

*Drawing*

**Life**



## CURATORIAL STATEMENT:

IN A MOMENT, A DRAWING LIFE BEGINS.

OUR HAND AND EYE COORDINATE, WE CONNECT OUR INSTRUMENT TO A SURFACE, THE FIRST MARK BEGINS THE JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY, IMAGINATION, RESPONSE AND CREATION, REVEALING SOMETHING UNIQUELY ORIGINAL.

AS A CHILD WE CAPTURE EMOTION, THE WORLD, ALL THAT WE LOVE, USING ART TO BEGIN OUR EXPRESSIVE JOURNEY. PRAISED FOR THE INNOCENCE AND PURITY OF OUR CREATION WE ARE EXCITED BY SIMPLICITY, COLOUR AND FORM.

AN IMAGE REFLECTS OUR OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION; OUR VISION IS PERSONAL AND REFLECTIVE. IT TRANSLATES AS WE EXPLORE AND CAPTURE TO COMMUNICATE.

LIFE IS ALL THAT WE SEE, WHAT WE EXPLORE, OUR EMOTION, OUR CHALLENGES; IT IS ALL THAT WE ARE AND A VISION FOR WHAT WE COULD BE. 'DRAWING LIFE' IS CONCEPTION, IT CAPTURES OUR IMAGINATION. IN THE SIMPLEST OR MOST COMPLEX FORM THROUGH A DOODLE, SKETCH, OR MASTERPIECE LIFE BECOMES ART.

'DRAWING LIFE' MARKS THE ARTIST'S INNER THOUGHTS ON PAPER. THE 'DRAWING LIFE' EXHIBITION FEATURES A SELECTION OF WORKS BY ALAN D. BAKER, NORMAND H. BAKER, AND J.S WATKINS CIRCA 1920 – 1980. ACCOMPANYING THE EXHIBITION IS A COLLABORATIVE DISPLAY OF CHILDREN'S WORKS INSPIRED BY BAKER, DRAWN WHILST VISITING THE GALLERY THROUGHOUT ITS FIRST YEAR.

REFLECTED IN THE WORKS IS THE FRAGILITY OF LIFE. MIRRORING THE HUMAN FORM AS IT ENDURES TIME, WAR, ELEMENTS, THE QUEST OF OUR LIFETIMES – LOVE, FAMILY, TRAGEDY, PASSION, DETERMINATION AND PROSPERITY. THE COLLECTION IS IN ITS RAW STATE AND EACH WORK INVITES YOU TO CONSIDER THE MESSAGE EXPOSED AND THE MEANING PROVOKED THROUGH THE EYE OF THE ARTIST.

- ROGER PERCY



# Drawing Life

A SUITE OF 20TH CENTURY DRAWINGS BY  
ALAN D. BAKER, NORMAND H. BAKER AND J.S. WATKINS

*-FEATURING GALLERY INSPIRED CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS-*

# WWII



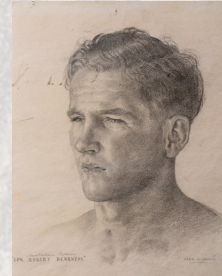
ALAN BAKER, 1946,  
'DARAUBI', GRAPHITE  
ON PAPER, 28 x 20.5CM



ALAN BAKER, c1945,  
[SELF PORTRAIT],  
GRAPHITE ON PAPER  
30 x 19.5CM



ALAN BAKER, c1944, [NATIVE PLANT  
STUDY], GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
23.5 x 17.5CM



ALAN BAKER, 1944,  
'AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER,  
CFN - ROBERT  
DEARNESS',  
GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
30.7 x 22.5CM



ALAN BAKER, c1944,  
[RR ROYAL RED CROSS],  
GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
26.5 x 20.5CM



## ARMY EDUCATION SERVICE

'AES HAD GONE TO CONSIDERABLE TROUBLE TO CATER FOR SOLDIERS IN THE AREA WHO WANT TO STUDY DRAWING AND PAINTING. THIS LECTURE WAS GIVEN TO INITIATE A SERIES OF CLASSES IN DRAWING THE HUMAN FIGURE FROM LIFE, TO BE HELD EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT. SINCE THE FIRST NIGHT, WITH THE HELP OF PTE ALAN BAKER, I HAVE

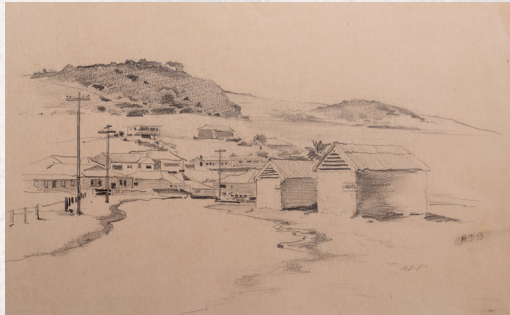
GONE TO EACH CLASS TO GIVE WHATEVER ASSISTANCE I COULD BY TEACHING, AND I HAVE ALWAYS FOUND THE ROOM TO BE SO CROWDED THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO MOVE AMONG THE STUDENTS.'

- WILLIAM DARGIE

# LANDSCAPE

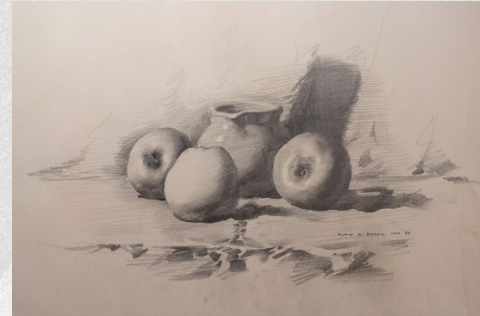


ALAN BAKER, c1940, [SYDNEY HARBOUR STUDY],  
GRAPHITE ON PAPER, 17.5 X 25CM



ALAN BAKER, c1970, [GERROA], GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
21 X 33CM

# STILL LIFE



ALAN BAKER, c1970, [APPLES WITH JUG], GRAPHITE  
ON PAPER, 44 X 64CM



ALAN BAKER, c1970, [BOOTS], GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
55 X 37.5CM

# CONTEMPORARIES



J.S. WATKINS, c1930,  
[ARTIST'S MODEL],  
GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
36 x 55CM



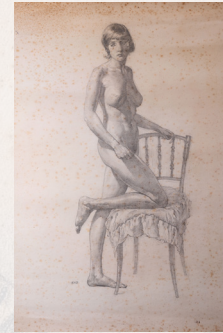
NORMAND H. BAKER,  
c1930, [SELF PORTRAIT  
WITH PLASTER CAST],  
GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
56 x 50CM



NORMAND H. BAKER,  
c1930, [STANDING  
MODEL], GRAPHITE ON  
PAPER, 71 x 48CM



NORMAND H. BAKER,  
c1930, [HAND STUDY],  
GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
75 x 54.5CM



NORMAND H. BAKER,  
c1930, [STANDING  
MODEL WITH CHAIR],  
GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
55 x 45CM



NORMAND H. BAKER,  
1927, [SWORDSMAN],  
GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
63.5 x 54CM



ART TEACHER AND PAINTER, JOHN (JIMMY) SAMUEL WATKINS WAS BORN IN THE ENGLISH MIDLANDS TOWN OF WOLVERHAMPTON ON 8 NOVEMBER 1866 AND ARRIVED IN SYDNEY IN THE EARLY 1880'S. FROM 1896-98, WATKINS ESTABLISHED AN ART SCHOOL IN SYDNEY ON THE FLOOR ABOVE JULIAN ASHTON'S ART SCHOOL AT 88 KING STREET, WHERE BOTH ALAN AND NORMAND BAKER ATTENDED AND ALAN LATER TAUGHT.

WATKINS WAS CRITICALLY RECOGNIZED FOR HIS DRAUGHTSMANSHIP. 'WATTIE', AS HE WAS AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN, BELIEVED STRONGLY IN THE NEED FOR AN ARTIST TO 'LEARN HIS CRAFT': HIS TEACHING EMPHASISED DISCIPLINED AND DETAILED DRAWING. SIR ERIK LANGKER, ONE-TIME PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ART SOCIETY, STATED 'WATTIE INSPIRED AND ENTHUSED US'.

- SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, 26 AUGUST 1942

# PORTRAITURE



ALAN BAKER, 1938,  
[PORTRAIT OF A  
MODEL], GRAPHITE ON  
PAPER, 27.5 X 22CM



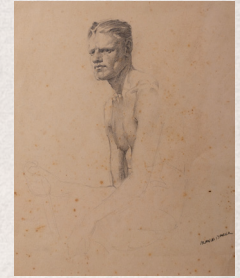
ALAN BAKER, C1936,  
[MARJORIE], GRAPHITE  
ON PAPER, 26 X 19CM



ALAN BAKER, 1930, [SELF PORTRAIT], GRAPHITE ON  
PAPER, 55 X 47CM



ALAN BAKER, C1930,  
[PROFILE PORTRAIT],  
GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
33.5 X 25CM



ALAN BAKER, C1945,  
[PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG  
MAN], GRAPHITE ON  
PAPER, 25 X 21CM

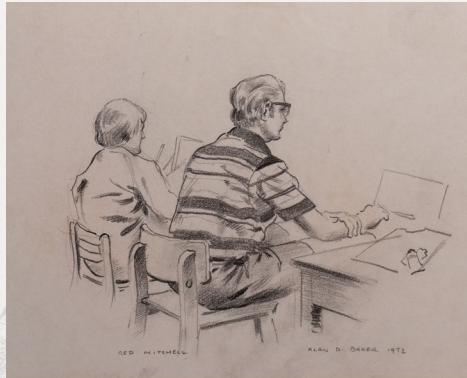
# CAMDEN ART GROUP



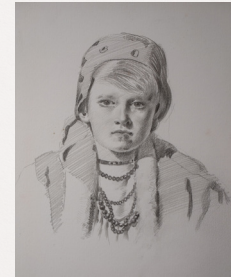
ALAN BAKER, c1980,  
'KIM', GRAPHITE ON  
PAPER, 37.5 x 25.5CM



ALAN BAKER, c1980,  
'CHRISTINE', GRAPHITE  
ON PAPER, 37.5 x 25CM



ALAN BAKER, 1972, 'CAMDEN ART GROUP',  
GRAPHITE ON PAPER, 15 x 22.5



ALAN BAKER, c1980,  
[PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG  
GIRL], GRAPHITE ON  
PAPER, 37.5 x 25.5CM



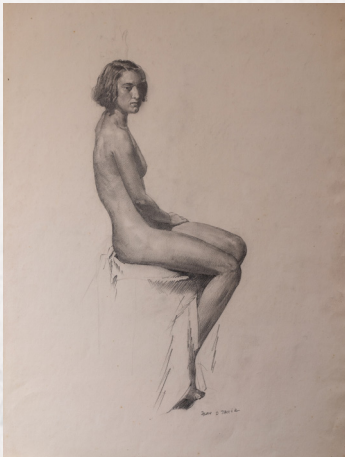
ALAN BAKER, c1980,  
'DANNY', GRAPHITE ON  
PAPER, 37.5 x 25.5CM

'ALAN DID NOT STAND IN FRONT OF THE GROUP AND TEACH, HE DREW OR PAINTED LIKE THE REST BUT YOU COULD SEE HIM WORKING. HE WOULD FINISH IN NO TIME AND THEN GO AND HELP SOMEONE AND WE WOULD ALL LOOK, LISTEN AND LEARN. YOU COULD ALSO BRING ALONG SOMETHING DONE AT HOME FOR ALAN'S ADVICE. OF COURSE WE WOULD ALL LISTEN AND EVERYONE IMPROVED IMMEDIATELY. ALAN NEVER DISCOURAGED ANYONE.'

-JACK DUNN



# LIFE DRAWING



ALAN BAKER, c1930,  
[SEATED MODEL I], GRAPHITE ON  
PAPER, 56 x 38.5CM



ALAN BAKER, c1930, [STANDING  
MODEL], GRAPHITE ON PAPER,  
46 x 48.5CM



ALAN BAKER, c1930,  
[SEATED MODEL II], GRAPHITE ON  
PAPER, 64 x 48.5CM



'UNDERPAID, THEY SAY - AT GENERALLY 5S FOR A 2 1/2 HOUR SITTING - ARTIST'S MODELS BELONG TO A NETHERWORLD BETWEEN REALM OF ART AND THE INDUSTRIAL SPHERE. REFUSED INDUSTRIAL STATUS TWO YEARS AGO IN SYDNEY, ARTIST'S MODELS WERE DESCRIBED IN INDUSTRIAL COURT AS "THE MOST POVERTY-STRIKEN FOLK IN THE WORLD; JUST MANAGING TO EXIST ON AVERAGE EARNINGS OF 30S A WEEK; NEVERKNOW WHERE THEIR NEXT PENNY IS COMING FROM.'  
- PIX MAGAZINE, 17 AUGUST, 1940

IN 2019, THE MINIMUM WAGE FOR LIFE MODELLING WAS DETERMINED AS \$40 HOURLY. ([HTTPS://WWW.LIFEMODELSSOCIETY.ORG/RATES.HTML](https://www.lifemodelssociety.org/rates.html))



# VISITOR ART COLLECTION



WITHIN THE EXHIBITION 'DRAWING LIFE', WE ENDEAVOUR TO CELEBRATE THE MEDIUM OF DRAWING AS THE BASIS OF ALL ARTWORK. HERE WE ARE REFERRING TO DRAWING AS THE SIMPLE PROCESS OF MAKING A MARK. RATHER THAN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE A SINGULAR DRAWING OR DRAWING STYLE AS A DEFINITIVE SOLUTION TO WHAT A DRAWING IS OR SHOULD BE, WE INSTEAD AIM TO CELEBRATE THAT EVERY DRAWING HAS SOMETHING UNIQUE TO OFFER.

OUR 'VISITOR ART COLLECTION' HAS BEEN AN ONGOING PROJECT WHEREBY ALL GALLERY VISITORS ARE PROVIDED DRAWING MATERIALS AND INVITED TO SKETCH INSIDE THE GALLERY. THESE DRAWINGS HAVE BEEN DIGITALLY RECORDED AND KEPT AS A PERMANENT AND EVOLVING GALLERY COLLECTION. IN CELEBRATION OF THE GALLERY'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY, WE HAVE CHOSEN TO EXHIBIT A SELECTION OF THE WORKS FROM THIS COLLECTION, AND WE PRESENT THEM TO YOU WITH OVERWHELMING THANKS TO ALL OF OUR VISITORS OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS.

# A DRAWING LIFE

The art of drawing, in its many forms, is a foundational skill underlying the practice of any great artist. For Alan and Normand Baker, the strength of the rigorous, classical drawing technique taught at J.S. Watkins Art School, which both attended from the late 1920s, is evident in the exquisite drawings in this exhibition. Alan frequently mentioned the techniques of the old masters<sup>1</sup>, which seem likely to have underlain his studies. It was said of J.S. Watkins, in *Triad* magazine, August 1923, that he was *'a great believer in hard work and careful drawing, and he regards as most pernicious to a student the idea that a few casual and incoherent brushmarks can make a picture'*<sup>2</sup>. This comment reflects the quite bitter controversies emerging at this time between the modernists and the conservative art establishment championed by Sir Robert Menzies with the establishment of the Australian Academy of Art in 1937, and no doubt influenced the approach of Watkins' pupils, Alan and Normand Baker among them.

Fine tonal rendering distinguishes this work of Alan and Normand Baker, modelling every detail of surface and turn of plane in finely hatched, delicate pencil work; carefully recording detailed observation of nuances of light, shade and form to create drawing of uncommon strength, but also superb delicacy. The exhibition also features several drawings made as demonstrations at the Camden Art Group facilitated by Alan from 1970 into the 1980s.

Alan and Normand Baker both won considerable recognition. Normand won the Artists Trust Fund Scholarship in 1926, and was awarded the Archibald Prize for portrait painting at what was then called the National Art Gallery of NSW in 1937<sup>3</sup>, at the unusually young age of twenty-nine. The companion Wynne Prize for landscape painting that year was awarded to renowned landscapist Elioth Gruner<sup>4</sup>, just two years before his death in 1939. The company was extremely distinguished. Both brothers cemented their reputations by being selected as Archibald Prize finalists over many years, Alan a total of twenty-six times<sup>5</sup>.

Alan and Normand were long-term Fellows of the Royal Art Society of New South Wales. Their work, particularly Normand's, was repeatedly singled out by critics for positive comment from the Royal Society of Artists' Annual Exhibitions from the 1920s to the 1940s<sup>6</sup>. A drawing of Normand's (not included in this exhibition), was selected for inclusion in a presentation album to the Duke and Duchess of York on their visit to Australia in 1927: a considerable honour at that time<sup>7</sup>. Alan's works are represented in the collections of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the National Gallery of Australia, the Queensland Institute of Technology, the Hinton Collection at Armidale, and many private and public collections<sup>8</sup>.

The Bakers' styles were forged in an academic realist tradition, paying close attention to tonal modelling and accuracy of detail. Both artists moved into freer, more modern forms of expression in later years, given strength by their disciplined grounding in observational drawing. Drawing styles have changed considerably by the twenty-first century, valuing process, fluidity of mark making, and free expression above the refined representation of Alan and Normand's formative years. Nonetheless the work of Alan and Normand Baker retains its strength, delicacy and beauty, offering exceptional pleasure to viewers. The Alan Baker Art Gallery is proud to present their work to contemporary audiences.

- <sup>1</sup> Baker, G. and Baker, M. n.d., Alan D. Baker, Artist. New Era Printing, Australia, pp.14-16
- <sup>2</sup> Clifford-Smith, S. 2009, John Samuel Watkins b. 8 November 1866. In: Design and Art Australia Online, <https://www.daao.org.au/bio/john-samuel-watkins/biography/> accessed 19.3.2019
- <sup>3</sup> Art Gallery of New South Wales, Prizes- Archibald Prize, viewed 13.3.2019, <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/1937/>
- <sup>4</sup> Art Gallery of New South Wales, Prizes- Wynne Prize, viewed 13.3.2019; <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/wynne/1937/>
- <sup>5</sup> Baker, G., online website, <http://www.garybaker.com.au/biographies/alan-d-baker> accessed 13.3.2019
- <sup>6</sup> Baker family, n.d. newsclipping collection, various newspapers, held at Alan Baker Art Gallery, Camden.
- <sup>7</sup> As above.
- <sup>8</sup> Baker, G. and Baker, M. n.d., Alan D. Baker, Artist. New Era Printing, Australia, p.6.

Please Note: Square brackets have been used in titling to indicate that the title has been applied to the work by the gallery for the purpose of identification, but is not a true title given by the artist.



CREDIT:  
ARTWORK PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY BRETT ATKINS