

Drawing attention to themes of darkness

Lucienne Rickard — Some old waste of death.

Beaver Galleries, Deakin. Until March 25.
Reviewer: Peter Haynes

The works in Lucienne Rickard's current exhibition are powerful assertions of the vitality of the medium of drawing.

The 11 works on display are characterised by the artist's persuasive palette of blacks. This by no means limits the attraction of each work but rather allows her to capitalise on the visual ambiguity of black and the subtle visual vibrations that emanate from it, and the connotations that black carries in our society.

Black is a positive visual fact, a fertile source for both artist and viewer, a colour that holds an ineluctable attraction which must be confronted. Rickard's use of black is consummate. Her blacks dance with themselves across the surface creating variations in texture, pattern, form, contour, light and shadow.



DYNAMIC: Lucienne Rickard's *Some old waste*.

The declarative presence of black, although intrinsically aligned to the artist's use of a 9B pencil as her chosen medium, also underscores the images she portrays. Rickard does not shy away from the confrontational or disturbing. Nor does she exalt these qualities. In *Some old waste* the motif of two roosters involved in a fight is almost subsumed by the artist's bravura display of tech-

nical virtuosity. The contrasting textures of feathers, beaks, talons and skin are exquisitely captured and seduce the viewer into close and prolonged examination of this marvellous work. The dynamism of the implied central diagonal sweeping across the pictorial surface produces a visual fulcrum around which the two protagonists battle it out. The contrast of the linear and the organic imparts an almost centrifugal movement to the composition, a further dynamic insertion to this compelling image. While movement is definitely present Rickard also implies a sense of a moment captured, a feeling of immanence, of something about to happen, that adds to the work's aesthetic tension. The splotchy background highlights the protagonists and gives contour to their physical presence.

In its inchoate insubstantiality it also reinforces the extraordinary precision and detailed execution invested in the

making of this powerful and commanding image.

Everything good and bad again presents that simple directness which calls for close engagement from the viewer. Here the amalgamation of textures is subtle and entrancing and the viewer cannot help but be enveloped by the virtuosic handling of the medium. Other works continue the artist's obsession with surface and the manipulation of that through the supposedly simple but incredibly effective means of a 9B pencil on a film still. Rickard invites the viewer to accept that the creative processes which produce the work of art are as important as the finished object. In juxtaposing images that are, perhaps, disquieting with techniques that produce incredibly attractive aesthetic results in themselves, she poses questions about the very nature of art. This exhibition is complex, demanding and beautiful and should not be missed.