

You are invited to an exhibition of drawings by:

Russell Craig

Exhibition Opens

Tuesday 28 September, 5 - 7pm

Exhibition Dates

28 September - 9 October 2010

Tuesday to Friday: 11am - 5pm

Saturday: 12pm - 4pm

Contact the Artist

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All dimensions are height before width in millimetres

All works are black charcoal drawings on veelin arches

Front cover: *Bloodlines*, 1220 x 800

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If we speak of the sea, 1220 x 800



Blade Customs, 1220 x 800



Objects of Navigation

Russell Craig



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Quiver, 1220 x 800

Objects of Navigation

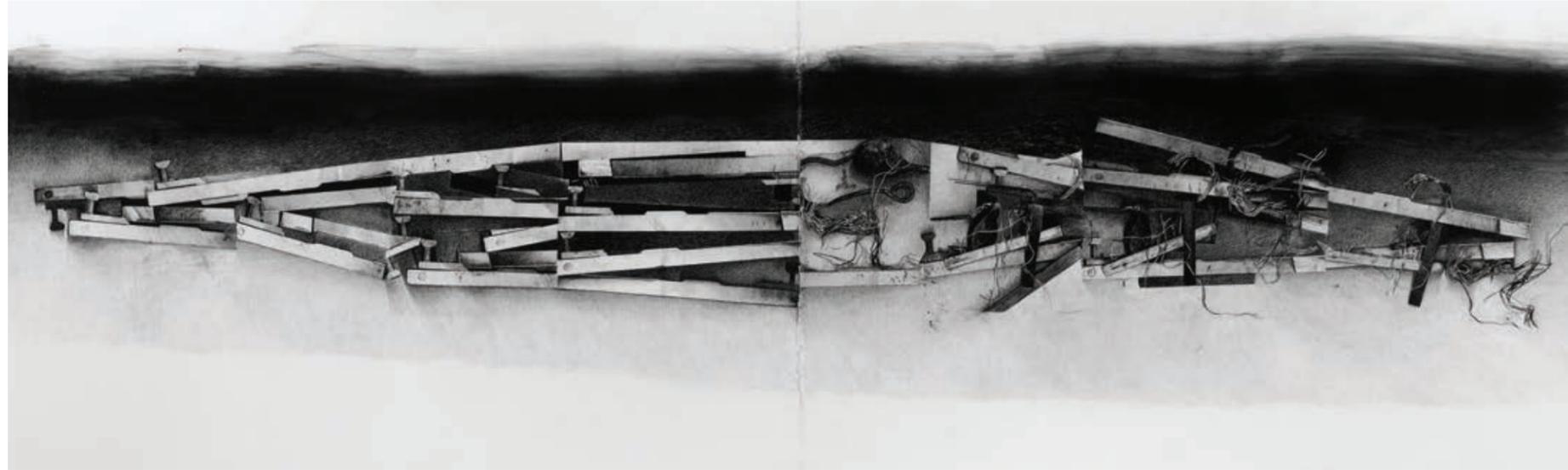
The initial inspiration for the majority of these drawings derives from Melanesian paddles used for propelling outrigger craft and canoes through water. The streamline shapes are reminiscent of elliptical forms used in water, air and snow craft. These forms are in transition; they move through tonal gradation, surfaces, fleeting light and imagery landscapes. Like a quiver of arrowheads, each form has its unique shape but collectively they are all part of the same set. They present a motif of navigation.

Navigation is an impulse common to all of humanity. It has brought about displacement and exchange between individuals, communities and cultures.

Navigation can facilitate exchanges of master skills and objects of trade, which can enrich social life and artistic expression.

Navigators are enterprising in their long voyages in search of new worlds. Constructing their 'objects for navigation' can be a cathartic act and messages of hope are often embellished into these forms.

Russell Craig, 2010



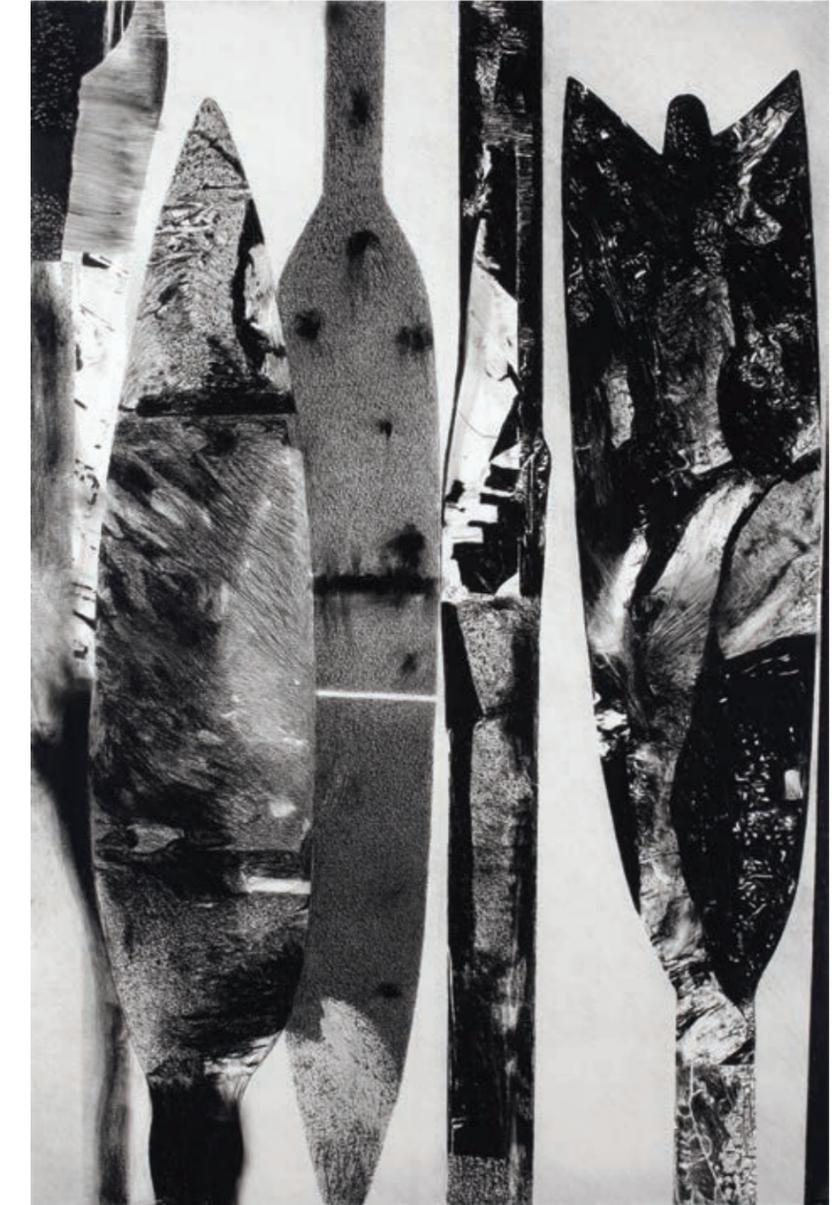
One hundred objects of navigation, 800 x 2440

Objects of Navigation

The art of drawing was the foundation on which formal art teaching academies were established in eighteenth-century Europe. Drawing, as taught for the past three hundred years, and not just western art schools, has mostly meant the mastery of line or outline. While the reasons for this are hardly ever articulated, the desire to draw the world first and foremost as a system of shapes was built on a deep or primal requirement of the human perceptual system to detect movement. The human animal detects movement in the lowest of light, well below the threshold of colour perception, and in a 360 degree arc with rotation of the head alone. To detect movement, or the displacement of shape against background, the world must first be broken into relationships of figure against ground. Giving perceptual privilege to contour or outline always had its limitations, even in primeval settings. An elephant standing still in the forest or the large ray resting on the sand below the shallow surface of the sea can be invisible to a human close enough to lose sight of the boundaries of the respective vast shapes because most human eyes are unable to easily distinguish subtleties of surface texture and shifts in tone. To see the surface of things requires special attributes. A "navigator" is a description that always evokes this special ability to look beyond the restless complex of moving shapes and to see the world as a space that can be negotiated by reading surface. Maybe it is because of the legacy of several centuries of art school teaching as much as our prehistoric roots that artists still

favour linear drawing. This is despite the fact that outline drawings are the most static of objects, enlivened only by the complexity of their contour or the use of often pretentious high-velocity, usually massed line, to animate their linearity. Tone is added to outline drawings almost as an afterthought because tonal gradients are most difficult to construct and indeed to interpret given their inherent perceptual ambiguity to most eyes. Russell Craig's total command of tonal drawing is no doubt related to his long apprenticeship in the dark art of building infinite variations or shades of black ink in the grain of lithographic stones or plates. Rather than a delineation of shapes on a ground, we see in these drawings the concentrated building of their surface with the most complex variations of texture and tone. This is why the drawings come alive. Russell Craig has managed a particular magical transformation of these drawings into *objects of navigation* since they represent the world as a restless, complex of moving shapes of every sort, some half-remembered, others ordinary or iconic: signs as wonders.

A/Prof Ross Woodrow
Deputy Director (Research)
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Messages of hope, 1220 x 800