



Alice Maher (Born Co. Tipperary, 1956)  
**Drawing from the Thicket**

1990 Mixed media on paper

138 x 114 cm

Purchased from the artist, 1991

This large charcoal drawing is part of a series of eight works exploring the theme of childhood and the onset of adolescence. *The Thicket* focuses on a young girl's discovery of the world; the protagonist in the series embodies the curiosity and wilfulness of a young girl as she goes out into the world to create her own narrative. The *Thicket* series draws inspiration from fairytales and folklore, mythology and legends, but also from the childhood imaginings that were part of Alice Maher's experience of growing up in rural Ireland. Maher emphasises the significance of stories in the country,

where 'every stone had a story, and if it didn't, you made them up' (Alice Maher, Profile, Dublin: Gandon Editions, 1998). This particular work depicts the gaucheness of a child in her ill-fitting dress, uneasy in her developing body. She tears a handful of plant stalks from the ground, awkwardly knocking over the milking stool. As she steadies herself with her right hand, she catches sight of her reflection in a pool, her long cascading hair shielding her face from the viewer. The semi-erased sketches, like echoes from childhood never quite disappearing into the past, are still partially visible in the background of the final image and convey a strong sense of motion. The delicate use of red paper chine collage adds drama and emotion to the girl's movement, highlighting her anger, frustration and enthralled fascination with the transformations taking place inside her.

*Nora Hickey, Curator of Education + Collections,  
 Lewis Glucksman Gallery*