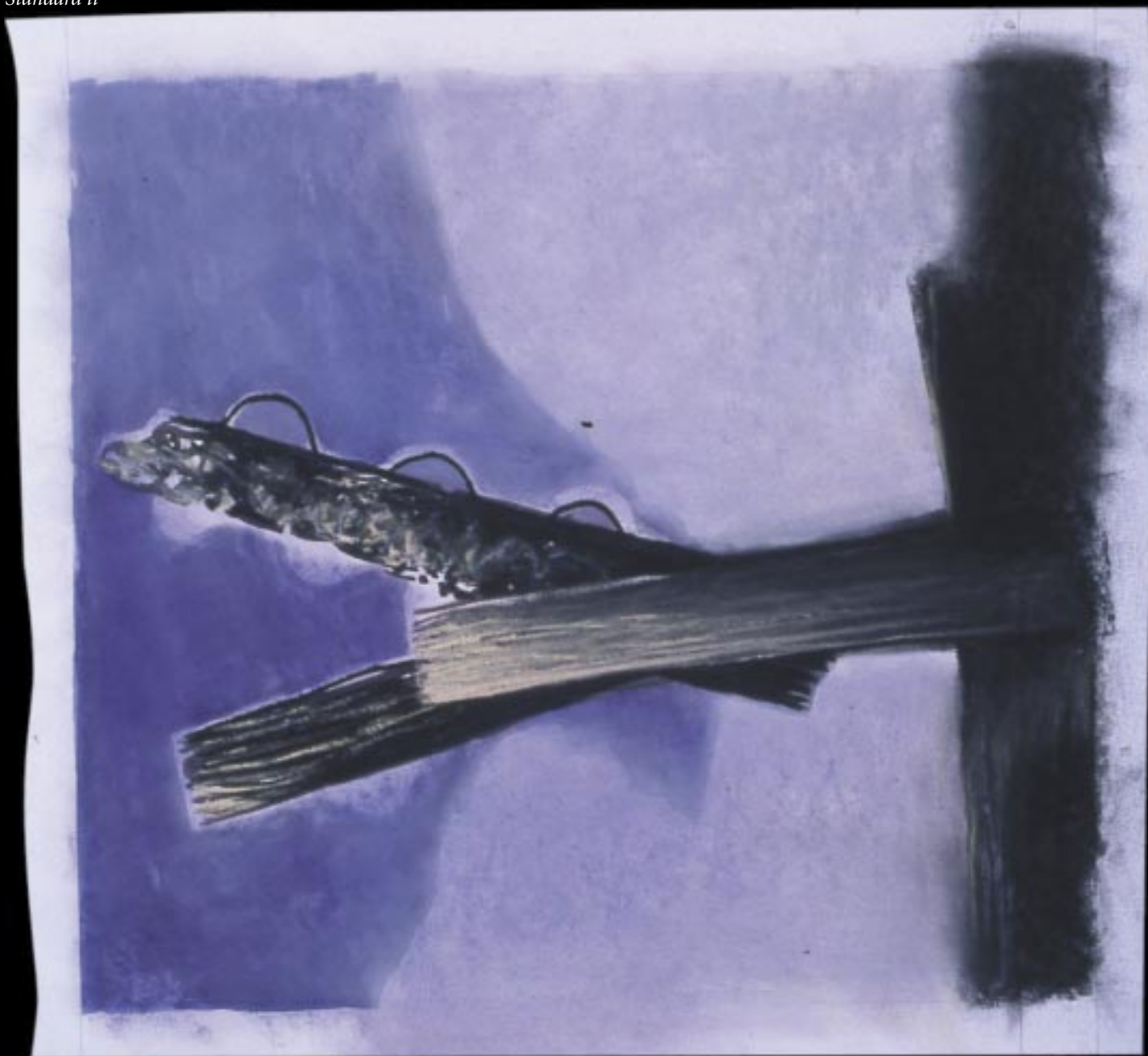


Standard iii



Standard ii





Watch Tower

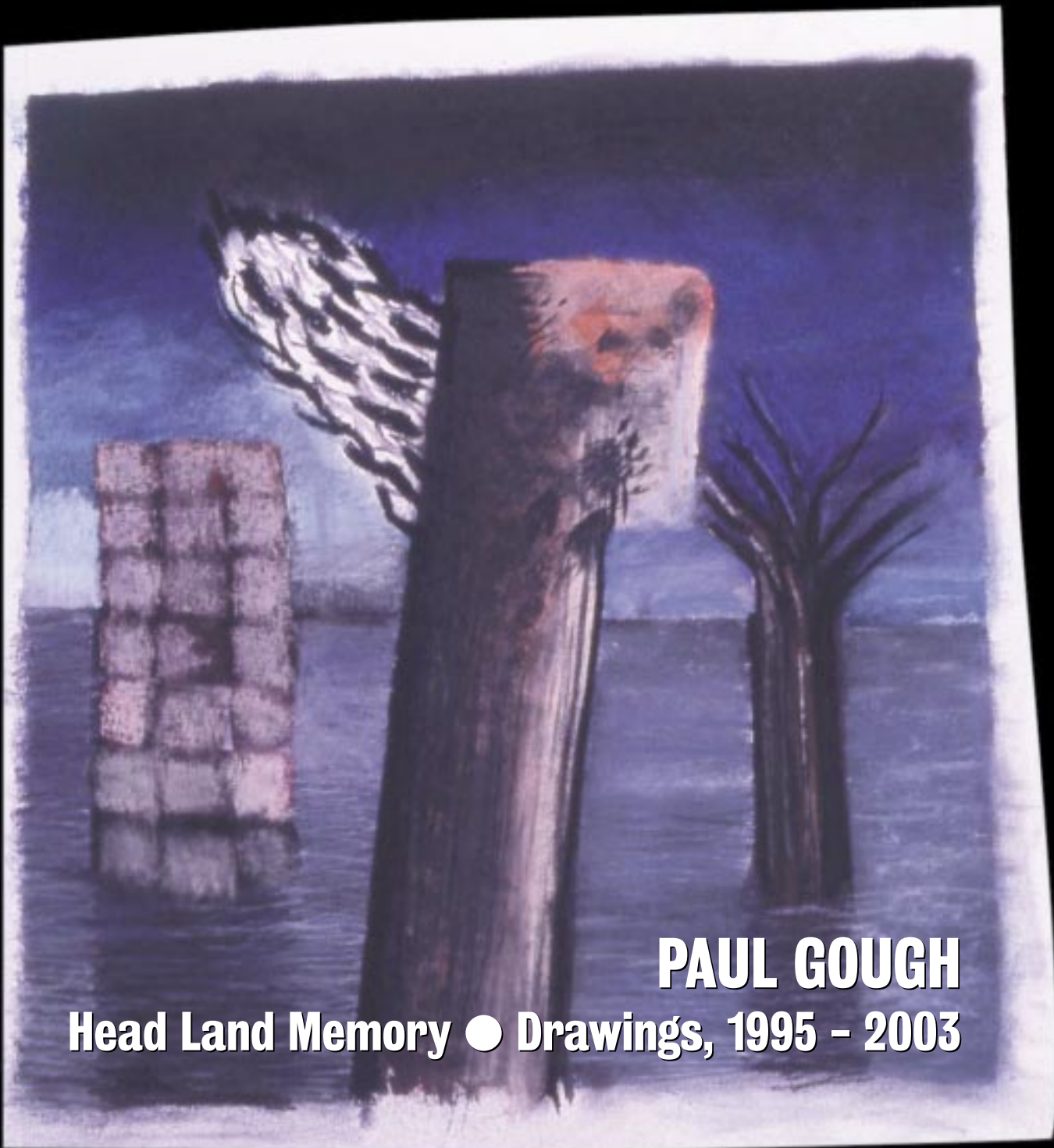
**Head Land Memory
Drawings, 1995 - 2003
9 October - 14 November 2003
9am-5pm Monday-Friday**

**Faculty Gallery
Faculty of Art & Design
Monash University
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Right: ????????

Cover: Standard I



PAUL GOUGH

Head Land Memory ● Drawings, 1995 - 2003



Paul Gough

FIELD OF MEMORY

The small village of Pozieres in Northern France is a straggle of featureless red-brick houses lining a dead straight road. It lies just below an almost imperceptible ridge in that huge, open area of rolling chalk slopes known as “The Somme”. If one walks up towards the crest of the ridge, beyond the village, a rough mound appears on the left, covered in wild grasses. It is the remains of a windmill which stood here before the First World War, which destroyed it together with so

much of the land for miles around. A sombre inscription tells us that men “fell more thickly on this ridge than on any other battlefield of the war”. Those men were Australians, and earth from this spot now lies in the National War Memorial in Canberra. Over the years, while walking the battlefields of France and Belgium, I have visited this place many times, and it never fails to move me deeply. The image of a scythe cutting these grasses comes inevitably



Clockwise from left: Pennant Trees (Lone Pine); Unknown Warrior (No. 3); Dead Plane



Far left: Cruciform Position (Heller)



to mind. Like many English people I had Australian, as well as British relatives who took part in this conflict, and a visit to Pozieres seems to bring them closer. It was through a shared interest in these places that I first encountered the paintings of Paul Gough, nearly thirty years ago.

Collective memory is a deep well, a pool into which we dip when we take a conscious decision to re-visit the past. Going back to places we knew and loved

when young stirs personal memories and emotions, but when we visit a place which has historical associations something different happens: knowledge and memory become interchangeable. We feel we are remembering events, even when we ourselves took no part in them. Mentally, we put ourselves back into those earlier times and scenes, wondering what we would have done, how we would have coped – or failed – had we been there. Nowhere is this more true than when one

visits former battlefields, particularly those of the First and Second World Wars.

In recent years such visits have developed, from occasional calls by curious historians or relatives of soldiers killed, into a major tourist industry. Educational visits by groups of schoolchildren to the cemeteries and memorials around Ypres, in Belgium, or Thiepval on the Somme for example, are now part of the normal curriculum for youngsters studying Modern History.

Right: Monument (after Brunel)

There is no doubt they get a great deal out of such visits, and for those of us who lost relatives in the conflicts, decades before we ourselves were born, there is something haunting about the open ridges with chalk traces of trenches still clearly visible, rusting wire and twisted pickets in the hedgerows, occasional cartridge cases lying in the furrows of newly-ploughed earth. Yet one has to say there has been a debit side to this opening up of places which for so long remained empty and unvisited. The signposts, souvenir shops and “Tommy’s Cafes” that now dot the landscape of the Somme represent a creeping suburbanisation which is uncomfortable.

With the battlefields of Gallipoli, and particularly with the area still known as Anzac, there are no such problems. The peninsula remains remote and largely undeveloped with minimal facilities for visitors. These come mainly in organised groups for brief special occasions, such as anniversaries or commemorations. Otherwise one can scramble over this tortured and parched landscape in complete silence and isolation. This is what the painter Paul Gough and I did when we spent a week there in 1995. By a lucky chance our visit took place only a few months after the devastating fire which raged over much of the Anzac area during the previous dry autumn.



Below from left: Grave Marker (near Hill Q); Grave Marker iii (Gully Ravine); Grave Marker ii (Chunk Bair)



This fire had the extraordinary effect of restoring the battlefield to something much closer to its condition in 1915. Eighty years of forestry growth (much of it planted deliberately) had obscured the shapes of the hills and valleys, concealing old trench lines and blocking any attempts to get general views of the ridges and gullies, many of them famously named, where so many men had fought and died. Now they lay open and exposed once more: Quinn's Post, Bloody Angle, Dead Man's Ridge

For many years Paul Gough, in his work, has explored that marginal area where knowledge becomes memory. In his studies of landscapes of dereliction, derived frequently from battlefields, he also touches on the subtle differences between memory and commemoration, which affect our perceptions of the places themselves and our "knowledge" of the events. In some of these paintings we may recognise the harsh colours of Anzac, the ochre, burnt sienna and yellow-browns of the arid ravines, the

dark hollows of old dugouts, the blackened stumps of tree trunks and bushes. But there are also allusions to the haunting presence of memorials, with their partial historical agendas, strange intrusions in the scenery.

There are no figures in these images, yet they populate our minds, just as the clear water of Anzac Cove, touching the tiny curve of an empty beach, fills the channels of memory.

Julian Andrews