

## **JAMES GLEESON INTERVIEWS: DOROTHY THORNHILL**

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Dorothy, I think we might begin this time with some biographical information. It's important that we have as much information about you and your background in the catalogue as possible. Could you begin by telling me about your early life, or early training as an artist, all that sort of information? First of all, did you come from an artistic family? Were there other members of your family who were—

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Not in recent generations, no, although my mother was interested in painting and did a little when she was young, but so did everybody's mother in those days.

**JAMES GLEESON:** In those days.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You were born in England?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Whereabouts in England?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Manchester. Well, actually in Cheshire where my mother's parents were. But my father had a parish in Manchester.

**JAMES GLEESON:** He was a minister?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. I grew up there and we loved the Lake District very much. My grandmother lived in the Lake District and we had a cottage up there, went up there whenever we could. I think a love of the land, if you like, and the growth of things very much came from those days.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Where did you first have your art training?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** In New Zealand.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, you came to New Zealand?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. We came out to New Zealand. Actually, I was very ill and the doctor said that was a suitable climate, so my father got a church in Auckland, New Zealand, and I studied at the Elam Arts School. I was very fortunate that just at the time I started they had a complete revolution and imported a staff from London and AJC Fisher, who was a protégé of John's, was really my first—

**JAMES GLEESON:** John?

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**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Augustus John.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Augustus John.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. Odd, wasn't it? That was my first strong influence in drawing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. So in a way John stood behind the teacher who taught you?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, something like that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** How long were you there?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh, we came to Sydney in '29, I think it was. Yes, just on. Yes, '29.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Nineteen twenty-nine.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Twenty-nine, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did you continue art?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, I cast around and wasn't very happy. I tried the Sydney Art School—wasn't it?—which of course had the great reputation.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This was the Julian Ashton?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** The Julian Ashton. But, you know, Julian wasn't there any more and it had fallen on rather sleepy days. The idea was that one started by drawing the antique. Well, by that time, having become very involved with figure drawing, I just wasn't interested in doing that. I tried the Royal Art but that didn't work very well. Then I was warned by all these people not to go near that awful place, the tech. Finally I thought, well, I must get some drawing in, so I don't have to speak to anybody but I can enrol for a night class and get some drawing. I enrolled and of course encountered Frederick Britton, who was a Slade man up there and who was really a terrific disciplinarian. But this was fine. I mean, he really knew about what I wanted to know. So I settled there and afterwards went there in the daytime too.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. How long did that go on for?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Can't have be very long because I was back in London in '33.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Thirty-two, '33, came back in '34. In London, I took some work over and was admitted to the Royal Academy School. I'd promised the family I'd go. I'd try there first, although I rather wanted to go somewhere else. But I got in so that was that, and it was very good. At the time Walter Russell was curator of the art school and Monnington, I think, and Anis Jackson were both teaching there. Yes. Jackson was, I suppose, the most sort-after figure man in London at that time, and Monnington was very good too. Also one had

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access from that place to any number of other facilities. For instance, I went to the Courtauld and I was lucky enough to get the last lectures given by Roger Fry, because he died before the next lot. But he was marvellous.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Dorothy, you're perhaps best known, in a way, for your draftsmanship for your drawings. Was that always a central interest too you, or in these days were you also painting?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh, I've always been also painting. But, going right back to childhood, I always wanted to paint. I thought the drawing's the trouble, you know. If I can only learn to draw, the rest will be fun. I became so interested in learning to draw that I began to think, now, if I can draw by I'm 40 I'll be doing pretty well. When I got to 40 I thought, oh dear, I'll need a bit more time. It's been going on ever since.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Still learning to draw.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. I hope.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You came back to Australia in 1934?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What happened then?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** What did I do? I started teaching, I think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** At the tech?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** No, not at the tech immediately. Actually, I think it was a little girls' school was the first place, St Catherine's, and then PLC Pymble, which was a pretty extending thing. Such a lot of people, everybody ran at the double all the time. But not much, not very much later I started teaching figure drawing. I was actually appointed, I think it was Hoff.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, Rayner Hoff, yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Rayner Hoff who sent for me and wanted me to start with the figure drawing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This would be in the mid-thirties?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, I suppose it was. I'm sorry, I'm bad about dates.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, I was there as a student '34, '35 and '36. I think he was the head of the school.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Well, that would be right. Several other jobs came up but he said, 'No, don't go for that. I want you for figure drawing'. I think that he died just about the time the right job came up. But, in any case, I started then and this went on more or less for 40 years.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Teaching and learning.

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**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, and with little breaks overseas of course which keeps you fresh.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Dorothy, who were students at the same time as you? Say, in the tech when you were there? Can you remember any?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh, dear me. Jean Appleton.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Jean Appleton.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Where she had a studio for a while after we left. Oh dear, who else? I can't think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No one stays in your mind as—

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Well, Barbara Tribe.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh yes, yes. A sculptress.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I think she was working as an assistant with Rayner Hoff at one stage.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** They did, yes. A number of them did.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. Stupid, isn't it? I can't really think back.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, that gives us a background, Dorothy. Anything you'd like to add?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** No, I don't think so.

**JAMES GLEESON:** All right. Well, we'll go on now to first of all the oil paintings. Could we start perhaps with this one which, if I remember, is called—I don't know what it's called. Saint Ceré, painted in Saint Ceré, isn't it?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. Except that for some odd reason, although it's the River Cere, the town is Saint Ceré.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ceré, C-E-R-E?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** It has the acute on the town but not on the river.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Is that so?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So it's Saint C-E-R-E acute?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, yes. Ceré.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** And this is—I think I remember you saying—the garden in the hotel in which you were staying.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, the place we were staying in, where the food was just divine and never ending—wonderful cooking. This was the—what did I call that?

**JAMES GLEESON:** I don't seem to have a worksheet for it for some reason or other.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I think you did have.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Anyway, we can check it.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Anyhow, it was just from the terrace looking out on the vegetables and various growing things.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Summer?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Summer, a hot summer.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The year?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Mm?

**JAMES GLEESON:** What year?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Fifty-two.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Nineteen fifty-two.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Fifty-two. Yes, a lovely place. The river wandered through the town. There were trout, fish from the stream, and everything, beautiful country.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It has a lovely opulent sort of light in it, I think. Did you do it actually on the spot?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh yes, yes. There was no hope of doing that otherwise. The growth of everything was fascinating and the light. But it's very beautiful country, full of (inaudible) and caves and very early man.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Of course.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Actually, we went there because we were looking for the caves at Lascaux, which turned out to be about 90 kilometres away, and we made the cross-country trip and saw them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, tell me a little bit about your working methods, Dorothy. Obviously this wasn't done in one sitting.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** No.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** What would you do, set up your easel and work for a certain time each day?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, yes, when the light was right.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Right.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. Not all my paintings of course were impressionist, but in landscape that was rather the way I felt. Yes, one could work there so long, and then the light changed. That was that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This was a little outhouse in the back of the garden?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Well, this was a part of France which I think still doesn't have many European—I mean from the rest of Europe—tourists. It's a place where the French go on holiday. Every little outhouse is opened up in August.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, I see.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, and they put people up all around.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, I see, yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, that whole neighbourhood. Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne was another little place not very far away. Wonderful old church, wonderful carved tympanum.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Where was this?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Beaulieu.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. But the whole neighbourhood through there, it's wonderful.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did you do any other work, paintings there?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh yes, we did quite a lot, yes. This just happened to be—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Doug as well?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh yes, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** And where are they now?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Heaven only knows.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It's hard to keep track, isn't it?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I still have a few drawings, I think, which I hung on to from around there of the chateau and so on, a fascinating place.

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**DOUGLAS DUNDAS:** You have a drawing of Lurcat's castle up on—

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh yes, I'll show you that. It's just for fun.

**JAMES GLEESON:** All right.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, from our bedroom window was a hill going up like this with a (inaudible) on the top which is where Lurcat worked on his tapestries.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, that will be interesting.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I'd like to see that. Well, Dorothy, from that can we go to what I consider to be one of your important oils, and this painting of *Diana resting*.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Ah yes. Yes, well, this is much earlier.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. This is about '32 at the latest, I think. Yes. That was painted in the life class.

**JAMES GLEESON:** At tech?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** At tech, yes. The model standing. Horrible set up. One of those dreadful high stools, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** And nothing but nothing behind. So I selected the lounge of the thing as it came that I felt could be used and set to work to resolve what I felt were rather unharmonious relationships by extending into, well, it really is pattern—isn't it?—of the surround. When we first arrived in Sydney—this was not so much later—I was fascinated by the fig tree growth. This was an opportunity to use both the cylindrical and the angular forms, which I thought married with the figure reasonably well.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, it certainly does give a great unity, the rhythms and the forms seem to come together in a very unified way.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** It was shockingly unpopular.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was it really?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** It was shockingly unpopular.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Isn't that strange?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** It was, I think, shown in the Society of Artists but it caused great disgust and annoyance.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Can you think why that would be? Was it too modern for them at that time?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, yes. You would have to think back if you can to the situation.

**JAMES GLEESON:** In 1932.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** In the thirties, yes. Well, when the gallery purchased the Pissarro some years later there was an absolute outcry about this modern art.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's true.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** So you can imagine how well that didn't go down. Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You didn't show it again until your—

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Actually, I think when I went over to London, it was one of the things I took with me to get entry to the Academy School. I think I entered it for the exhibition and it was accepted and not hung, which is a very good arrangement they have there. I can see it would have been awkward to hang there with the usual nature of things that were hanging in those days. However, I think that's enough about that, isn't it?

**JAMES GLEESON:** All right. Well look, while we're on that, can we go to this drawing which is a pencil study for a decorative work you did for the *Westralia*.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, certainly, James.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Can you tell us something about that?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Just before we do that, are there any really early drawings here because I think there should be something which links with the *Diana*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, that's perhaps the nearest thing. But I think we'll show you what was interesting me at the time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I afterwards decided it was too static, my approach was too static, and therefore developed into a thing like that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** More dynamic and freer.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, yes, freer. But at that time I was entirely absorbed in exploring the nature of the form, behind as well as in front, right round.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.



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**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Working from the height of the form, round towards the last part of it that one could see. Sometimes working without any outlines at all, and always working from the height of the form. As though one could handle (inaudible).

**JAMES GLEESON:** It's almost a sculptor's approach.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, a sculptor's approach, if you like. But this I later felt did not allow sufficiently for movement, possible movement of the figure, and therefore later drawings like that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Which one is this?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Quick sketch on an exercise book or something, the double one, that one.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The double figure.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, the double figure. We'll show you, I think, how my mind began to move from that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This would be closer to the approach you had in the *Diana resting*.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, yes, yes. There are a whole series of drawings which have come to light from that period.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was this the same model? I think you mentioned that—

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh, I have no idea. No, that wouldn't be the same model.

**JAMES GLEESON:** But you told me this girl was still alive.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** She is, yes, yes. She had that curious slightly flattened form, particularly around the pelvis and shoulders, which suggested Diana to me and that's how I named it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Am I right in thinking that you used a very old technique in working from greens in the shadows to the warms in the highlights in this?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I hadn't thought about that, James. Yes, probably. I did later experiment with that. Cool lights.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. Warm shadows and perhaps neutral half tones, you know. Yes. But later I think—

**JAMES GLEESON:** It wasn't a conscious thing at that time with you?

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**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I was simply moving the form around away from the height of the form. I think it looks to me there as though it cooled as it went away, yes, which of course would be logical too.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, exactly. Now there are a series of nude studies.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** But I interrupted something then by trying to tie in a drawing. Oh yes, there we are. Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, what would you like to speak about now?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** This is what you are coming on to, I think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. Well, mainly because that had a decorative quality that linked in a way to what evolved in the *Diana resting* painting.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, yes. It was really all composition with me. I would have liked to have painted murals but there were very few opportunities in those days.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Tell me about that *Westralia* project.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Well, it wasn't mine really, it was Doug's. I think you should talk to him about it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** All right.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** But he had these four panels to do at a time when he was extremely busy. He did *Spring, Summer, Winter* and I did the *Autumn* cartoon. Well, I did a small and pretty complete painting.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Which I have seen. Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. That, I think, may have been for squaring up this. I think you said it was on tissue paper.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, it is.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. It was probably for squaring up on to the six foot  
—

**JAMES GLEESON:** The sketch. Or the big one, the final one?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Well, you see, there was the complete colour sketch which was the one you saw.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now in a private collection in Brisbane, isn't it?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** No. I borrowed it for Brisbane. The Civic Collection wanted it there but it was already sold to somebody.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It's a private collection here in Sydney?

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**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** In Sydney, yes. But that was the complete colour thing. Need not have been as complete as it was, I mean, it would have done (inaudible).

**JAMES GLEESON:** You would have changed it, yes. Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. This was, I think by the look of it, probably the cartoon which was squared up to be enlarged on to the thing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The full final version.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. I mean, rather than drawing over the oil painting, this would be the cartoon sketch I think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Dorothy, was it on canvas or a wooden panel or a hardboard panel? What did you use as a support?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** They were hardboard panels. This was shortly after the war and it was very hard to obtain materials. The ship was being reconditioned after being a troop ship. The murals in extent were copies of some done by my ancestor, oddly enough. Where are they?

**JAMES GLEESON:** The Thornhill who did the (inaudible).

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, yes. Oh dear, Greenwich.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Greenwich. Yes, of course.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. Yes. We tried every way to get the right size of hardboard for the new ones and it was impossible to get the proper height or width. In the end we had to strip the old ones which were in an awful mess and work to that. So I'm afraid I can't give you the precise size. I would guess they were about five to six feet high by much longer. This was the end. There were two end panels, *Spring* and *Autumn*, and then the major ones along the side.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was the final scheme ever published? Did it appear in any—

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I think it just went into action.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Because I think that ship met a sticky end and we don't know what happened. But I think this is being researched.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What line was it?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Westralia, was it? We had a very busy time when this went on.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, I can imagine.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** But I think that Eileen Cannon is researching the thing, together with the man who has the two panels. He got one of Douglas', *The summer wind*.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, I should talk to Eileen about it.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I think that she and this man are researching the whole thing and trying to get the sketches together, so she would be able to tell you.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Good. Well, Dorothy, before we come on to the more, you know, highly developed ones in the shells, what about these nude studies? There are two male figure ones in pencil. Can you tell me anything about those two?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. Well, it must have been very early because I remember the man. He was on, I think, a beach patrol, a lifesaver.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This is the standing front view?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** The frontal standing man.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I remember he was very bronze and standing wasn't very good for him and he went a pale green colour and on one occasion keeled over. But he was one of the early models up there. I know this is quite an early drawing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What, in the early thirties?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, early thirties I mean, yes. This is the famous old master, this is Frank White.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The famous model in—

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, I think he must have been posing as long as I was teaching drawing, I think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This is a walking study?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. Well, you can see there that I'm becoming more interested in movement.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** And therefore the tightness of the form. The exact examination of the form has loosened quite a lot, because it's incompatible with the possibility of movement.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** So that that is, I should say, a transitional. This of course is much freer and I couldn't tell you just when I did that. I've done thousands of them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Later on, and I'm thinking now of your current drawings, you seem to be using this greater freedom of approach, catching the rhythm and movement.

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**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, very rapidly.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Very rapidly.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This would have been done perhaps in two swift—

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I just couldn't tell you about that because it would have been whatever was on the desk, well, something was going on.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I thought, 'That's a nice movement' you see. Then I think it was the arms that interested me particularly. I seem to have had two goes at them, but the relationship of the lifted arm and the slightly relaxed one. But that's a very quick, very free notation. Not intended for anybody but myself.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No. But they are very revealing and very interesting to see how a draftsman works.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Well now, you don't have one here of what this developed into.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It came into a picture?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** No, no. The later drawings which became almost pillar linear, some of them. Just the most rapid statement.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I know those ones.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** We don't yet have any of them. No, but in time.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I was trying all the time to eliminate—well, you can see the work through, can't you?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, (inaudible) entirely modelled.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. I mean, I feel that a line drawing, however rapid, must sum up everything that's gone into all these other things. That's what I was trying to do, which is not very easy.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I mean, if you say it works. You have to keep doing it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** To get the maximum out of the minimum.

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**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, exactly. Whether one would go on forever doing that, I don't know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, I think it's impossible when you know so much that you can condense it into a line. I think you really do have to know all about (inaudible).

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** You do absolutely. And with me it has to happen quickly, otherwise I start going into rather more detail about things, and the total meaning of a movement. I just have to do it quickly or else I'll be getting into more detail.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Perhaps lose the whole.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well now, Dorothy, there are two pen drawings. One heightened with white. Or are they both heightened with white of shells? This is *Form and void*, I think.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, yes. I was fascinated by it. The solid and the hollow forms they are. I think I may have told you. I have a feeling that when a form is so strong and hollow is so strong, it might be any size at all.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** It might be as big as the universe or a tiny—

**JAMES GLEESON:** It has a universality about it.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. I had the feeling there that it would be fascinating to have figures walking down, tiny figures, to give the feeling of the immensity of the nature of that thing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Even though its size is small, it's a (inaudible).

**JAMES GLEESON:** They're marvellously observed, I think, your feeling of the form. Well, I suppose it—

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Well, it is a feeling, isn't it?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** It doesn't happen unless you—

**JAMES GLEESON:** No.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** No.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You clearly couldn't have drawn that without all your experience in figure drawing because the feeling of the volume.

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**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I think that's probably true, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes. This is one of the dated ones, Dorothy, I notice, 1954.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. Well, that would have been soon after we came back from Europe, I think. Not that that has anything to do with it really.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** No.

**JAMES GLEESON:** But it's interesting to have some kind of sequence.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This other shell one—

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Does that have a date? I think it might have been earlier. There is a date.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Shells*, 1945. That's earlier.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Ah, it is earlier. Yes, I thought so, because there I'm much more concerned with the total decoration of the thing. I think there's some colour used on that. It was a pen drawing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Shell, ink and wash on white paper is all we've got.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, yes. There was some colour used, but just a wash with a pen.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did you do many studies of shells?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I suppose I did do a few. I was fascinated by their forms. But actually, although this is decoration, it's the outside of the shells more, isn't it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Takes you inside.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** It takes you inside and explores the inside outside of the form which I find more interesting now.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, I think the title is exactly right for it, *Form and void*.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** That's what it is, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This, of course, is more decorative and I think in a way related to the Westralian panel in its emphasis on—

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Possibly, yes. On the design perhaps? Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, just that you are concentrating on the arrangements.

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**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, yes. True.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Anything more now, Dorothy?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I don't know. What are those things here?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, that's the *Diana resting*.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh, that's Diana, yes. Yes, I've got a feeling we might have missed something but I can't think what.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Let me go through the worksheets. The *Female study*, the *Male study*, *Two female nudes*, *The shells* we've just talked about, the mythological scene which is really *Autumn* from the *Westralian* sequence.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *A male figure*.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh, I know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Form and void*. Ohm there is one here, *Rocky Hill*.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** *The dragon dog*. *The Still life with dragon dog*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Which one is that now?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I'm sure you've got it. I don't think I've seen a photograph of it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Don't tell me I've lost one.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Maybe it wasn't photographed.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Possibly not. I've got one here which I don't seem to have had—*Rocky Hill*, *Murrurundi*.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh, now you did have a photograph of that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, they must have got mixed up and left out.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. Yes, I remember that. I hadn't seen that landscape till you showed me the photograph. It's fascinating. But there again it was a rocky, rocky hillside. There were the most wonderful, some free standing and some hollowed rocks in that place. I don't think that particular lot came into the landscape but it was that feeling of rock and bone sticking out, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** That fascinated me about that place. I can't think of the date of that. Would you know, dear?

**DOUGLAS DUNDAS:** No, I'm afraid I can't tell you. It would be in the late forties, I think.



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**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes. I think so.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Late forties.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, perhaps not even very late.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It may have got mixed up with Doug's. I'll just switch off and I'll check that.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, do that and we'll see.

**JAMES GLEESON:** (inaudible) found the *Rocky Hill, Murrurundi*.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** No, I don't—

**JAMES GLEESON:** In the forties?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Yes, it would be in the forties. What? Fifty-six it says.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh well, that's probably right. It must have been after we came back. Yes, it would have been. No, all I can say about that is that it was pretty well nature as it came except that I think I pulled the pool in from a little distance to the side somewhere.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Composition again. Yes, I think that's all. I'm not really a landscape painter, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** If I may I say so, I still seem to detect human forms, anatomical forms, in the way you treat the landscape.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I think so, yes. Are we on air or not?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** Oh.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, thank you, Dorothy. Anything more you'd like to add to that?

**DOROTHY THORNHILL:** I don't think so. Thank you.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Thank you very much indeed.