’s cancer symptoms returned and the Reeds purchased a house for her and her family in Box Hill, where hospital treatment was readily accessible. Though she endured a serious physical decline she had no less determination, to make art. In her last letter to Sunday Reed in 1960 she wrote that she had been working but was disappointed with the results, observing, ‘I feel I can’t go as far as I would like to and each drawing seems bound so much in a piece of paper with four edges ... I am so conscious of my own limitations that I’m afraid I’ll never do any of the things I dream of’.

Hester died on 4 December 1960 and three years later the Reeds’ celebrated her extraordinary output with a commemorative exhibition presented at the Museum of Modern Art and Design of Australia. In his catalogue introduction John Reed wrote:

Her drawings are a particular experience in themselves, belonging to no category except their own, emotionally complete, flowing and relaxed, natural and integral with herself ... they challenge our sense of awareness of human life, with all its love and all its suffering.