

## **PACK**

For over thirty years, Deborah Williams has been sharing her close, attentive observations of the canine. The animals in her vast oeuvre of etchings, monotypes and digital images appear absorbed in their own lives: sniffing, basking in the sun, attuning to the sounds around them. Many works depict solitary dogs in open fields of space inviting us to encounter our oldest companion species clearly, and sometimes at close range.

Yet, although Deborah's subjects are often alone on the page, many were, in fact, observed by the artist in packs: street dogs living on the margins of cities, and camp dogs deeply embedded within remote Aboriginal communities. *Pack* re-imagines Deborah's body of work through the lens of these social bonds. It gathers work from years past and reconfigures what were once discrete pictures to reconstruct a social system within the gallery.

As Deborah embarks on new research into interspecies communication and kinship, *Pack* foregrounds the networks of relationship that bind dogs together, with one another, and with us. Alongside past work, the exhibition includes Deborah's new work *Consequence of presence* (2025), a video that captures her canine kin Elkie rubbing "drawing" residues across her lounge room wall each morning.

***Dr Clare Humphries April 2026***

### **Consequence of presence**

Elkie begins each day the same way. A routine of drawing her body along a wall, pressing and releasing, backwards and forwards, repeat. The same wall, the same surface, the same place of contact — a return, at least from what I perceive.

I have begun recording this activity because I noticed the behaviour occurring daily. Or perhaps the recording shaped the noticing. That uncertainty is not incidental to this work — it is the work. The question of whether the observed shifts as a result of observation is not mine to answer, and Elkie offers no resolve. She simply does.

The wall holds a mark. It has accumulated slowly, across many mornings, without apparent intention. Elkie does not regard it — or if she does, not in a way I am able to interpret. The mark comes not from intention but from contact: as residue, as the inevitable consequence of presence. The trace is indexical in the purest sense — caused by the body, not composed by it. It records a presence that carries no sense of being recorded.

What registers to a human eye as mark-making may be, for Elkie, something closer to reading — a return to a scent-site, a bodily attunement, a somatic or material knowledge the body carries without language. The cognitive question of whether something is being enacted or merely repeated, and whether that distinction even translates, is speculative. What appears from the outside as repetition may be, from within, always the first time.

And yet the wall collects. It accumulates what the body offers — not as composition, not as expression but as residue. A record of a body enacting its own habitual path through a space, autonomously, in the same place, because that is what this body does.

The wall is simply what is there. And it holds a trace.

***Deborah Williams 2026***