

RA

Royal Academy of Arts

Australia

AUSTRALIA

Main Galleries

21 September – 8 December 2013

In September 2013, the Royal Academy of Arts will present *Australia*, the most significant survey of Australian art ever mounted in the UK. Focusing on the influence of the landscape, *Australia* will span more than 200 years from 1800 to the present day and will feature over 200 works, including paintings, drawings, photography, watercolours and multimedia. This ambitious exhibition will bring together works from the most important public collections in Australia, the majority of which have never been seen in the UK before. HRH The Prince of Wales will be the Patron of the exhibition.

The story of Australian art is inextricably linked to its landscape. An ancient land of dramatic beauty, a source of production, enjoyment, relaxation and inspiration, yet seemingly loaded with mystery and danger. For Australian artists, this deep connection with the landscape has provided a rich seam of inspiration for centuries. In 1948, the Australian artist, and Royal Academician, Sidney Nolan (1917-92) said of his iconic Ned Kelly series that it was *'a story arising out of the bush and ending in the bush'*. He believed strongly that an understanding of landscape was central to his work, giving meaning to place, and commented that he found *'the desire to paint the landscape involves a wish to hear more of the stories that take place in the landscape'*.

The exhibition will map the period of rapid and intense change; from the impact of the first settlers and colonisation on the indigenous people to the pioneering nation-building of the nineteenth century, through to the enterprising urbanisation of the last century. Reflecting the vastness of the land and the diversity of its people, early, as well as contemporary Aboriginal art will sit alongside the work of the first colonial settlers, immigrant artists of the twentieth century and the work of some of today's most established Australian artists.

The exhibition will include works by Aboriginal artists such as Albert Namatjira (1902-59), Rover Thomas (c.1926-98), Emily Kame Kngwarreye (1910-96) and a number of artists from the Papunya Tula group of the Western Desert. Nineteenth century European immigrants such as John Glover (1767-1849) and Eugene von Guerard (1811-1901) will also feature, as well as the Australian Impressionists whose paintings relied heavily on the mythology of the Australian bush: Arthur Streeton (1867-1943), Tom Roberts, (1856-1931) a student of the Royal Academy Schools, Charles Conder (1868-1909) and Frederick McCubbin (1855-1917). Early Modernists such as Margaret Preston (1875-1963), Grace Cossington Smith (1892-1984) and Roy de Maistre will hang alongside the leading twentieth-century painters: Arthur Boyd (1920-99), Albert Tucker (1914-99), Rosalie Gascoigne (1917-99), Fred Williams (1927-82), Brett Whiteley (1939-92) and Sidney Nolan RA. The exhibition will end in the twenty-first century with internationally recognised artists such as

Bill Henson (b.1955), Gordon Bennett (b.1955), Tracey Moffatt (b.1960), Fiona Hall (b.1953) Shaun Gladwell (b.1972), Christian Thompson (b.1978) and Simryn Gill (b.1959) who will this year represent Australia at the Venice Biennale.

Highlights will include Frederick McCubbin's *The Pioneer*, 1904 (National Gallery of Victoria); four paintings from Sidney Nolan's *Ned Kelly* series, 1946 (National Gallery of Australia); Rover Thomas' *Cyclone Tracy*, 1991 (National Gallery of Australia); Emily Kame Kngwarreye's *Big Yam Dreaming*, 1995 (National Gallery of Victoria) and Shaun Gladwell's video *Approach to Mundi Mundi*, 2007 (Art Gallery of New South Wales, John Kaldor Family Collection). Judy Watson has been commissioned to create a new sculpture for the Royal Academy's Annenberg Courtyard that resonates with the themes of the exhibition and with the context of its British setting.

Australia aims to evoke a sense of the distinctiveness of the Australian landscape whilst considering the art historical developments and contributions of Australian art across the last two centuries. It will show how in the nineteenth century an exploration of national identity allowed artists a freedom to define themselves, away from the rules of the European tradition. That focus on the landscape and its complex, deep-rooted connections to national identity, has continued in the work of Australian artists to the present day.

Christopher Le Brun, President of the Royal Academy of Arts, said, "The Royal Academy is delighted to be working in partnership with the National Gallery of Australia and we would like to thank them, together with the other public collections, for loaning their works. Without their support, and that of the Australian High Commission in London, this exhibition would not be possible. HRH The Prince of Wales' patronage of the exhibition acknowledges the ambitious scale of the project and the close links that the UK and Australia continue to share today."

Dr Ron Radford AM, Director of the National Gallery of Australia said: "This partnership between the Royal Academy of Arts and the National Gallery of Australia is a great opportunity to present Australia's strong visual arts tradition, particularly that of land and landscape, both indigenous and non-indigenous, to audiences in Europe."

Organisation

Exhibition organised with the National Gallery of Australia. The exhibition has been curated by Kathleen Soriano, Director of Exhibitions, Royal Academy of Arts, Dr Ron Radford AM, Director of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and Dr Anne Gray, Head of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Supported by



Honorary Exhibition Circle

Catalogue

Australia is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue featuring essays by Wally Caruana, Franchesca Cubillo, Anne Gray, Deborah Hart, Ron Radford, Kathleen Soriano and Daniel Thomas.

Dates

Press view: Tuesday 17 September 2013, 10am – 2pm
Open to public: Saturday 21 September – Sunday 8 December 2013
10am – 6pm daily (last admission 5.30pm)
Late night opening: Fridays until 10pm (last admission 9.30pm)

Admission

£14 full price; concessions available; children under 12 free; Friends of the RA go free.

Tickets

Tickets for **Australia** are available daily at the RA or visit www.royalacademy.org.uk. Group bookings: Groups of 10+ are asked to book in advance. Telephone 020 7300 8027 or email groupbookings@royalacademy.org.uk

Images

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About the Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

About the National Gallery of Australia

The National Gallery of Australia in Canberra is home to the Australian national art collection, comprising the world's largest collection and display of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and extensive holdings of international art from America, including Jackson Pollock's famous *Blue Poles* 1952, along with a major collection of art from the Indian sub-continent, Southeast Asia and the Pacific. It has outstanding collection displays, touring exhibitions as well as major international exhibitions, and many public programs and events that increase access to and enjoyment of the visual arts among Australian and international audiences. www.nga.gov.au

For public information please print 020 7300 8000 and www.royalacademy.org.uk

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