



ABOUT THE FRIENDS OF SASA, INC

The Friends of the South Australian School of Art (SASA) aim to promote the work, history, and development of the South Australian School of Art, using the outstanding expertise, experience and collegial nature of its past and present scholars and staff.

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Friends of the South Australian School of Art, Inc. Newsletter

PATRON: DR JEFFREY SMART AO

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50 years ago @ the South Australian School of Art



Demolition begins at the rear of the Exhibition Building, North Terrace, 1962. SLSA Archives.

For some members of Friends SASA it may seem like only yesterday that you were on the move from the derelict (but much loved) Exhibition Building on North Terrace to the new purpose-built campus on Stanley Street, North Adelaide. The reality is that it is now almost exactly 50 years since this significant event occurred. Such significance lies in the fact that it was the first time in the one hundred years of the school's operation, that it was to be housed in a building specifically designed for its purpose.

Built in the 1960s in conservative Adelaide, the school's modern design attracted much public comment. Leading English critic and art educator, Sir Herbert Read, who visited the almost completed



South Australian School of Art, Stanley Street, North Adelaide. This photograph shows the 'box-like' structure of the building and the unusual exterior 'grille' which was made of 18000 triangular concrete blocks. SASA Prospectus, 1963.

campus a month before it was first occupied on July 11th, 1963—thought it 'better designed and better equipped than any art school' he had ever seen.

Others found the school's design less than satisfactory.

As long serving Senior Lecturer at SASA, John Copeland has written, 'This building was designed with almost no input from School of Art staff or students. No in-built heating. No air-conditioning. No lifts. No wheelchair access to upper floors. No possibility for future expansion. No parking area for students' cars. Small parking area for staff cars only. Lecture theatre on top floor was very hot in summer months'.

However, John did comment favourably on the building's 'pleasant central courtyard for display of students' sculpture and ceramic works', and its 'quite good gallery area'. He also noted that, 'despite its many faults the building created a unified entity'.

Of particular importance here is the fact that the school could at last boast a Gallery or exhibition space of its very own. Neither of the buildings in which the school had been previously housed—the South Australian Institute Building and the Exhibition Building—had allowed for such an important facility.



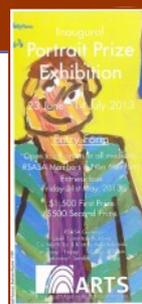
View of interior courtyard, SASA, Stanley Street Campus. SASA Prospectus, 1967.



Sale of ceramic works in the courtyard of Stanley Street Campus. 1975 Torrens CAE Report.

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Royal South Australian Society of Arts Portrait Prize



The Inaugural RSASA Portrait Prize is one with a difference. Open to all artists in all mediums, it encourages artists to think beyond the human face. The exhibition runs at the RSASA Gallery from June 23 to July 14, 2013. Entries are

due May 31. Prizes include \$1,000 First Prize and \$500 Second Prize (sponsored by Friends SASA).

The exhibition will be opened Sunday June 23 at 2.00 pm by Nick Mitzevich, Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia.

Other components of this prize include:

- inviting entrants to respond to the following 'Why I would like to have my portrait painted'.
- Portrait demonstrations in the RSASA Gallery with up to four artists working on portraits of sitters.
- A *Portrait Trail* at the Art Gallery of South Australia.
- An invitation to school children to create portraits of their favourite character which will be displayed on screens in the foyer to the RSASA Gallery.

Entry forms are available from the **RSASA website** or via email to rsasarts@bigpond.net.au.



Acting President & Vice President of Friends SASA, Pamela Karran with artist and long-time staff member at the South Australian School of Art, Geoff Wilson. Both are pictured at the recent Friends SASA fundraising event held at the Bradley Forum (Tuesday April 9) where Greg Johns spoke on the theme of 'Public Sculpture: Place, Meaning & Journey. For report and pics see p 5. Photograph courtesy Bente Andermahr.



FRIENDS SASA NEWSLETTER

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Dear Friends ...
 I write to you as Vice President and also Acting President of FSASA. As most of you will recall we are actually without an elected president since Jack Condous retired from the position in August 2012. Consequently, our Board has had to develop an alternative way of operating. We now work as a cooperative with each board member taking on a specific management role which we believe has resulted in a very successful working team.

Denice Daou is Secretary and has become a huge asset to the team. She is based at the City West Campus of the University of South Australia and as a result has been able to expedite our operations within the Art School. **Nicola Semmens** is in her second year as Treasurer and has shown huge commitment to the task. **Gloria Goddard** oversees all exhibitions and is currently mentoring the "Third of the Friends" exhibition team and **Bente Andermahr** is our advertising and photographic manager.

Andrew Hill represents the SA School of Art; **Barb Tanner** manages our student scholarships and **Mark Fischer** liaises with **Jenny Aland**, who produces our newsletter and manages our **website** and **Facebook page**. **Lyn Robins** is our official FSASA representative at art events about town and **Trish Wozniak** is our Membership Officer.

I have also retained the role of Events Coordinator as well as my leadership role. I sincerely thank the Board for their continued support.

I feel that it is important to understand that we are an organisation of volunteers constantly striving to balance work, family and social lives along with our commitment to ensure that Friends SASA continues to fulfill its aims.

Most importantly, your Board relies on the strong participation and support of members so I urge you to become involved in our functions and exhibitions wherever possible and to encourage new members in order to refresh our organisation and to ensure a

smooth succession into the future. Several Board members will be ending their current tenures at our AGM this year and some have indicated that they will not be re-nominating. Therefore, I encourage you to consider nominating either yourself or others for a position on the Board.

Special Thankyou's.

To **Michael Scarpantoni** of Scarpantoni Wines who has donated 12 dozen wines once again for us to use at our functions throughout the year.

To members, **Jack Condous**, **Nicola Semmens**, **Garrie Hisco** and **Gareth Thomas** who spotted an opportunity to hang a city exhibition thus earning \$300 which they generously donated to FSASA.

Our next major fundraiser **The Third of the Friends – The 20x20 Show** at the Prospect Gallery is to be opened by Vickie Chapman MP on July 7, 2013. The entry fee is \$25 per work and as a new initiative, the Friends SASA are offering a \$500 cash prize for the best work. For further information contact Lois Turner at loturner@bigpond.net.au.

We have determined to continue our collaboration with the **Royal Adelaide Show Art Purchase Exhibition**. Our former President Jack Condous continues in his coordination role and several of our members assist as stewards. We also contribute a \$150 prize. Members please consider submitting works.

This year, the Board has also agreed to sponsor the **Inaugural Royal South Australian Society of Arts Portrait Prize Exhibition**. The first prize is \$1500 (non-acquisitive) and the second prize is \$500, sponsored by Friends SASA. The exhibition is designed to give South Australian artists their own portrait prize. The exhibition is open to RSASA members and nonmembers. The venue will be the RSASA Gallery and the exhibition will be opened by Nick Mitzevich, Director, Art Gallery of South Australia on Sunday, 23 June 2013 at 2 pm. Anna Platten, Chris Orchard and Sam Hill-Smith have agreed to be exhibition judges.

Report continues Page 5>>>



Adjunct Professor
 Kay Lawrence AM

Professor Kay Lawrence appointed Adjunct Professor

We recently received the following message from **Professor Mads Gaardboe**, Head of the School of Art, Architecture & Design.

Colleagues: It is my great pleasure to inform you that our former Head of SASA and subsequently Director of SASA **Kay Lawrence** who recently retired, has been appointed Adjunct Professor in the School of Art, Architecture and Design.

The University's Senior Honorary Academic Titles Committee, convened by the Vice Chancellor, acknowledged Professor Lawrence's international status as a researcher in the area of textile practice

and theory, that she has won over \$1.6 million in grants and produced over 20 publications in addition to her teaching and Higher Degree Research (HDR) supervision.

I am particularly pleased that we will continue to see Kay around the School in the future, where she will maintain her office, and I am sure that you will all join me in offering her our warmest congratulations.

Prior to her retirement, Professor Lawrence was the Institutional Member on the Board of the Friends of the South Australian School of Art. This role is now undertaken by the Director: SA School of Art and Associate Head of School: Teaching, **Andrew Hill**.

VALE : BERT FLUGELMAN (1923-2013)



Bert Flugelman as pictured in the catalogue to the SASA Staff Exhibition titled *Then and Now* which was held in the school's Gallery from 24 February to 20 March, 1978. SASA Archives.

Bert Flugelman was born in Vienna in 1923 but migrated to Australia in 1938, along with his family to escape the Nazis and World War 2. From 1943 to 1946 he served in the Australian army (non combative duties) and from 1948 to 1951 he studied at the National Art School in Sydney. From 1951 to 1955 he travelled and worked in England, Europe and the U.S.A. In the second year of these travels (1952) he contracted poliomyelitis which left him partially crippled. Despite this setback he had several successful exhibitions (mostly of paintings) in London and New York before returning to Australia in 1955. In the late 1960s, his adventurous

spirit was encouraged at the 'Tin Sheds' section of the University of Sydney, where he ran the gallery and art workshop. This gallery/art workshop set-up, which had been initiated by Donald Brook, encouraged a cross-disciplinary approach as well as the development and production of conceptual and performance art.

In an interview with a curator from the National Gallery of Australia in 2009, Flugelman recalled those heady days as 'being an invigorating time of burning euphoniums, feathered rooms and performance art on peak-hour buses. Art was experimental and it was for everyone'.

Between 1973 and 1983, Flugelman lived in Adelaide, where he made a great contribution as an inspiring teacher and artist at the South Australian School of Art. He also participated in the evolution of the Experimental Art Foundation.



Bert Flugelman, *Tetrahedra (Festival Sculpture)*, 1974, stainless steel, Adelaide Festival Centre Plaza.. SASA Archives.



Bert Flugelman, *Spheres*, 1977, Stainless steel sculpture, Rundle Mall, Adelaide. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

He undertook significant sculptures for the Adelaide Festival Centre including *Tetrahedra* (above). His balancing stainless steel *Spheres*, (left) commonly referred to as the *Mall's Balls*, are an Adelaide City landmark. It is ironic that in the same year as Flugelman's death, both sculptures are to be relocated from their original sites—the *Spheres* are to be moved 3 metres south as part of Adelaide's Rundle Mall redevelopment while *Tetrahedra* faces an uncertain future since the Festival Plaza area is planned for a radical transformation into a new-look Square and parkland under the Riverbank master plan.

Long-time friend, Emeritus Professor of Visual Arts at Flinders University Donald Brook says that Flugelman leaves a lasting legacy. He was a person 'who will be very much missed by a great many people who admired his work and admired him. He was very influential. He had a great many students who were very much inspired by his teachings and his ideas'.

Email to the Friends SASA from Vincent de Gouw

Some weeks ago, this email from **Vincent de Gouw** came to us via our **Friends SASA website**.

Dear 'Friends':

I'm a former student of the South Australian School of Art, starting in the Stanley Street days and finishing at Holbrooks Road, Underdale, doing illustration/graphics with John Copeland and George Tetlow. I'm now in Sydney, a freelance illustrator, University lecturer and general Artistic Mercenary. The reason for this email is in memory of Bert Flugelman, who as you know, died a few weeks ago.

He was always an impressive, dedicated, fascinating artist; one of the many at the school at the time. I had seen him a few times in the last couple of decades in and around Sydney. The last time I saw Bert was in December 2005 at the Glebe Coroner's Court, in Sydney. I regularly work as a court artist for the various free to air TV news services. My task is to draw the accused, the court scene or the judge/coroner, time permitting.

On this occasion I passed Bert when looking to occupy a vacant seat, introduced myself and shook his hand. I then realised who he was sitting with and made this quick sketch (above: Left: Donald Brook; Right: Bert Flugelman). Bert had accompanied Professor Donald Brook (with, I think the Professor's wife), as support for the inquest into a 30 year old murder. There was strong suspicion that a convicted murderer (**Derek Ernest Percy**)



may have also killed the Professor's 3-year old son Simon in a Glebe park, early one morning in the late '60s.

Bert and Donald Brook had been close in the 60's at Sydney University when he was involved in the Tin Sheds Art Space and Gallery. At about the same time Bert was teaching Sculpture at the South Australian School of Art, Professor Brook was lecturing at Flinders University.

In some court cases you can be dispassionate, unaffected, unemotional, but in others it can hurt to the gut. Seeing the Professor, his wife and Bert listen to the proceedings, living through the details of the death of this child, watching their quiet dignity in what is a pain no parent would even consider, has left this etched in memory.

An email was sent to Vincent in response to the above requesting his permission to use his sketch and the accompanying text in this Newsletter. He agreed and concluded his return email with the following:

All power to you and the publication. Every time I check on the SASA website I get hit by irrational nostalgia. Should anyone remember me, old staff or students, please give them my best.

Cheers
Vincent (de Gouw)

SASA GRADUATES ACHIEVE SUCCESS @ THE HELPMANN ACADEMY AWARDS

The recent Helpmann Academy Graduate Exhibition featured work by students from the Academy's three visual arts partners: Adelaide Central School of Art, Adelaide College of the Arts (TAFE SA) and the School of Art, Architecture and Design (UniSA).

At each annual Graduate Exhibition a panel of judges looks to identify works that are, in their view, deserving of the various awards that are sponsored by donors to the Academy. This year, the judging panel included Lisa Slade, Project Curator at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Paul Hamra, Chair of the Fleurieu Art Prize and Andrew Durham, Director of Artlab Australia.

Two students from SASA were recipients of these awards. The Adelaide City Council \$2,000 acquisitive prize was awarded to emerging photographer **HAILEY LANE** from UniSA's School of Art, Architecture and Design. Her series of giclee prints featuring striking Australian landscapes ravaged by bushfires were highly praised by the judges for their quality and level of technical execution. Hailey says of her photographic studies of the landscape that she 'look[s] at the landscape more as an emotional landscape, rather than straight documentary photography'. She also explains the process she used in capturing this image: 'I came across a scrub



burn-off near Second Valley, towards Deep Creek, and photographed it for three hours, until sunset. The high quality giclee printing gives the work its dramatic, painting-like mood'.

This work also appeared in a feature article titled 'In Pursuit of Art' published in the November issue of the *SA Life Magazine*, 2012.

Another SASA Graduate, **OLIVIA KATHIGITIS** was awarded the \$500 Peter Walker Fine Art Encouragement prize for her exquisitely crafted wax bust, *Figure #3*. This award is presented to an artist that in the opinion of the panel deserves particular encouragement to continue with their current art practice.

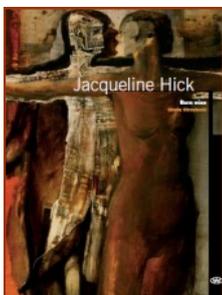


The Friends SASA congratulate both Hailey and Olivia.

Above: Hailey Lane, *To Lands Unknown*, giclee print, 2012.

Left: Olivia Kathigitis, *Figure #3*, wax, 2012.

JACQUELINE HICK @ CARRICK HILL



The cover of *Born Wise: the art of Jacqueline Hick*, written by Curator, Gloria Strzelecki. This is the 8th book focusing on the work of SA artists in the series produced collaboratively by Wakefield Press and Carrick Hill in association with Carrick Hill's exhibition program.



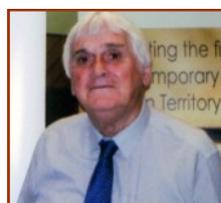
Gloria Strzelecki is also Gallery Manager at the Adelaide Central School of Art.

The historic homestead of Carrick Hill is currently hosting an exhibition of works by Jacqueline Hick (1919–2004) who was one of Australia's most successful figurative painters. In a long and fruitful career, spanning over 50 years, Hick explored various mediums such as printmaking, enameling and set and costume design. Her subjects included the Australian landscape, floral still life subjects, musical and theatrical performances, stylized underwater bathers, and the hustle and bustle of city life. The Carrick Hill exhibition *Born wise: the art of Jacqueline Hick* features an array of Hick's finest works, and traces a life that, like her art, was imbued with wit, wisdom and empathy.

The book of the same title that accompanies this exhibition, was written by its curator Gloria Strzelecki. Gloria is also the author of another in the Wakefield Press/Carrick Hill series of monographs on SA artists: *Kathleen Sauerbier: A Modern Pursuit* (2012).

Copies of *Born Wise: the art of Jacqueline Hick* are available from the Carrick Hill Gift Shop or online from **Wakefield Press**. The exhibition runs from 27 March to 30 June.

JACK CROSS AWARDED AM



Congratulations go to Jack Cross, who became a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in this year's Australia Day Honours List. This prestigious award which entitles him to use the postnominal 'AM' recognises Jack's 'significant service to

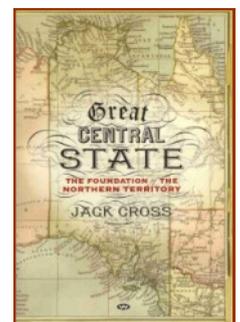
tertiary education in South Australia, particularly in the field of art and design, and to indigenous education'.

Jack is also author of *Great Central State*, published by Wakefield Press for which he was named joint winner of the 2012 Chief Minister's Northern Territory History Book Award.

The medal of the Member of the Order of Australia is a badge with a gold-plated silver insignia of the Order in the centre. The central insignia is inscribed with the

word 'Australia' in gold capital letters. The circle also contains two gold sprigs of mimosa. The insignia is ensigned with the Crown of St Edward in full colour. The medal is hung from the ribbon of the Order which is royal blue with a central band of mimosa blossoms.

For more information about Australia's distinctive honours system and their administration, go to the Australian Government website: **'It's an Honour'**.

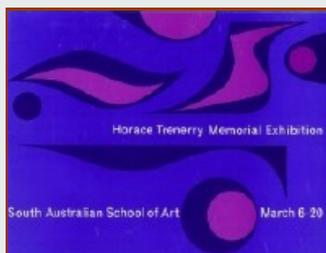


50 Years Ago @ SASA (Cont)

In the 17-years (1963-1979) that SASA spent at the Stanley Street campus many and varied exhibitions of art works were held, all of which became an increasingly important adjunct to the work of the school. The Gallery space allowed staff to assess student work and they in turn could exhibit their work there for analysis, appreciation and critique.



It also allowed for invitations to be extended to artists and groups external to the school to exhibit there. Among the exhibitions that took place over the years that the school was at Stanley Street were: the Horace Trenerry Memorial exhibition (1964)[Left], selected works by British sculptor Kenneth



Armitage (1967)[Top left], the Elliot Aldridge Collection, curated by Gordon Samstag (1970) and the L H (Laurence Hotham) Howie Memorial Exhibition (1978)[Left]. The latter was the last exhibition ever to be held at the Gallery.²

Of equal importance were the displays of student work that took place each year at SASA, two of which are pictured below along with three of the hand-painted/printed catalogues

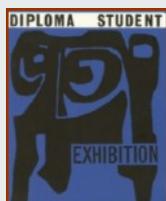
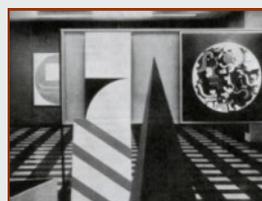
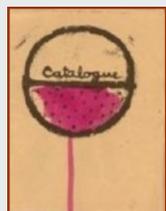
students created to accompany their displays.

In the next issue of this Newsletter, we will focus on the current SASA Gallery and discuss its importance in the context of the work, history and development of the South Australian School of Art with its Director, Dr Mary Knights.

Dr Jenny Aland

NOTES to 50 Years ago @ SASA

1. South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 30 July 1963. p.179.
2. From 1980 to 1999 the Stanley Street campus was home to TAFE's North Adelaide School of Art. When the TAFE school moved to its new home in Light Square in 1999 as part of the Adelaide College of the Arts, the site stood empty for 7 years until it was finally demolished in 2006. The Town Acre on which the school was originally built now features modern homes & apartments.



Above from Left: Works by Stewart MacFarlane on display for his 2nd Year Assessment; 2 hand-painted student exhibition Catalogue Covers, 1966/67; At left: Student works in Gallery, 1974 Prospectus; Diploma Student exhibition Catalogue cover, Screen printed, 1966.

Friends SASA Board Report (Cont)

The **2013 FSASA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** will be held at the Bradley Forum on the **13th of August 2013**. Please be sure to put this date in your diary.

In September 2013 **FSASA will again partner with Lincoln College** to present their annual art show. A number of our members assist with the show and we earn 12.5% commission on all works sold. Last year we made a profit of \$1000. Details will be available as soon as these are finalised.

And last but certainly not least, the Board will continue to provide two annual scholarships for students of the South Australian School of Art, these being:

\$1000 scholarship—awarded to the student with the highest grades at the end of their second year of the undergraduate degree program.

\$1500 International Travel Grant—which is open to students enrolled in higher degree research programs (Masters/ PhD) within the School of Art, Architecture & Design.

Pamela Karran

Acting President Friends SASA

FRIENDSASA EVENING WITH GREG JOHNS



Photograph courtesy Bente Andermahr

On Tuesday 9th April, members of Friends SASA attended the Bradley Forum for a presentation by **Greg Johns**, one of Australia's best known and contemporary sculptors. Greg's most interesting illustrated presentation ranged from his experiences at the South Australian School of Art, Stanley Street campus, to the logistics of setting up monumental steel sculptures in Europe. His description of the development of his Palmer Project with its emphasis on sculpture and its relationship with the landscape was fascinating.

Thank you Greg, for giving your precious time to help raise scholarship funds for the students of SASA.

Pamela Karran

Acting President, Friends SASA

MEMBERS @ GREG JOHNS EVENING



L: Audience @ Greg Johns Evening;
R: Mark Fischer & Gary Schulz



L: Greg Johns & Gloria Goddard;
R: Gareth Thomas & Max Lyle



L: Anne Best & Jack Condous
R: Ron Rowe & Richard Marr

Photographs courtesy Bente Andermahr

Meet the artist : DOUGLAS ROBERTS : Principal SASA 1964-1976



Douglas Roberts, Principal of the South Australian School of Art, 1964—1976. Undated photograph, SASA Archives.

Douglas Roberts is an important figure in the history of the South Australian School of Art, not only for his very expressive and original work as an artist during the 1940s and 1950s, but also because he served as Principal of the South Australian School of Art during the 1960s and 1970s, a period of significant cultural, social and political change in Australia.

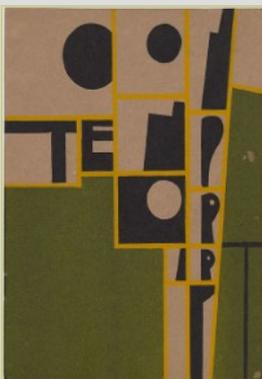
His appointment as Principal in 1964 came after he had served in

various positions within the school including senior lecturer (art teacher training), senior master, acting vice-principal and acting principal. His sudden death in 1976 at the age of 57 came as a great shock to everyone within the school and the wider visual arts community.

Born in the rural town of Kadina, some 140 km north-west of Adelaide, Roberts went on from high school to train as an art teacher at the Adelaide Teacher's College and at the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts where his teachers were Geoff Mainwaring, Dorrit Black, Marie Tuck and Jessamine Buxton. His first appointment as a student teacher was to Nailsworth Boys' Technical High School and subsequently as senior assistant and senior master to the Thebarton and Le Fevre Boys' Technical High Schools respectively. In 1958, he was among the first group of students to gain the newly introduced Diploma in Art Teaching. Roberts' fellow diplomates were David Dallwitz, Helen McIntosh, Alan Sierp, Harold Baily (later Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, 1967-1975), Richard White, Ronald Bell, Albert Smith and Kenneth Lamacraft (Principal, South Australian School of Art, 1957). Like Roberts, all of these individuals were already teaching at the school.

In the early 1940s, Roberts became actively involved with a group of artists who sought to secede from the Royal South Australian Society of Arts largely because 'they found their developing works increasingly rejected by the Society's selection and hanging committee from the twice

-yearly Spring and Autumn member's exhibition'.¹ In 1942, this breakaway group, which was largely made up of former students of the School of Arts and Crafts (including Roberts), formed the Contemporary Art Society of South Australia. The group's first exhibition (Roberts designed the Catalogue Cover), was held at the Royal South Australian Arts Society Gallery. This exhibition created much controversy, which was largely because it was 'Adelaide's first substantial public experience of either interstate or local modern Australian art' which they found largely unsettling.² It was also because the majority of exhibiting Adelaide



Douglas Roberts, *Catalogue cover First Exposition : Royal S. A. Society of Art Associate Contemporary Group*, 1942, Adelaide, colour linocut on paper, 24.2 x 19.3 cm. SASA Archives.

artists (some were from interstate) were also art teachers within Government schools which resulted in 'grave fears [being] expressed for South Australia's school children and questions were asked of the Minister of Education in the House of Assembly'.³

As an art student, Roberts had attracted considerable attention as a watercolourist of great promise but he quickly moved on to



Douglas Roberts, *Exhibit No 3 (Max Harris splitting the infinitive)* from a series of nine illustrations relating to Max Harris's Trial and the Ern Malley Hoax, 1944, Adelaide, pen & brush & ink on paper, 38.6 x 28.3 cm (sheet). South Australian Government Grant 1981. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

work mostly in oils or occasionally acrylic. Whatever medium he used, he was always a prolific sketcher: apparently he even at one time thought seriously about becoming a cartoonist, a profession he greatly admired. The Art Gallery of South Australia has in its collection, a number of satirical drawings that Roberts created to caricaturise the prudish minds of those who found indecent the poems produced as part of the hoax 'Ern Malley Series'. Max Harris had published these poems in his *Angry Penguins* magazine (1944). Although controversial, the poems were well received, except by the South Australian police: they interpreted some lines in the poetry as lewd—one poem used the word 'incestuous'. As publisher, Harris

was charged with obscenity and subjected to an arduous trial in Adelaide which he subsequently lost. *View through an old man's fingers* (1944)[p7] presents us with another example of Roberts' expressive graphic abilities. According to his artist friend Ivor Francis, Douglas Roberts was essentially 'a painter's painter with a highly developed sensitivity for the feeling of paint. From the near-surrealist and expressionist compositions of his early work to the almost conventional landscapes and experimental abstracts on which he subsequently concentrated, it is only the subject matter, which changes: the aim is always the same'.⁴

In *Desert landscape*, we see Roberts working in a surrealist manner to interpret the landscape—most likely that of the ancient and spectacular Flinders Ranges. A slightly later work, *The Tribunal* (1949)[p 7] further demonstrates his ability to work as an

expressionist-surrealist painter. It also continues Roberts' critique of the stuffiness of Adelaide society. Jane Hylton sees this work as being 'the artist's summing up at the end of the decade of Adelaide's 1940's clash between the traditional and the modern. It can also be seen as an illustration of Adelaide's judgement of Max Harris, who, bound, naked and vulnerable, is stripped of all dignity while he is prodded and considered by the suited men who surround him'.⁵

Although Roberts constantly exhibited work in society and



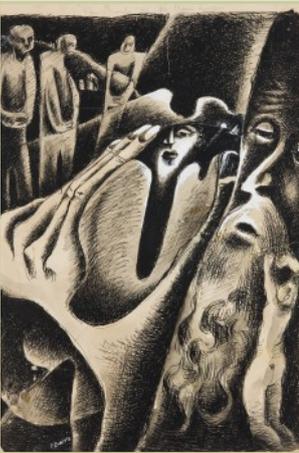
Douglas Roberts, *Desert landscape*, 1947, Adelaide, oil on canvas, 46.7 x 62.0 cm, 58. x 74.0 x 4.0 cm (frame). South Australian Government Grant 1981. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

Meet the artist : DOUGLAS ROBERTS : Principal SASA 1964-1976 (Cont)

group shows locally, interstate and overseas – he was a Fellow of the RSASA for many years, a former Vice President and member of the selection committee - it is strange fact that he never held a solo exhibition during his lifetime.

In 1988, 12 years after his death, an important retrospective exhibition of his work was held at the Niagara Galleries in Melbourne. This exhibition, which included 86 works Roberts had produced when aged in his twenties, was the first time these works had ever been exhibited. Gary Catalano's review of the exhibition 'Artist's work maps the paths of the psyche' reads, in part:

Something ate at Roberts throughout these years. These 86 works very strongly invoke a sense of a psyche under sustained assault by forces it found difficult to cope with. . . You can look at Robert's work from any one year and find that at one moment he considered himself something of a cubist, at another an expressionist, and at yet another a surrealist. These changes of artistic identity follow no rhyme or reason. Roberts seized each mask with an absolute belief that it was the appropriate one for him. But with the new day it would be cast aside and another world would take its place. But I think Roberts was most himself when wearing his surrealist mask. What makes his surrealist paintings of consuming interest is in one sense diagnostic, for their overriding features suggest that the fear which most deeply troubled Roberts was that of homelessness or dispossession. The painting themselves are acts of compensation.⁶

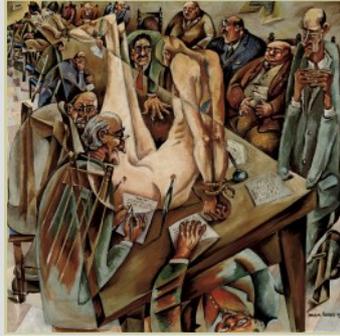


Douglas Roberts, *View through an old man's fingers*, 1944, Adelaide, pen & brush & ink, white gouache on paper, 37.7 x 25.4 cm (sheet). Gift of John Reed 1981. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

During the period when Roberts was Principal of SASA, he seems to have been more preoccupied with teaching and educational administration than with working as an exhibiting artist. In 1974, after 11 years as Principal, Roberts went overseas on an extended study tour, the purpose of which was to provide 'a period for self-development, and to investigate procedures in institutions in the United Kingdom and the United States of America with a view to assessing their relevance to education within Art and Design areas within the Torrens College'. In his study tour report, Roberts not only compares the standard of work produced by SASA students with those from overseas, but also reflects

on the impact of the rapidly changing world on the world of art, art education and pedagogy:

I was gratified ... that the types of fine art work from the S. A. School of Art and its general standard compared favourably with Dip. A. D. work ... while I saw much work that was lively and forward-looking, I also encountered much presented for the award, and gaining it, that looked tired and stale as though from disinterested students who had lost direction ... Perhaps a great deal of student work today reflects the dilemma that while a number of individual students have found suitable directions from their studies and flourished under recent circumstances, many have floundered. This now seems to pose a double task for the

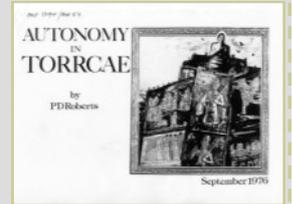


Douglas Roberts, *The Tribunal*, 1949, Adelaide, oil on canvas, 61.3 x 61.8 cm Elder Bequest Fund 1984. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

instructor, that is, while catering for the individual, how, via both analysis of recent events and foresight, to restore the teaching of an overall body of knowledge pertinent to our own time and to the coming years.⁷

In September, 1976, Roberts was invited as Head of SASA to speak on the topic of 'Autonomy in the Schools and the Role of Head of School' at an assembly of the newly formed Torrens CAE Council. As Max Lyle has written in his Friends SASA History Project *Snapshots*, Roberts 'showed considerable, unusual boldness in speaking to a self published illustrated booklet...entitled *Autonomy in Torrae* (below), the booklet was a tongue in cheek, extremely critical commentary on the Torrens

College amalgamation. In one section he presented his take on the functioning of the Art School Community - *They (are)...freedom loving, more interested in art than politics, and more prone to work with great intensity when fired to do so than to work like clockwork. Rather than adherence to strictly scientific tenets and formulae, they tend, somewhat in the manner of an artist composing his picture, to work in a method that mixes instinct with reason to achieve results seen at times to be extravagant and inexplicable to their newly acquired and sober neighbours.⁸*



Although I have spent the past several months researching the life and work of Douglas Roberts (aka P D Roberts) he remains a complex and rather enigmatic character. I am fascinated by his early work some of which includes highly personal and passionate expressions of the world of dreams and desires while others explore human relationships, sexuality and erotica. I am curious to know more about his work and why he didn't continue along the same creative pathway on which he began. I am also keen to find out more about the man himself, his personality, his sources of influence and his ideas on art practice and educational pedagogy.

I have yet to research, in full, his personal correspondence as Principal of SASA and am keen to talk to his son Paul who will, I am sure, be able to fill in many of the gaps in my information. As his friend Ivor Francis wrote in Roberts' obituary published in RSASA's magazine *Kalori*, Doug Roberts accumulated a large body of work which has yet to be collated, catalogued and assessed'.⁹

The development of a research archive that ticks all these boxes is now my main aim. If any members of Friends SASA are able to assist in this task I would really like to hear from you. You may have one or more of his works in your possession or other memorabilia that would be a valuable addition to such an archive. You can contact me via the **Friends SASA email address**.

Dr Jenny Aland, SASA History Project

NOTES:

- Hylton, J 1989, *Adelaide angries : South Australian painting of the 1940s*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide, p 15.
- Hylton, p 16.
- Ibid, p 18.
- Francis, Ivor, 1976, *Surrealism in Australia*, Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, p 39.
- Hylton, J *Lawyers, Guns & Money*, [Art Gallery of South Australia website](#) (Accessed 6/5/2013)
- Catalano, Gary, *The Age*, April 6, 1988, p 14; The Catalogue for this exhibition is in the UniSA Library – **Call No 759.994 ROBD**
- Roberts, Douglas 1975, Report on Study tour undertaken during 1974 by P.D. Roberts, SASA Archives, ART/5244, Box 64.
- Lyle, Max 2008, South Australian School of Art History Project, [Stanley Street Staff Snapshots website](#).
- Francis, Ivor, Obituary, 'Roberts, Douglas (Phillip Douglas)', *Kalori*, vol 3, 1977.

