

JERWOOD VISUAL ARTS

JERWOOD  
DRAWING  
PRIZE  
2016

## SELECTION PANEL



L-R: Paul Hobson, Stephanie Buck, Glenn Brown

**Glenn Brown**  
Artist

**Stephanie Buck**  
Director of Kupferstich-Kabinett at  
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

**Paul Hobson**  
Director of Modern Art Oxford

## SELECTION PANEL PERSPECTIVES

**Jerwood Drawing Prize 2016**

I enjoyed the process of judging this year's Drawing Prize. I like looking at art and I particularly like looking at drawing. The two days in Wimbledon made me feel like a kid in a sweet shop. Perhaps a good drawing is not like a full meal, but a precise and clever confection, simple and not overblown.

Nearly as much as I like looking at art I enjoy talking about it. I liked being challenged by Stephanie and Paul to look at work I might have not been drawn to at first. When a particular drawing was discussed and was given a context I had not thought of, or we considered the drawing in a new way, my opinions were challenged, and new ways of perceiving the quality of a drawing were opened up. We talked at great length about what constituted a great drawing (and sometimes, of course, what made a bad one). There was laughter aplenty. Human ingenuity knows few boundaries. Many entries were meant to surprise us, and they did. It was a great pleasure discussing such a diverse range of art with such knowledgeable people.

Nevertheless, there was one aspect I didn't appreciate: we had to choose so few for the final list of works. There were many drawings that didn't make the final list that I still remember well, and would dearly like to see again. Drawings that were really beautiful, or disturbingly strange, or had parts that were so beguiling that they made my head swim. I could go on at great length about the ones that didn't make it.

Sometimes we were given a magnificent drawing, but with passages that were perplexing. It was like reading a book with a great start, an intriguing middle, but with an ending that disappointed. For these I wanted to write little notes to say how much we loved the drawing, but felt a little change could have driven it to greatness.

We always looked at the drawings themselves, fairly unconcerned with who had made them. Contemporary art relies so much on context, but the nature of an open submission prize is not having a context. The work had to speak for itself. You have to look very hard to make sure some quiet but beautiful aspect of the work is not being overlooked. In many cases we had to probe meticulously to understand how something was made, because the making was part of the work's narrative, just as much as the drawing's actual subject.

Usually we had consensus when a work qualified for the exhibition, which is strange because there is so much in art that is personal and subjective. I am sure another set of three judges would have picked a very different exhibition to the one we have put together, though I'd like to think certain drawings have an almost universal appeal.

One thing that troubled me repeatedly throughout the discussion and selection was wondering whether one of my drawings would qualify if it was put into this rigorous and cruel competition? How would my drawing measure up? So, since being judge, I always try to mentally place the drawings I am making into the context of the prize. Which so far leaves me feeling: no, that wouldn't make it, it's not good enough, it's not relevant and it's too stuck in the past. The major effect the prize has had on me is to greatly improve my own drawings by giving me new critical faculties in judging them.

So it's back to the drawing board for me.

**Glenn Brown**  
Artist