

ROBERT AUSTIN



PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS BY  
**ROBERT AUSTIN**

RA PRE PRWS · 1895-1973

*Friday 4 October - Friday 18 October 2002*

**THE FINE ART SOCIETY PLC**

*in association with Paul Liss Fine Art Limited*

## Seascapes and Landscapes

2 Most landscapes were begun on site, between the hours of five and seven in the morning, the hours that Austin considered light to be at its best. He went out on his bicycle with paints, sketchbook or prepared paper and a jar of water swinging from the handlebars. The impressions were then brought home and finished in the studio.

### CATALOGUE NOTE

All drawings are from the artist's estate and all are for sale. Everything is sold unframed unless indicated in the catalogue.

[ F ] Framed

MO Mount opening

AM In the artist's original wash line mount

† Illustrated in colour

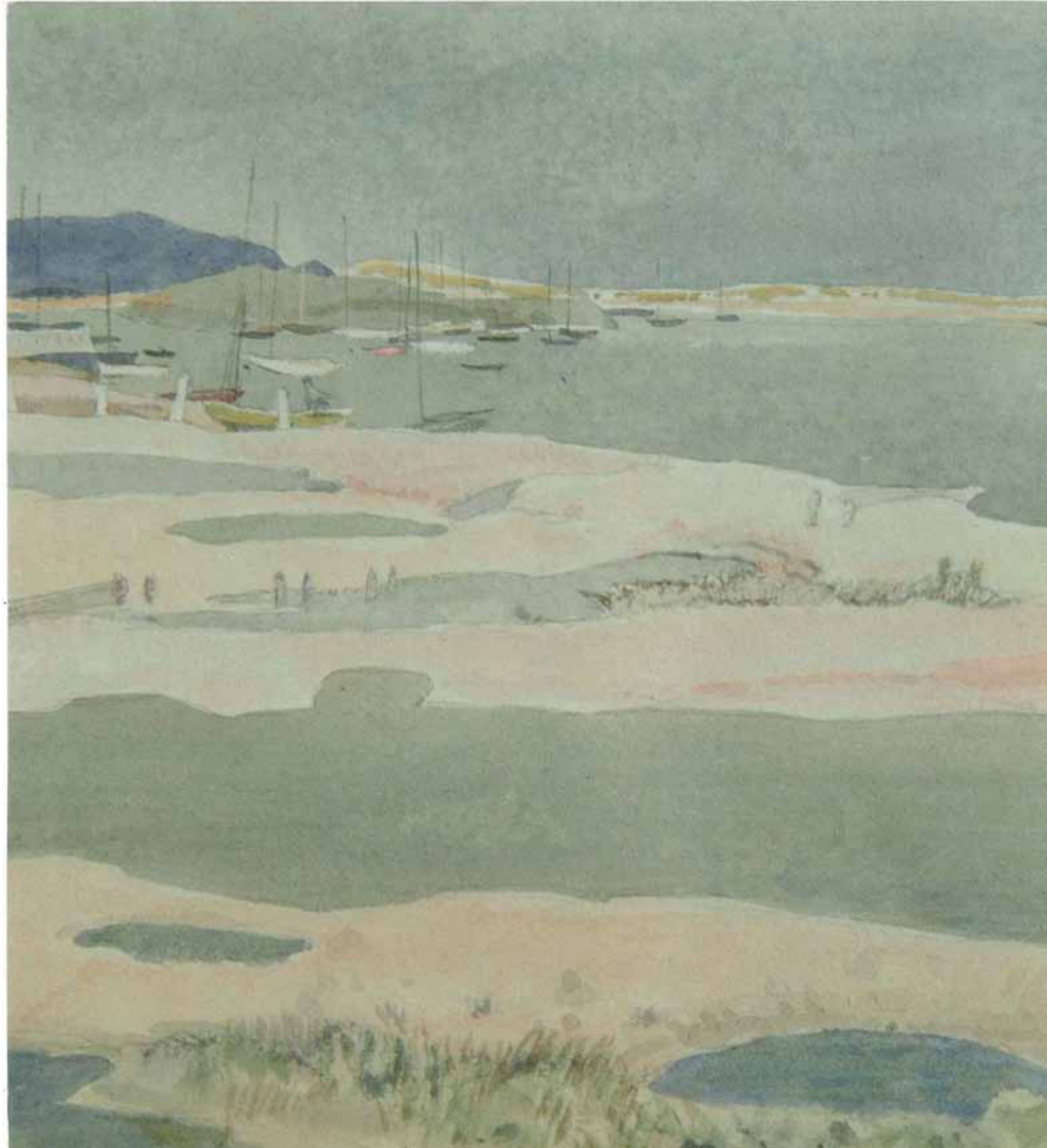
‡ Illustrated in black and white

All drawings, irrespective of whether they have been signed by the artist, have been stamped with the artist's initials.

Catalogue notes prepared by Paul Liss and Robert Austin's two daughters, Rachel Austin and Clare Calder.

- 1 *Storm, Burnham Overy Staithe, 1960* †  
Signed, watercolour, MO 22 x 26 cm, AM [ F ]  
Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1980 (101)  
The majority of Austin's landscapes were drawn in Norfolk. In 1935 he bought and converted a primitive Methodist Chapel at Burnham Overy Staithe and continued to use it as his studio throughout his life.
- 2 *The Creek after a high tide, late 1930s* †  
Signed, watercolour over pencil, MO 20 x 27 cm [ F ]
- 3 *View of the Thames from Lingard House looking towards Barnes, 1950s* †  
Signed, watercolour, MO 23 x 27.5 cm AM [ F ]  
Lingard House, Chiswick Mall was the artist's London home and studio from 1931.
- 4 *Fossett's Circus, Wells-next-the-Sea, 1930* †  
signed and dated in pencil, watercolour, MO 20 x 28 cm, AM [ F ]  
Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1980 (96)
- 5 *High Tide, Burnham Norton, 1957* †  
Signed and dated, watercolour, MO 22.5 x 23.5 cm, AM [ F ]
- 6 *High Tide, Burnham Overy Staithe, 1949*  
Signed and inscribed with title on the backboard, watercolour, MO 31 x 35.5 cm AM  
Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1980 (98)
- 7 *Four beached dinghies* †  
Signed, brown and black chalk, MO 42 x 52.5 cm [ F ]  
Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1980 (79)

Detail of catalogue 2 ▶





1 Storm, Burnham Overy Staithe



3 View of the Thames from Lingard House looking towards Barnes



2 The Creek after a high tide



4 Fossett's Circus, Wells-next-the-Sea



7 Four beached dinghies



## Portraits

Although Austin always maintained he never enjoyed doing portraits, nevertheless he excelled at them, and was continually asked to do them.

- 8 *Rachel*, 5th January 1942 †  
Signed and dated, red chalk, MO 23 x 21 cm AM [ F ]
- 9 *Ada, the artist's wife*, circa 1925 †  
Signed with studio stamp, coloured chalks on buff paper, 77 x 57 cm [ F ]  
Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford 1980 (62)  
Ada Harrison wrote a number of successful children's and travel books which were illustrated by Austin.
- 10 *Ada, the artist's wife*, circa 1925  
Signed, charcoal with highlights in white chalk, 38.5 x 34.5 cm [ F ]
- 11 *Hubert Hartley, House Master at Eton* †  
pencil, MO 43 x 35 cm
- 12 *Erlund Hudson*, 11th December, 1935  
Signed, dated and inscribed Overy Staithe, Norfolk, pencil, MO 39 x 36 cm
- 13 *Clare*, 6th August 1933 †  
Signed and dated in pencil, red chalk on brown paper, MO 24 x 25 cm
- 14 *The artist's daughter*, mid 1930s †  
pencil, MO 21 x 21 cm
- 15 *Clare sleeping*, 12th May 1933 †  
Dated and inscribed by the artist 'To Peach from D.', red and brown chalk and white bodycolour, MO 25 x 21.5 cm, AM
- 16 *Baby*, 6th March 1939 †  
Inscribed with date, pencil, MO 25 x 26 cm
- 17 *Rachel*, 8th June 1937 †  
Signed and dated, charcoal on pink paper, MO 37 x 29 cm, AM [ F ]
- 18 *Rob asleep*, 14th June 1928  
Signed, dated and inscribed, charcoal, chalks and white body colour on brown paper, 40 x 31.7 cm  
Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1980 (63)
- 19 *Four studies*  
Inscribed in pencil, AM [ F ]  
Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1980 (68-71)  
*7 hours old*, 30th August 1933, born 5.17am  
Pencil and black ink, 34.4 x 24.4 cm  
*One day old*, 31st August 1933  
pencil, 28.4 x 22.2 cm  
*Sunday / Aug (sic. in fact September) 3 - 1933, 5 days old*  
Pencil, 28.2 x 23 cm  
*16th October 1933*  
Pencil, 32.8 x 24.3 cm



9 Ada, the artist's wife



Erlund Hudson



11 Hubert Hartley



13 Clare



15 Clare sleeping



17 Rachel



16 Baby



14 The artist's daughter



20 Honesty and Lace



21 Flowers in light †



22 Mixed flowers in front of lace

## Flower Paintings

Flower painting became one of Austin's most popular subjects and, when exhibited, sold at once. He was very particular when choosing each individual flower and he always picked them himself, and then arranged them in an antique glass jug – he felt it was important to show the stems – often with a background of old lace.

### 20 Honesty and Lace †

Signed, watercolour over pencil, MO 25 x 21 cm, AM [ F ]  
Exhibited: Royal Society of Painters in Watercolour

### 21 Flowers in light †

Signed, watercolour, MO 27.5 x 22 cm AM [ F ]  
Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1980 (92)  
and Royal Society of Painters in Watercolour

### 22 Mixed flowers in front of lace †

Watercolour, MO 25 x 22 cm, AM [ F ]  
Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford,  
1980 (95)



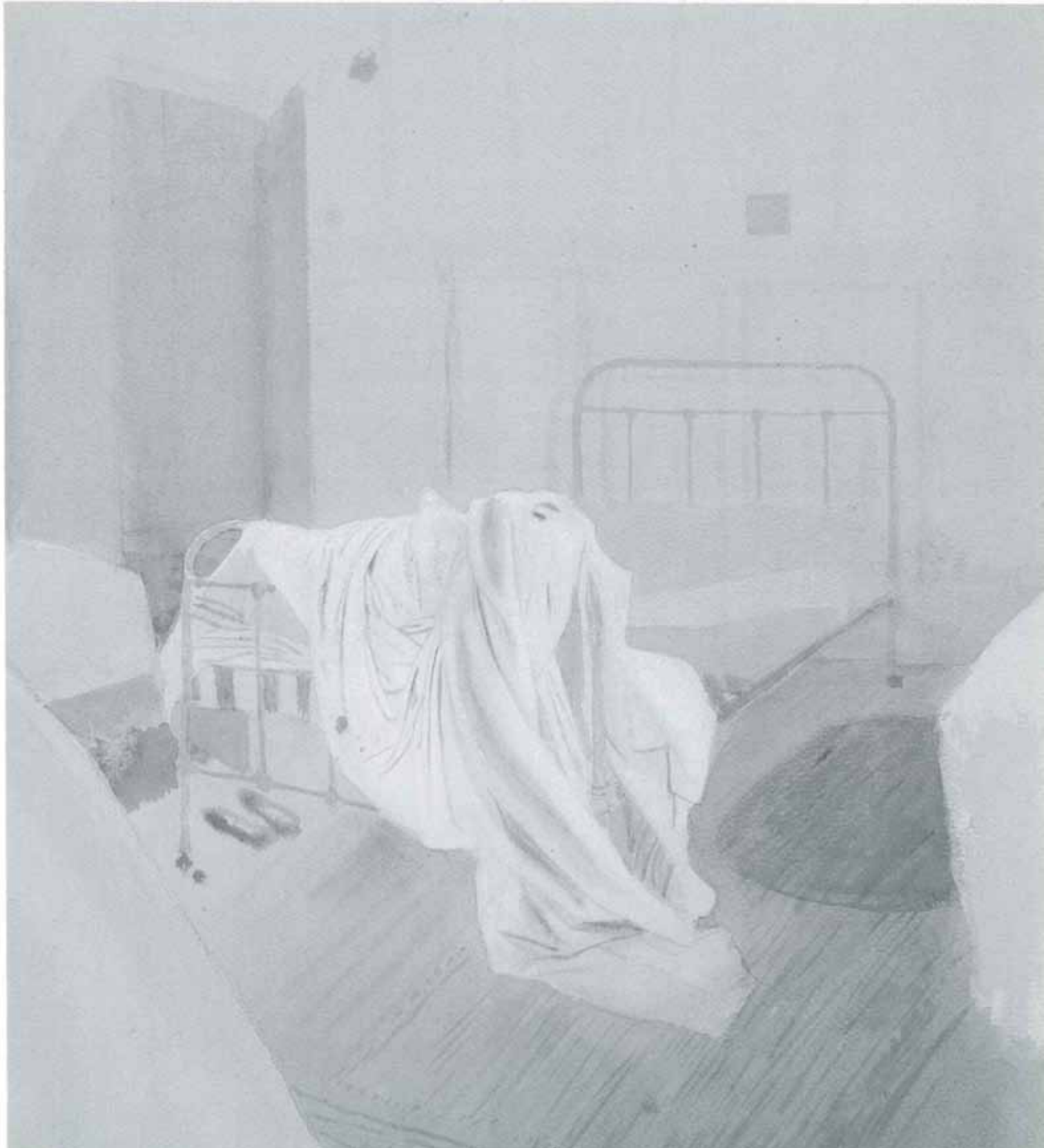
## At Rest

14

Figures resting or sleeping are amongst the subjects that Austin drew consistently. In the domestic family routine which formed the backdrop to his work, Austin found an endless source of inspiration. Drapery was a subject he was particularly drawn to.

- 23 *Attic room, Lingard House, with unmade bed* †  
watercolour, 46 × 33 cm [ F ]
- 24 *My bed, rainy day, 1939* †  
Inscribed with title, signed and dated, black chalk with highlights in watercolour, 46.5 × 31 cm, AM [ F ]
- 25 *Camp bed, 18th August 1939* †  
Signed, dated and inscribed in pencil, black chalk on Ingres laid paper, 32 × 48 cm [ F ]
- 26 *The artist's bathroom*  
charcoal, 39 × 30 cm [ F ]
- 27 *Peach - Hot Night, 15th July, 1935* †  
Signed, dated and inscribed with title, charcoal, 39.5 × 51.5 cm [ F ]  
Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford 1980 (75)
- 28 *The artist's daughter sleeping, 1934* †  
Signed and dated in pencil, wash, 30 × 27 cm [ F ]
- 29 *Sleeping mother, child and baby in a waiting room, mid-1920s* †  
Black chalk squared with highlights in black ink, 59 × 43 cm [ F ]
- 30 *Peach, 22nd July 1934* †  
Signed, inscribed and dated, pencil, 28.5 × 45.5 cm [ F ]
- 31 *The artist's daughter sleeping, early 1940s* †  
chalk on washed light pink paper, 45 × 56 cm [ F ]
- 32 *Model resting, 1938* †  
Signed and dated, black chalk on grey paper, 46.5 × 59 cm [ F ]

Detail of catalogue 23 •

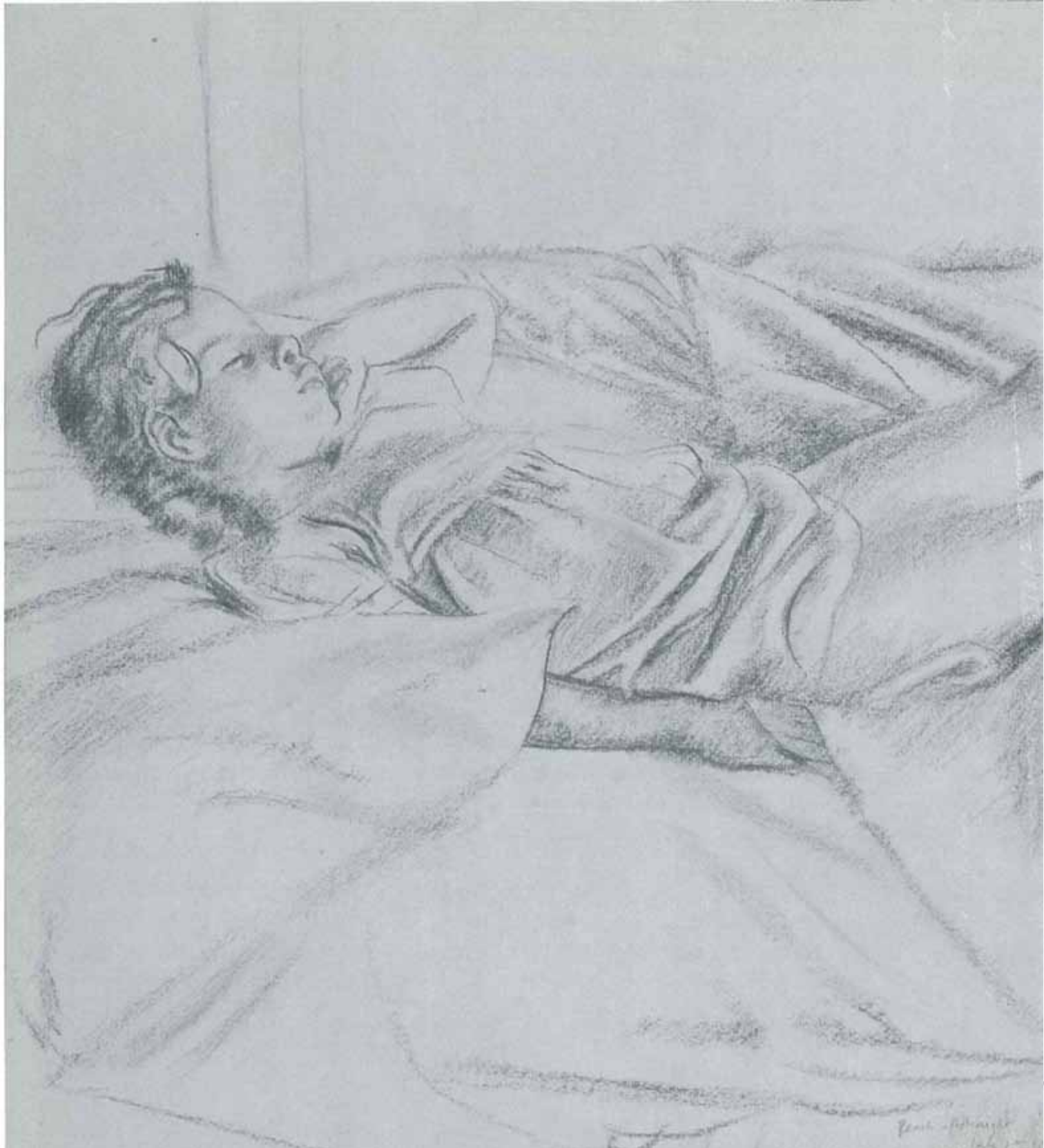




24 My bed, rainy day



25 Camp bed





•28 The artist's daughter sleeping



29 Sleeping mother, child and baby in a waiting room



30 Peach



31 The artist's daughter sleeping



32 Model resting

## Mother and Child

24

Amongst the subjects that Austin was most naturally drawn to were his three young children with either their mother or their nanny.

- 33 *Child in bed*, 1930 †  
Signed and dated, egg tempera, 26, 3 x 27.7 cm [ F ]  
Illustrated on front cover. Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1980 (65)  
Literature: Illustrated, Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1980
- 34 *Child kissing mother* †  
Brown & red chalk on paper with PM Fabriano watermark, 33 x 24 cm
- 35 *Mother seated in a railway carriage with sleeping baby* †  
watercolour over pencil on buff paper, MO 40 x 36 cm
- 36 *Bathtime*, 1934 †  
Signed, dated and inscribed, pencil and wash, MO 20.1 x 16.5 cm [ F ]  
Exhibited: Robert Austin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1980 (72)
- 37 *Mother feeding child*, 1928 †  
Signed and dated, watercolour over pencil on buff paper, MO 40 x 30.5 cm
- 38 *Night scene, mother at bedside* †  
Watercolour with touches of gouache on washed buff paper, MO 43.5 x 34 cm
- 39 *Mother brushing child's hair*, 1939  
Signed and dated in pencil, charcoal, MO 36 x 27 cm
- 40 *Mother bathing child*, 1939 †  
Signed and dated, charcoal, MO 45 x 28cm

Detail of catalogue 34





35 Mother seated in a railway carriage with sleeping baby



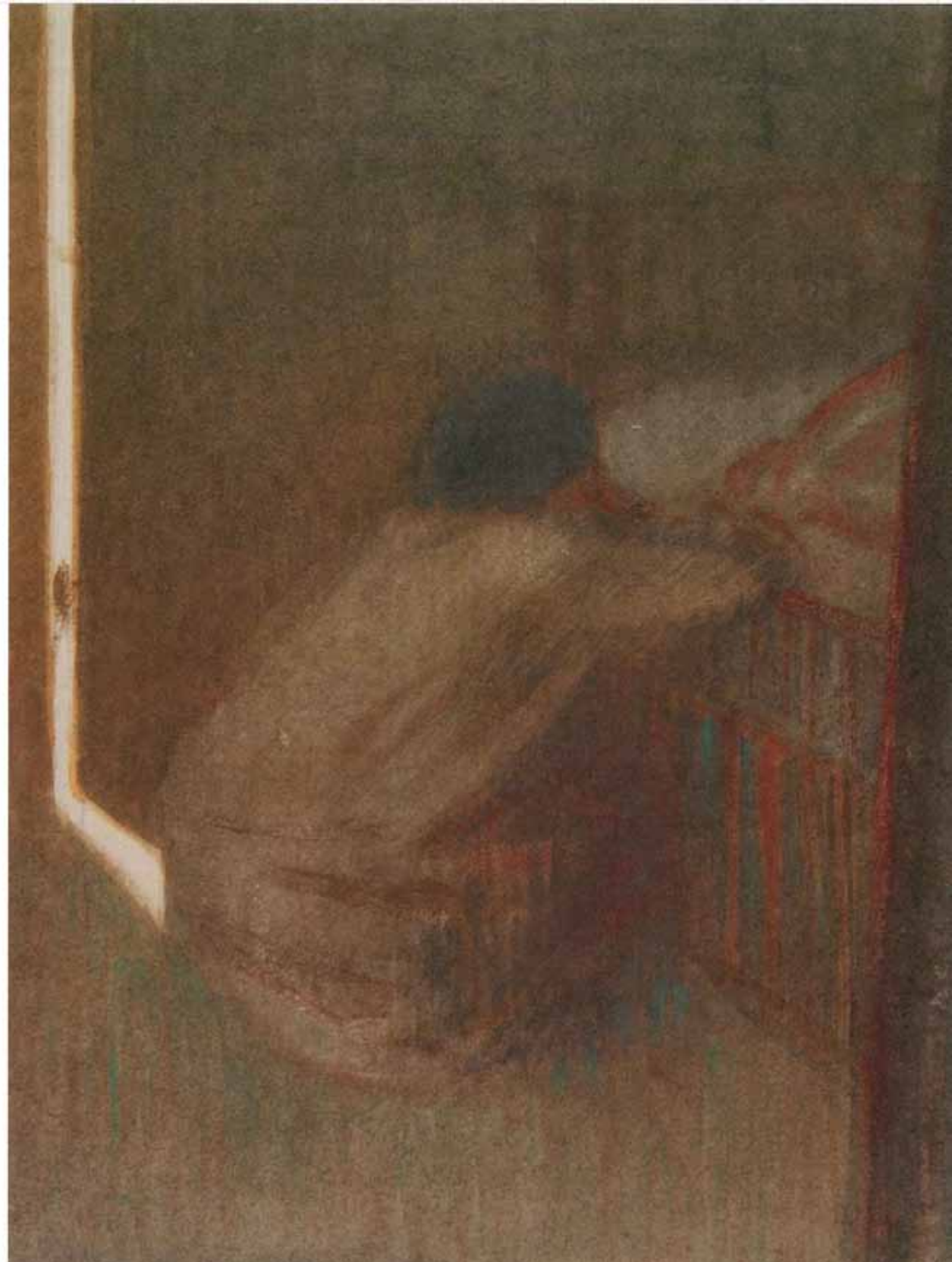
37 Mother feeding child



36 Bathtime



40 Mother bathing child



38 Night scene, mother at bedside

## Circus

28

The Circus came once a year and set up on the shingle foreshore outside the artist's studio at Burnham Overy Staithe. The combination of animals and performers always fascinated him.



41 Circus

- 41 *Circus, circa 1935* †  
Gouache on board, 124 × 93.5 cm [ F ]
- 42 *Ballerina adjusting her shoes, 1936* †  
Signed with initials and dated (twice), charcoal with highlights in brown chalk, 56 × 45.4 cm
- 43 *Preparing for the show, 1938* †  
Signed and dated, charcoal on buff washed paper, 57 × 45 cm
- 44 *Porte des bras, 30th December, 1935* †  
Signed and dated, charcoal with highlights in red chalk, 56 × 45 cm
- 45 *Deshabillée, 1938* †  
Signed and dated, black chalk on washed buff paper, 57 × 45 cm
- 46 *The artist's daughter seated by a trapeze, 1938*  
Signed and dated, charcoal with highlights in watercolour, 57 × 45 cm.
- 47 *The artist's daughter standing by a trapeze, 1938* †  
Signed and dated, black and red chalks with highlights in watercolour, 56 × 45 cm

Detail of catalogue 41 •







42 Ballerina adjusting her shoes



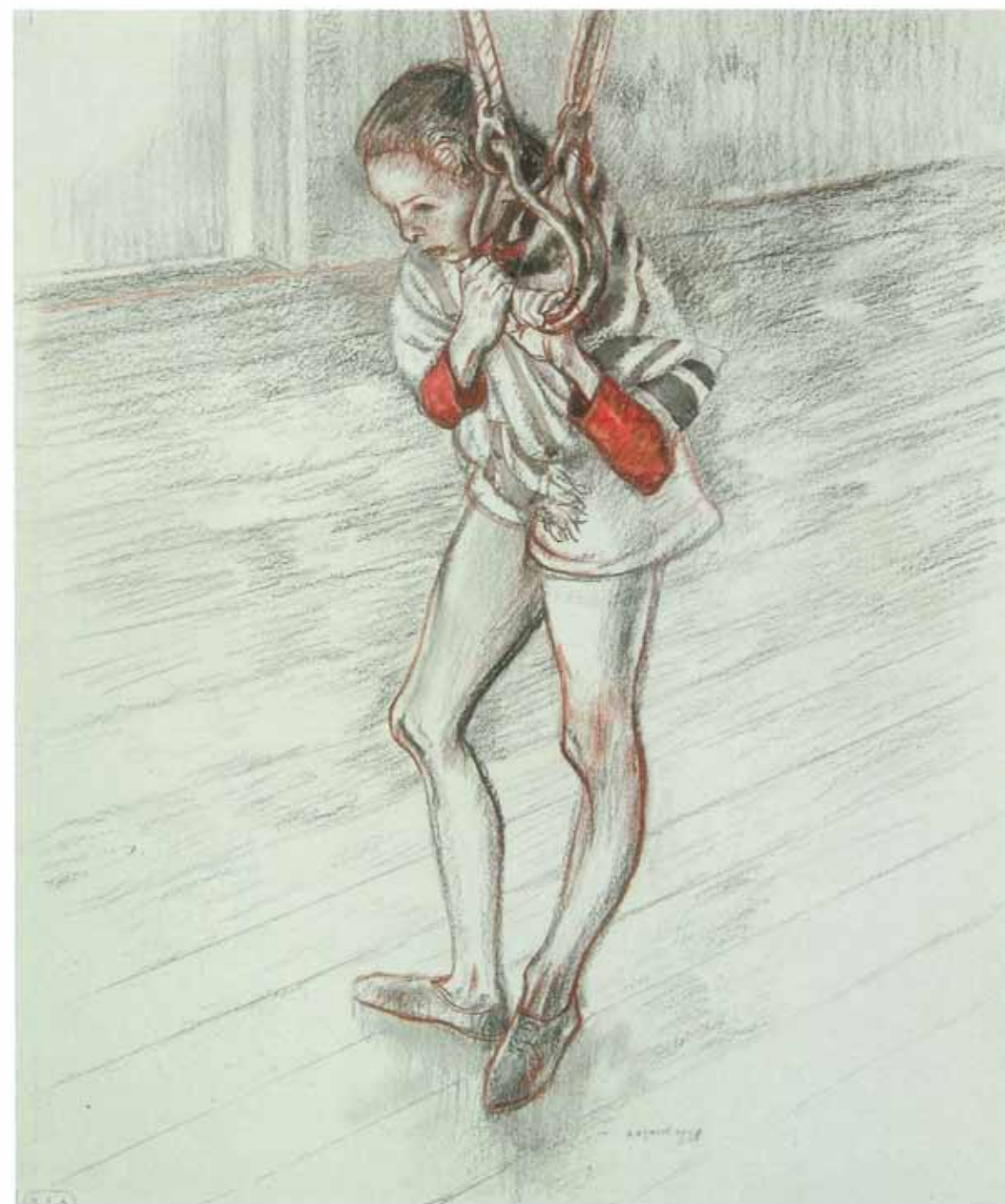
44 Porte des bras



43 Preparing for the show



45 Deshabillée



47 The artist's daughter standing by a trapeze



## Life Drawing

Like many of the rigorously trained engravers of his generation, Austin was a technically brilliant draughtsman, comfortable with a range of media – pencil, chalk, charcoal, pen and ink – and equally at ease with both small and large formats. Life drawing was an essential part of Austin's creative discipline. He drew from life throughout his career and always retained a model.

- 48 Seated female nude, arms raised, 1934 †  
Signed and dated, brown and blue chalks with white and blue highlights on buff paper, 37 x 29 cm. Reproduced on back cover [ F ]
- 49 Female nude, three quarter view with arms resting on hips, 26th November 1947 †  
Signed with initials and dated, pencil on pink washed paper, 56.6 x 39 cm [ F ]
- 50 Nude in front of a sail †  
Charcoal with highlights in watercolour on buff washed paper, 63 x 48 cm
- 51 Female nude seated on a stool with arms raised, 16th November 1964 †  
Dated, charcoal and pastel, 60 x 49 cm
- 52 Nude kneeling in profile, 1st March 1937 †  
Signed and dated, charcoal, 57 x 37.5 cm
- 53 Standing female nude, three quarter rear view, arms crossed over to shoulders, 1938 †  
Signed and dated, charcoal on washed grey paper, 56 x 45 cm
- 54 Female nude, three quarter view †  
Red chalk, 33 x 24 cm [ F ]



50 Nude in front of a sail



52 Nude kneeling in profile



51 Female nude seated on a stool with arms raised



53 Standing female nude, three quarter rear view



54 Female nude, three quarter view



55 Nurses' break

## The Second World War

Austin worked as a War Artist between 1940 and 1944 while he was based in Ambleside with the Royal College of Art, which was evacuated there. The majority of this work is in the Imperial War Museum. A full list of Austin's work as a War Artist is contained in Robert Austin, Ashmolcan Museum, Oxford, 1980.

55 Nurses' break, 1938 †

Signed and dated, watercolour, 55.2 x 72.4 cm [ F ]

56 Boris of Ambleside, 1941 ‡

Signed, dated and inscribed with title, black charcoal with white highlights on light blue paper, 48 x 64 cm [ F ]

Whilst Austin rarely praised his own work, he considered this drawing to be one of his best.



56 Boris of Ambleside

57 Eye trouble, ATS, 1943 ‡

Signed and dated, charcoal on buff paper, 78 x 57 cm

58 Operation on ear, 1943 ‡

Signed, dated and inscribed with title, charcoal on buff paper, 78 x 57 cm

59 Abdominal pain, 1943 ‡

Signed, dated and inscribed with title, charcoal on buff paper, 78 x 57 cm

60 A new dressing, 1943 ‡

Signed, dated and inscribed with title, charcoal on buff paper, 78 x 57 cm

61 Airmen working on a Spitfire in an RAF Hangar ‡

charcoal on pink washed paper, 45 x 56.5 cm [ F ]



57 Eye trouble, ATS



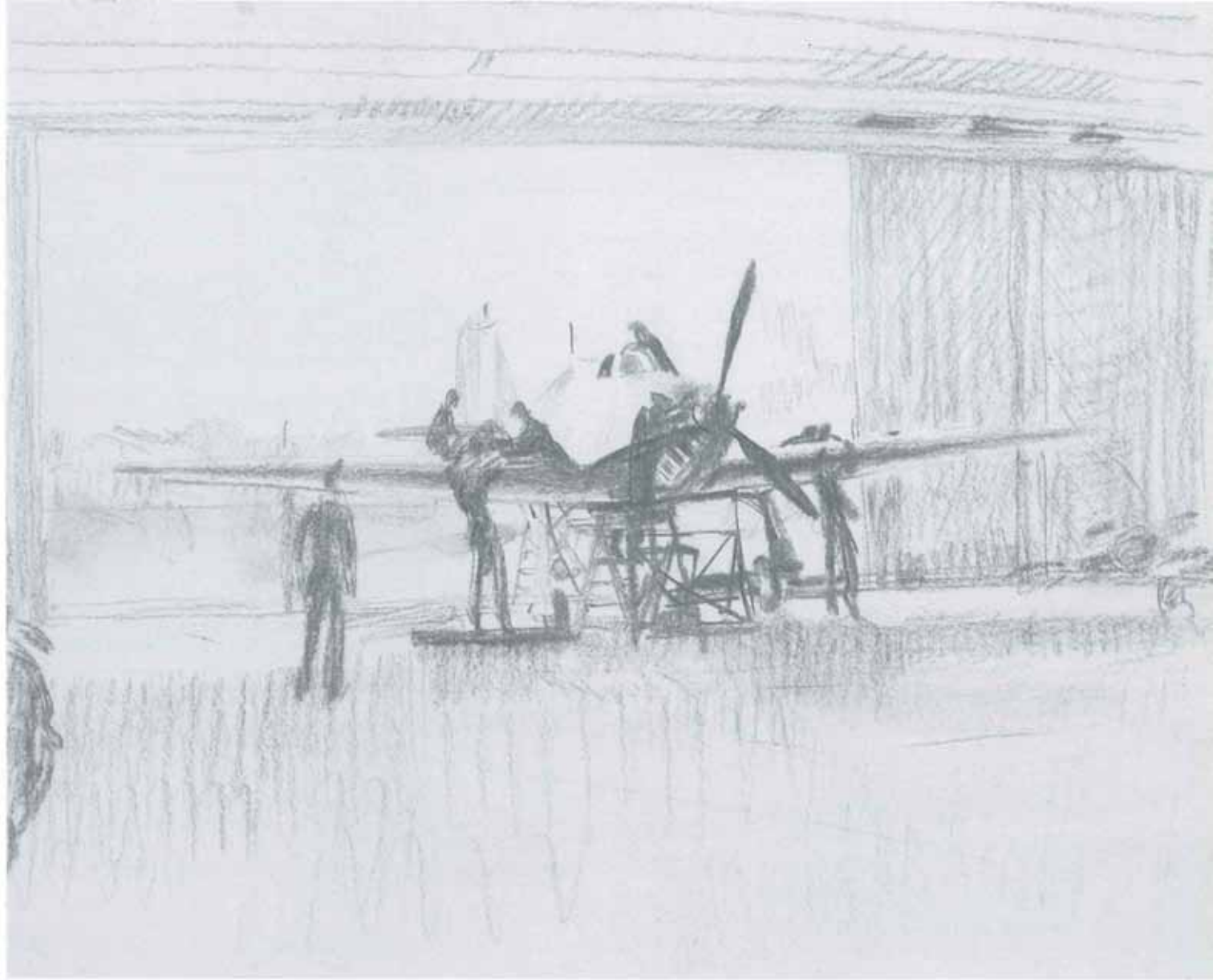
59 Abdominal pain



58 Operation on ear



60 A new dressing



61 Airmen working on a Spitfire in an RAF hangar

## The Artist's Studio at Burnham Overy Staithe, Norfolk

40

The Chapel at Burnham Overy Staithe consisted of large, light-filled rooms, either facing the green meadows or out to sea. Austin chose a huge, white, north-facing room, overlooking the sand dunes to Scolt Head, to be his studio, and it was here that all his work was carried out.

62 The artist's son, Robert, sketching †

Signed, brown and black chalk on grey laid paper, 43 x 31 cm

63 The artist's son, Robert, sketching, 1st September 1932

Inscribed in pencil 'To Si From B', brown crayon, 35 x 26 cm

The artist referred to his wife as Si, to whom this drawing is dedicated.

64 Miss Barbara Harris, 1943 †

Signed and dated, charcoal, 46 x 58 cm [ F ]

65 Model seated on a cushion, 17th July 1946 †

Signed with initials, pencil on pink washed paper,

46 x 56.5 cm [ F ]

66 Seated female nude, sketching 1938 †

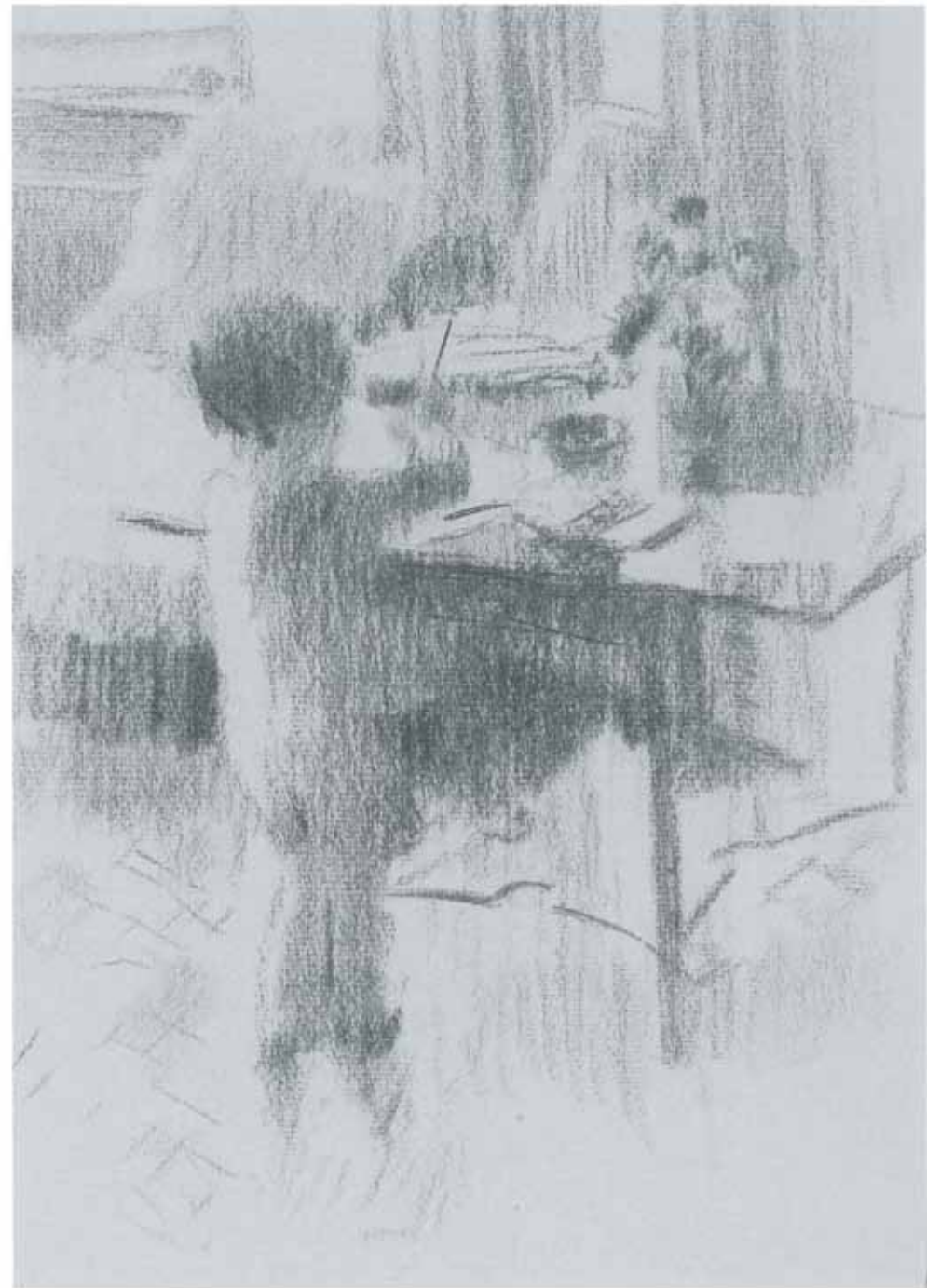
Signed and dated, red chalk, 56.4 x 45 cm AM [ F ]

67 Clare seated on a chaise longue, 1938

Signed and dated, charcoal, 56 x 45 cm [ F ]



67 Clare seated on a chaise longue



62 The artist's son, Robert, sketching

41



66 Seated female nude, sketching



64 Miss Barbara Harris



65 Model seated on a cushion

## Early Work and British School at Rome

44

Austin studied at Leicester Municipal School of Art (1909–1913) before going to the Royal College of Art in 1913. He returned there in 1919 after the First World War. In 1922 he was elected to the Scholarship in engraving at the British School at Rome and between 1922 and 1925 he lived in Rome and travelled in Italy.

68 Monumental figure carrying a jar, early 1920s †  
Pencil, squared, 27 x 22 cm

69 Seated man and woman repairing umbrellas, early 1920s †  
Pencil, 18 x 18 cm

70 Scene in an inn, 1925 †  
Signed and dated, pen and ink and wash, 28 x 29 cm

71 Figures in a cafe, circa 1925 †  
Signed, charcoal and wash on buff paper, 34 x 28 cm

72 Study of a skeleton, sketch for etching, April 1920 †  
Signed, dated and inscribed, pencil with white highlights, 35 x 25 cm [ F ]



72 Study of a skeleton, sketch for etching



68 Monumental figure carrying a jar



69 Seated man and woman repairing umbrellas



70 Scene in an inn



71 Figures in a cafe

45



## Chronology



Robert Austin RA PRE PRWS 1895–1973

- 1895 Born in Leicester, 23 June.
- 1909–13 Studied at Leicester Municipal School of Art.
- 1913 Enrolled at the Royal College of Art. His first two etchings were made on zinc.
- 1915–19 Served in the trenches through the First World War as a gunner, and in Germany with Army of Occupation.
- 1919 Returned to the Royal College of Art.
- 1920 First etching published by Mrs Bernhard Smith's Twenty-One Gallery, which consistently published Austin's plates during the twenties.
- 1921 Elected an Associate of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers.
- 1922 Elected to the Scholarship in engraving at the British School at Rome. He was the third holder of the scholarship.
- 1922–25 Lived in Rome and travelled in Italy. The character of Austin's work began to change, as he became more exposed to European art, especially old master prints.
- 1924 Married Ada (May) Harrison with whom he collaborated on *Some Tuscan Cities* (London 1924) and *Some Umbrian Cities* (London 1925) and other books.
- Began to use line engraving in place of etching. Engraving is much more difficult than etching. Austin is one of the few twentieth century artists to have mastered the technique.

- 1925 Elected Hon. Secretary to the Faculty of Engraving of the British School in Rome. Became a member of the Faculty in next year.
- 1926 Assisted Malcolm Osborne (1880–1963) RA PRE in teaching engraving at the Royal College of Art. Through his teaching, he influenced several generations of artists. He taught what he did best himself: life drawing and printmaking.
- Visited the Dolomites. First one-man exhibition of prints at the Twenty-One Gallery.
- 1927 Visited the Balearic Islands. Later illustrated Ada Harrison's book *A Majorcan Holiday*. Son, Robert, born (daughters Clare 1929 and Rachel 1933).
- 1928 Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers, in whose annual exhibitions he continued to show new work until his death.
- 1929 First visit to Norfolk.
- 1930 The Twenty One-Gallery published *A Catalogue of Etchings & Engravings by Robert Austin RE 1913–1929* by Campbell Dodgson.
- 1931 Moved to Lingard House, Chiswick Mall, where, apart from his visits to Norfolk, he lived for the rest of his life.
- 1934 Drew and completed *North Bank of the River Thames from Chiswick Parish Church to Hammersmith Bridge*, as it was one hundred years ago.
- Elected a member of the Royal Watercolour Society.

- 1935 Converted the Primitive Methodist Chapel at Burnham Overy Staithe.
- 1938 Exhibition of drawings at Colnaghi's.
- 1939 Elected an Associate of the Royal Academy. Continued to teach at the Royal College of Art, evacuated to Ambleside in the Lake District.
- 1940–44 Worked as a War Artist. Made drawings of Woolwich Arsenal, Fighter Pilots, and Nurses at work. War posters commissioned by the Ministry of Information with subjects including Pitt and Nelson.
- 1949 Elected a Royal Academician.
- 1955 Retired from the Royal College of Art.
- 1956 Elected President of the Royal Watercolour Society. Became adviser to the Bank of England. Designed new Ten Shilling and One Pound notes which came into circulation in 1960.
- 1958 Ada Austin died.
- 1962 Elected President of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers in succession to Malcolm Osborne.
- 1973 Died at Burnham Overy Staithe, 18 September.
- 1980 Exhibition of prints and drawings at Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and Leicester Museum and Art Gallery.
- 2001 Exhibition of prints at the Fine Art Society, London, touring to Paul McCarron, New York, and the Open Eye Gallery, Edinburgh.

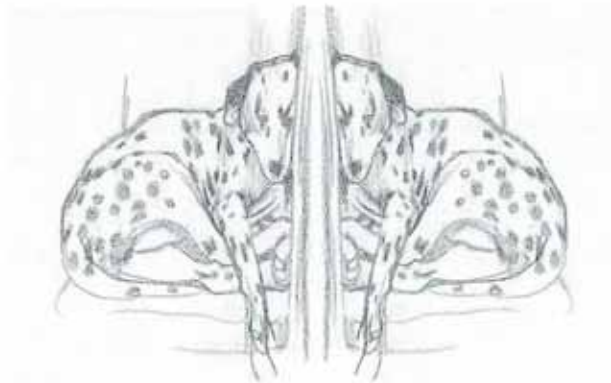
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Illustrated on front cover: *Child in Bed*, 1930  
Catalogue 33

Illustrated on back cover: *Seated Female Nude, Arms Raised*, 1934  
Catalogue 48

Illustrated below: *Ling Asleep*,  
1949





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