In the mid-1940s, veteran Melbourne etcher Victor Cobb gave a practical text on etching to the painter John Farmer who had lived in Europe in the 1920s, during which time he had studied the British Museum's holding of etchings by Rembrandt van Rijn, one of the greatest masters of the print medium. When, some years later, Farmer created the etching *Fisherman's Bend*, c. 1960 CAT. NO. 2, its composition and subject matter drew upon elements common to etchings of pastoral subjects by Rembrandt, in particular the Dutch artist's *Landscape with a cottage and hay barn*, 1641 CAT. NO. 1, with its low horizon and centrally placed cottage. Farmer's image, an exquisite glimpse of post-war Melbourne, is typical of the works that are the focus of this exhibition—images by Australian artists, past and present, who have been influenced by the visions and works of earlier European and British master-printmakers. *Print traditions—sources of Australian printmaking* brings together works by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778), Thomas Bewick (1753–1828), Charles Meryon (1821–1868), James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) and Frank Brangwyn (1867–1956), with related images by Australian artists as a means of illustrating the different streams of influence that have contributed to the notably rich tradition of printmaking in Australia.

John Shirlow's *Melbourne from the west*, 1919 CAT. NO. 5 is one of several early-20th century prints to reference works by Rembrandt, and specifically those with narrow strips of land and buildings insinuated between expanses of sky and water, as in Rembrandt's *View of Amsterdam from the north-west*, c. 1640 CAT. NOS 3 & 4. Henri van Raalte and Sydney Ure Smith utilised a similar scheme in several of their representations of the cities of Perth and Sydney. In the etchings of contemporary artist Joel Wolter, the city skyline of Geelong appears filtered through landscape and sky much as Rembrandt depicted towns and cities in his native Holland. In Wolter's *View of St Mary's Cathedral, Geelong*, 2003 CAT. NO. 6, the church sits starkly in the middle distance between the open sky and the dense mass of vegetation, its silhouetted spire recalling the windmill in Rembrandt's landscape.

Both the technical skill and sensitivity to landscape evinced by British artist, Thomas Bewick, inspired successive generations of British and foreign wood engravers. The extraordinarily small scale on which Bewick worked (many images were used as vignettes at the beginning and end of book chapters) did not hinder him from achieving great precision of detail and depth of perspective. Bewick was the dominant influence on Australian printmaker Lionel Lindsay when the latter turned to wood engraving in the early-20th century. Such was Lindsay's proficiency with the process that it was his wood engravings, rather than his etchings, that established his reputation among British print connoisseurs and collectors. Parallels between Bewick's *The peacock*, (1797) CAT. NO. 9 and Lindsay's *Autumn*, 1929 CAT. NO. 12 are clear, as is Lindsay's debt to the Japanese woodblock tradition.

The link from Bewick to Lindsay extends well into the present as exemplified by contemporary wood engravers such as Rosalind Atkins and Tim Jones, both of whom bring current environmental issues to the fore in works including *Near Smoko*, 2004 CAT. NO. 14 and *Ginkgo tree, Geelong*, 2003 CAT. NO. 13. While the fundamental technique of wood engraving remains largely unchanged from Bewick's time, one notable technical shift has been the substitution of high-impact polystyrene for the woodblock itself—a method employed by Atkins in *Homage to Bewick and his swan*, 2006 CAT. NO. 15.

Before the Second World War, many city views depicted by Australian printmakers echoed the responses of earlier European and British printmakers to the dramatic growth of modern cities and the impact of industrialisation, whether these captured a sense of excitement at the rate of progress or a sense of nostalgia for the past. Arguably, the best-known prints to depict the growth of Australian cities are those from the
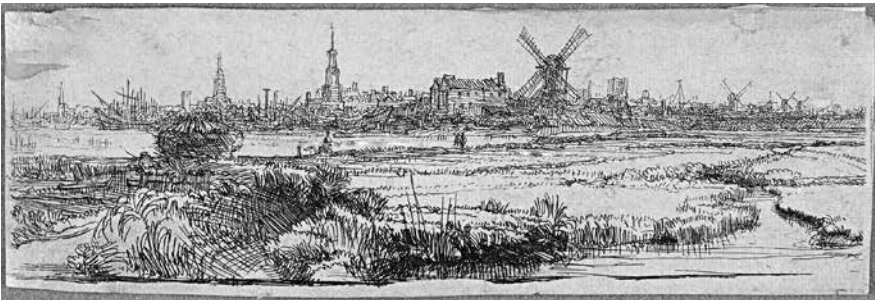
late-1920s and early-1930s by Jessie Traill showing the progress of construction on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Traill's interest in such subject matter can be traced, decades earlier, to her studies in London in 1907–08 with Frank Brangwyn. The motif and technique of Traill's heavily-bitten etchings *Scaffolding, London*, 1908 CAT. NO. 19 and *The building*, 1912 CAT. NO. 20 have a clear precedent in Brangwyn's *Building the Victoria and Albert Museum,* 1904 CAT. NO. 16, completed only a few years previously.

Brangwyn's influence was pervasive in both Great Britain and Australia, particularly amongst his contemporaries. Several of his fellow countrymen, including Muirhead Bone, warmed to the scale and intensity of industrial enterprise as a worthy subject for their art, as we see in Bone's *The great gantry, Charing Cross Station*, 1906–07 CAT. NO. 18. And in Australia, Brangwyn's influence reached as far afield as Broken Hill where Joseph Goodhart, a successful businessman, had taken up printmaking in middle age with the encouragement of Adelaide-based John Goodchild and access to the Art Gallery of South Australia's print collection. Goodhart's images of heavy industry, such as *Day shift, Prop[rie]t[ar]y Mine, Broken Hill*, 1926 CAT. NO. 21 had few parallels elsewhere in Australia.
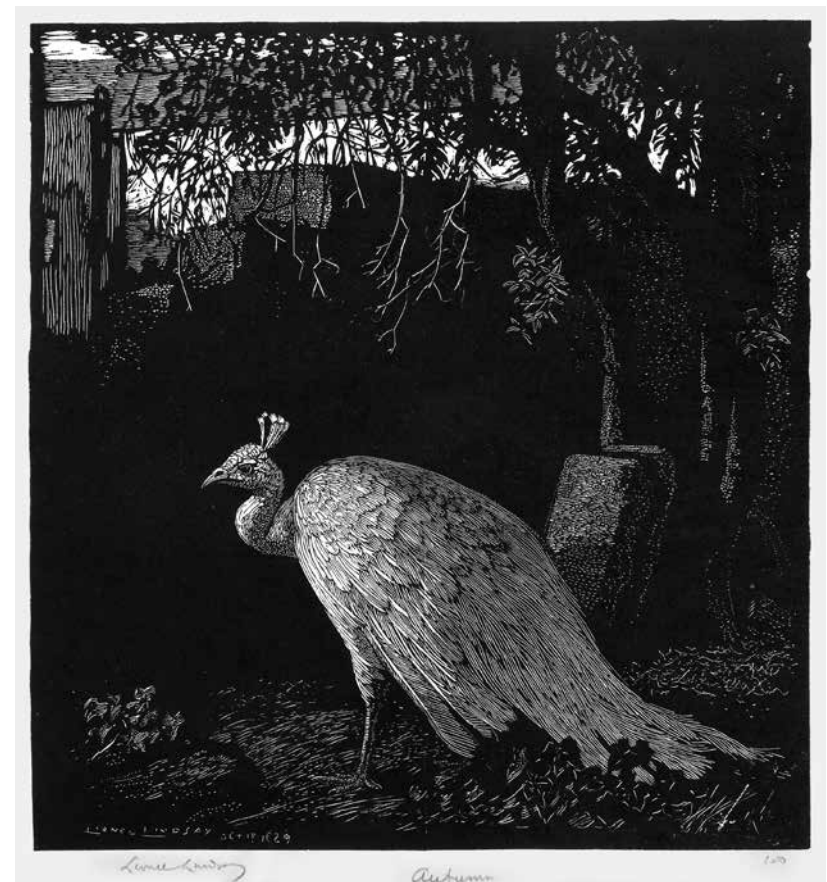
French etcher Charles Meryon's mid-19th century views of historic Paris—conceived as Baron Haussmann was planning the city's wholesale transformation—inspired certain Australian printmakers whose works are notable for the nostalgic quality of their imagery featuring ruinous buildings and others under demolition. For Lionel Lindsay, Meryon's works struck a clear emotional chord. The Australian artist had been scathing in his denunciation of urban development in Sydney, while he waxed lyrical over the city's colonial heritage.

Lindsay was not alone amongst Australian printmakers in his interest in Meryon's prints with their brooding evocations of medieval Parisian streets—works that were also an influence on Melbourne artist John Shirlow. The vertical format of Meryon's *The Rue des Chantres* (*La Rue des Chantres*), 1862 CAT. NO. 22, for example, in which the foreground buildings frame the composition and lead the eye to a church spire in the distance, is repeated in Shirlow's *The slum, Bullen Lane*, 1914 CAT. NO. 23. Similarly, later works by John Goodchild CAT. NO. 24 and Victor Cobb CAT. NO. 25, employ this vertical format to create an equivalently elegiac mood with their depictions of the architecture of Adelaide and Melbourne respectively. Dora Wilson was another who looked to Meryon as we see in her c. 1907 etching of a well-known Melbourne landmark CAT. NO. 27, the Princes Bridge over the Yarra River— a work that adopts a similar vantage point to that of Meryon's *The Pont Neuf* (*Le Pont-Neuf*), 1853 CAT. NO. 26.

The nostalgic—at times melancholic— mood of Meryon and Brangwyn's works is evident also in a number of city scenes by Shirlow and Len Annois. Whether in their subject matter, composition or atmospheric sense, various works by the two Australian printmakers are reminiscent of Meryon's *The mortuary* (*La morgue*), 1854 CAT. NO. 28 and Brangwyn's *Old Hammersmith*, 1908 CAT. NO. 29. Shirlow's *Sailor's Rest, Hobart*, 1933 CAT. NO. 30, again, depicts a run-down area of Hobart comparable in its shabbiness to that of Meryon's etching of the riverside mortuary in Paris, while Annois reflects an unease at the demolition of Melbourne's Bijou Theatre in Bourke Street in his atmospheric lithographs CAT. NOS 31 & 32.

Meryon's emphasis on the mood rather than the physical characteristics of his locations is a trait that he shares with the 18th century Roman master-printmaker Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Locally, and more recently, Marco Luccio's large-format etchings of modern Melbourne invite comparison with the claustrophobic caprices depicted in Piranesi's series *Carceri d'invenzione* (*Imaginary prisons*), 1749–50 & 1761 CAT. NO. 33, images that Piranesi reworked extensively over many years and whose symbolism, even now, remains essentially mysterious. Oppressive, high-vaulted structures and vast

BRITISH BIRDS. 289

THE PEACOCK.
(*Pavo criſtatus*, Lin.—*Le Paon*, Buff.)

Lionel Lindsay del. 1929
Lionel Lindsay   Autumn   Lit.

swags of chain are two elements in Piranesi's vocabulary that recur in images such as Luccio's *Cranes and the State Library from the QVB site*, 2003 CAT. NO. 34.

James McNeill Whistler was a further important influence on Australian printmakers of Lindsay's generation, particularly in respect of his famous views of London and Venice (that were inspired, in turn, by Meryon's images of Paris). Whistler's etchings of these old and picturesque cities avoided familiar monuments, inviting viewers instead to contemplate lesser-known byways, architectural features (particularly doorways), ageing timber bridges, and generally unfashionable quarters. Lindsay's *A La Trobe Street courtyard*, 1914 CAT. NO. 38— together with images by Shirlow CAT. NO. 39 and Cobb CAT. NO. 37—share elements common to Whistler's *The lime-burner*, 1859 CAT. NO. 36: a courtyard, with its entrance serving as a framing device for a composition in which figures of workers often appear. Several of Whistler's Venetian and London images in which water is prominent were equally influential. Van Raalte's *Bridge, Fremantle*, 1917–19 CAT. NO. 41 consciously recalls Whistler's *Old Battersea Bridge*, 1879 CAT. NO. 40 with the bridge span placed high in the composition, in the manner of a Japanese woodblock print.

As illustrated by the examples discussed above, antique prints have long been a vital source of inspiration to modern artists, a fact aided by the portability and affordability of the medium, and the possibility of its wide circulation. Notwithstanding the 'educational' role played by old master prints, for the majority of young Australians overseas travel was prohibitively expensive in the years preceding the Second World War, with only a minority of artists being able to study abroad and directly absorb the influences of European and British printmakers. A handful—primarily women from wealthy families like Jessie Traill—were able to study overseas and returned to Australia to share their knowledge with their artist peers. Overseas journals that frequently reproduced work by contemporary printmakers (such

as *The Studio* published in London), as well as specific publications on printmaking— historical and contemporary—were vitally important in keeping Australian printmakers abreast of new developments in the art form. The lithographic reproductions of prints in some books were often of such deceptively good quality that they were occasionally framed and sold (deliberately or mistakenly) as originals.

The acquisition of original prints by major Australian public collections enabled local artists to observe and adopt some of the influences of master-printmakers working abroad. For Shirlow, Cobb and Lindsay, certainly, their catalyst into printmaking was the National Gallery of Victoria's early acquisition of old master and 19th century prints, including major works by Rembrandt, Meryon and Francis Seymour Haden. Cobb extolled particular works as being exemplary in his lectures and journal articles over the course of almost four decades. According to Cobb, such paradigms of the medium included Rembrandt's *The three trees*, *The goldweigher's field* and *The Omval*, several of Whistler's London and Venetian etchings, and works by other British contemporaries such as Frank Short.

Of course, printmakers themselves could, and did, become collectors. Lionel Lindsay formed a collection of fine impressions of significant works by Albrecht Dürer, Rembrandt and Meryon, largely through his friendship with London dealer Harold Wright. Fortunately, parts of Lindsay's collection made their way into various public collections, including the National Gallery of Victoria, from which collection a cropped version of Rembrandt's *View of Amsterdam from the north-west: a fragment*, c. 1640 CAT. NO. 4, is included in this exhibition.

Today, the role played by public galleries through exhibitions and displays of their permanent collections remains an important factor in promoting widespread appreciation of the print medium. *Print traditions–sources of Australian printmaking* is conceived in this spirit and reinforces the Geelong Gallery's commitment to printmaking in Australia.

Dr Colin Holden
Guest curator
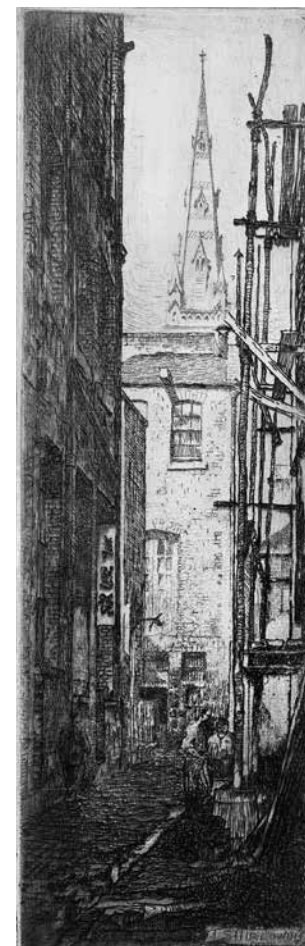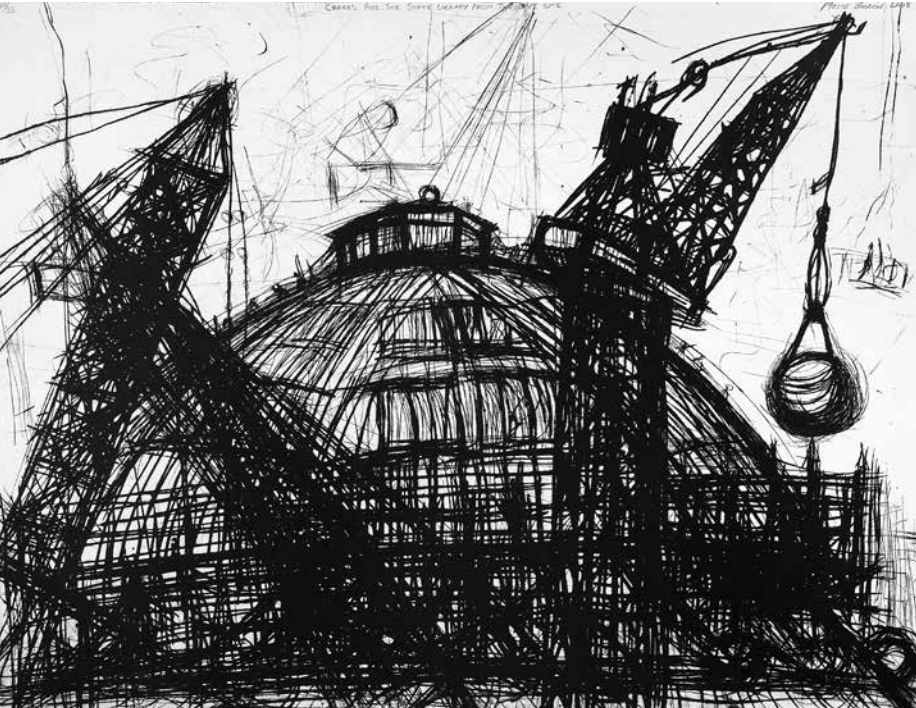
all works height x width in cm

Group I

Rembrandt van Rijn
Dutch 1606–1669

CAT. NO. 1
*Landscape with a cottage
and hay barn* 1641
etching
sheet 13.4 x 32.3; image 12.9 x 31.7
Special Collections, Baillieu Library,
The University of Melbourne

John Farmer
Australian 1897–1989

CAT. NO. 2
Fisherman's Bend c. 1960
etching
sheet 8.8 x 12.9; plate 6.7 x 11.2
Collection: Geelong Gallery
Gift of the artist, 1979

Group II

Rembrandt van Rijn
Dutch 1606–1669

CAT. NO. 3
*View of Amsterdam from
the north-west* c. 1640
etching
sheet 11.1 x 15.4; image 10.9 x 15.2
Special Collections, Baillieu Library,
The University of Melbourne

CAT. NO. 4
*View of Amsterdam from the
north-west: a fragment* c. 1640
etching
sheet 5.1 x 15.4 (trimmed top edge)
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne. Felton Bequest, 1933

John Shirlow
Australian 1869–1936

CAT. NO. 5
Melbourne from the west 1919
etching
plate 16.7 x 21.9
Private collection

Joel Wolter
Australian 1978–

CAT. NO. 6
*View of St Mary's Cathedral,
Geelong* 2003
etching; artist's proof, state 2
sheet 38.0 x 56.3; plate 29.6 x 44.0
Collection: Geelong Gallery
Gift of the artist, 2005

Group III

Thomas Bewick
British 1753–1828

CAT. NO. 7
(*A hunter in the snow*) (1797)
wood engraving
sheet 6.7 x 12.5; image 4.3 x 7.5
Special Collections, Baillieu Library,
The University of Melbourne

CAT. NO. 8
(*A man asleep under a bush*) (1797)
wood engraving
sheet 5.5 x 12.4; image 4.5 x 7.5
Special Collections, Baillieu Library,
The University of Melbourne

CAT. NO. 9
The peacock (1797)
wood engraving
sheet 16.4 x 12.4; image 10.9 x 8.7
Special Collections, Baillieu Library,
The University of Melbourne

CAT. NO. 10
Lesser Imber 1804
wood engraving in Thomas Bewick,
History of British birds,
vol. 2, Newcastle, 1804
sheet 19.5 x 12.1; image 8.2 x 6.8
Private collection

Lionel Lindsay
Australian 1874–1961

CAT. NO. 11
The broken fence 1924
wood engraving in Lionel Lindsay,
Twenty-one woodcuts, published
by Meryon Press, Sydney, 1924
sheet 17.1 x 12.1; image 15.9 x 11.5
Private collection

CAT. NO. 12
Autumn 1929
wood engraving
sheet 24.3 x 18.5; image 15.4 x 14.5
Collection: Geelong Gallery
Purchased 1944

Tim Jones
born Clwyd, Great Britain 1962;
arrived Australia 1984

CAT. NO. 13
Ginkgo tree, Geelong 2003
wood engraving; artist's proof
sheet 38.3 x 27.0; image 20.1 x 15.2
Collection: Geelong Gallery. Gift of the
Geelong Art Gallery Foundation, 2003

Rosalind Atkins
Australian 1957–

CAT. NO. 14
Near Smoko 2004
wood engraving; edition 3/25
sheet 23.5 x 25.1; image 10.0 x 15.0
Collection: Geelong Gallery
Geelong Acquisitive Print Awards, 2005

CAT. NO. 15
*Homage to Bewick
and his swan* 2006
wood engraving
sheet 38.1 x 28.4; image 16.2 x 13.0
Private collection

Group IV

Frank Brangwyn
born Bruges, Belgium 1867;
arrived Great Britain 1877;
died 1956

CAT. NO. 16
*Building the Victoria and Albert
Museum* 1904
etching and plate-tone
sheet 55.8 x 73.2; image 49.8 x 61.0
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne. Felton Bequest, 1907

CAT. NO. 17
Scaffolding c. 1919–25
reproductive print in *Modern masters
of etching: Frank Brangwyn RA*,
published by *The Studio*, London, 1925
sheet 19.1 x 20.7; image 17.7 x 19.6
Private collection

Muirhead Bone
British 1876–1953

CAT. NO. 18
*The great gantry, Charing Cross
Station* 1906–07
drypoint
sheet 41.3 x 58.0; image 27.8 x 43.4
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne. Felton Bequest, 1907

Jessie Traill
Australian 1881–1967

CAT. NO. 19
Scaffolding, London 1908
etching; edition 3/10
image 37.2 x 27.5
Collection: Janet Clarke Hall,
The University of Melbourne
Bequest of the Traill family

CAT. NO. 20
The building 1912
etching
plate 40.0 x 28.0
Collection: Castlemaine Art Gallery
and Historical Museum
Gift of the artist, 1913

Joseph Goodhart
Australian 1875–1954

CAT. NO. 21
*Day shift, Prop[rie]t[ar]y Mine,
Broken Hill* 1926
etching
sheet 37.8 x 31.5; plate 29.5 x 24.0
Private collection

Group V

Charles Meryon
French 1821–1868

CAT. NO. 22
The Rue des Chantres
(*La Rue des Chantres*) 1862
etching
sheet 32.8 x 17.7; image 28.8 x 12.0
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne. Purchased 1963

John Shirlow
Australian 1869–1936

CAT. NO. 23
The slum, Bullen Lane 1914
etching
sheet 32.2 x 10.1; plate 30.2 x 9.2
Private collection

John Goodchild
born London, Great Britain 1898;
arrived Australia 1913; died 1980

CAT. NO. 24
Exchange Place, Adelaide 1922
etching; edition 10/40
sheet 25.2 x 13.9; image 18.8 x 8.2
Private collection

Victor Cobb
Australian 1876–1945

CAT. NO. 25
*The Dome, Supreme Courts,
Melbourne* 1935
etching
sheet 27.7 x 24.2; plate 22.0 x 12.1
Private collection

Group VI

Charles Meryon
French 1821–1868

CAT. NO. 26
The Pont Neuf (*Le Pont-Neuf*) 1853
etching
sheet 24.1 x 28.5; image 16.8 x 16.6
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne. Presented by the Estate
of Miss Jamieson Hood, 1970

Dora Wilson
born Newcastle-upon-Tyne,
Great Britain 1883;
arrived Australia 1884; died 1946

CAT. NO. 27
Princes Bridge c. 1907
etching
plate 17.5 x 12.7
Collection: Castlemaine Art Gallery
and Historical Museum
Gift of Mr HA Watts, 1974

Group VII

Charles Meryon
French 1821–1868

CAT. NO. 28
The mortuary (*La morgue*) 1854
etching
sheet 32.4 x 32.4; plate 23.0 x 20.6;
image 21.2 x 19.0
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne. Felton Bequest, 1961

Frank Brangwyn
born Bruges, Belgium 1867;
arrived Great Britain 1877;
died 1956

CAT. NO. 29
Old Hammersmith 1908
etching and plate-tone
sheet 55.8 x 73.2; image 49.8 x 61.0
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne. Gift of John H Connell, 1914

John Shirlow
Australian 1869–1936

CAT. NO. 30
Sailor's Rest, Hobart 1933
etching
sheet 31.9 x 26.0; plate 23.5 x 20.9
Collection: Geelong Gallery
Bequest of Sybil Craig, 1989

Len Annois
Australian 1906–1966

CAT. NO. 31
Demolition, Bijou Theatre c. 1934
lithograph
sheet 34.0 x 32.0; image 29.0 x 26.5
Private collection

CAT. NO. 32
Friday night, Bourke Street c. 1940s
lithograph
sheet 29.6 x 33.5; image 25.5 x 29.4
Private collection

Group VIII

Giovanni Battista Piranesi
Italian 1720–1778

CAT. NO. 33
Prisoners on a projecting platform
(plate 10 from the series *Carceri
d'invenzione* (*Imaginary prisons*))
c. 1749–50 & 1761
etching, engraving, sulphur tint
or open bite and burnishing on paper;
sheet 52.7 x 70.7; plate 41.6 x 55.0
Collection: Art Gallery of South
Australia, Adelaide. Morgan Thomas
Bequest Fund, 1961

Marco Luccio
born Benevento, Italy 1969;
arrived Australia 1974

CAT. NO. 34
*Cranes and the State Library from
the QVB site* 2003
drypoint; edition 20/25
69.0 x 89.0
Private collection

CAT. NO. 35
QVB construction no. 2 2003
drypoint; edition 11/25
sheet 32.3 x 24.1; image 13.6 x 13.3
Private collection

Group IX

James McNeill Whistler
British 1834–1903

CAT. NO. 36
The lime-burner 1859
etching
(plate 9 from the series
*Sixteen etchings of scenes
on the Thames*, published 1869)
sheet 33.2 x 20.7; plate 25.0 x 17.5
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne. Purchased 1892

Victor Cobb
Australian 1876–1945

CAT. NO. 37
Kyte's Lane, Bourke Street 1909
etching
sheet 25.3 x 16.4; plate 21.0 x 13.2
Private collection

Lionel Lindsay
Australian 1874–1961

CAT. NO. 38
A La Trobe Street courtyard 1914
etching; artist's proof
sheet 26.1 x 21.3; plate 16.9 x 12.3
Collection: Geelong Gallery
Gift of the artist, 1944

John Shirlow
Australian 1869–1936

CAT. NO. 39
*Carron's Iron Yard,
Little Collins Street* 1915
etching
sight 21.0 x 17.6; plate 17.7 x 15.2
Private collection

Group X

James McNeill Whistler
British 1834–1903

CAT. NO. 40
Old Battersea Bridge 1879
lithograph
sheet 28.6 x 45.7; image 14.5 x 33.6
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne. Purchased 1971

Henri van Raalte
born London, Great Britain 1881;
arrived Australia 1910; died 1929

CAT. NO. 41
Bridge, Fremantle 1917–19
drypoint; edition 10/40
sheet 27.2 x 45.8; plate 19.8 x 37.5;
image 17.8 x 36.1
Collection: National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne. Felton Bequest, 1921

Print traditions
sources of Australian printmaking

COVER
Giovanni Battista Piranesi
Prisoners on a projecting platform
(plate 10 from the series *Carceri d'invenzione*
(*Imaginary prisons*)) (detail) c. 1749–50 & 1761
etching, engraving, sulphur tint
or open bite and burnishing on paper;
fourth edition, 1800–09
sheet 52.7 x 70.7; plate 41.6 x 55.0
Collection: Art Gallery of
South Australia, Adelaide
Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund, 1961