

Adam Dutkiewicz

Introduction

Over the last few years, as an extension of my projects as RSASA Historian, I have worked with the Collections Manager, Doris Unger, who has been maintaining the RSASA Collection, accessioning donations and revising what's been done in previous decades, and adding information into the Collection's database. I recalled things I saw in boxes or found while digging in the Archives that needed to be incorporated into the collection of artworks, and most of this has been done over the last year. With so much material being recovered, and new works coming into the RSASA Collection at a steady pace, it occurred to the Director, Bev Bills OAM, that History Month would provide a perfect opportunity to showcase this part of the Society's activities to the public.

The last comprehensive showing of its Collection material only was in 2015, when 80 works were shown in *Unwrapped: The RSASA Collection*; and prior to that a smaller display in *Selected Works from the Society's Collection*, in 2006. Before that a number of works and documents were displayed to celebrate the 140th anniversary in 1996, as part of a broader exhibition with borrowed works. The 2016 exhibition *Proud to be 160* featured about three dozen works from the RSASA Collection among works from members, and private and museum collections. Earlier in 2022 the Society presented a second solo exhibition of the Malcolm Carbins' works it holds, and from time to time supplements other exhibitions with more tightly focused presentations, such as for Life drawing (next year is the 100th anniversary of our Sketch Club).

In the previous few History Festivals we have presented an exhibition on Doreen and John Goodchild, an artistic couple who were very active in Adelaide from the 1920s, and especially attached to the RSASA as John was President 1937–40. That exhibition was held in 2019; 2020's was cancelled due to Covid and presented last year as *Trailblazers*, an exhibition on pioneers and artists of the first 20 years or so in the colony's history. Associated with that exhibition, and largely because of the extra time leading up to its eventual presentation, the Society published *Early Settler Artists of South Australia, 1836–1856*. These projects added information to the History Project that resulted in two volumes of *A Visual History*, published in 2016/2018.

So, there have been several historical exhibitions showing aspects of the Society's collection over the last two decades since the Society's rooms were first refurbished at the beginning of the century. The focus on this exhibition has been to show some of the best of the Collection, and some of the newer material that has come in but not been seen yet. There has also developed a strong theme in the Collection of portraits of artists in paintings, drawings, photographs, and sculpture. This emerging theme is presented as an exhibition within an exhibition, as a means to introduce these artists to the members and public, as many of them have become obscured or are not familiar to modern viewers.

As I've worked on the catalogue over a period of months, it has enabled me to refine what images should be presented. The final outcome depended on a visual inspection after work was unpacked, and repairs or remounting or reframing were made as required, as works long packaged to protect them in storage were able to be better assessed and photographed. Some of them had not been accessioned. Finally, the hang, too, informed the ultimate selection in terms of the curation of the exhibition, and it amounted to about 1/2 of the work in the catalogue, which is estimated to be around 1/2 of the total material held.

Of particular note are the conté and photographic portraits of artists from the 1960s made by the then editor of *Kalori*, Betty Jew, and a series of strong photographic portraits of key modern artists by Peter Medlen. There are several large paintings that won various prizes at the Society from the 1920s to the 1970s. There are a few photographs from the RSASA Archives, too, which have not been framed but have been presented in reproduction on walls added in to the gallery. These reproductions show works that won prizes in the 19th century, some work that was not suitable to show at present or had not yet been repaired or framed, or due to constrictions of space.

It is hoped the selection offers a glimpse at the range of media, in both 2D and 3D, and the quality contained within the broader Collection, and informs and provides interest and pleasure to members and gallery visitors.

David Baker

Foreword

Wind and rain lashed the tiny street-level window. The masked Doctor and assistant are working in The Cage, tunnelled under the Institute Building. They are taming the (caged) Collection that belongs to the Royal South Australian Society of Arts Inc (RSASA) (founded 1856), scrutinising works and researching for an exhibition in the gallery several metres above where they work. The Doctor, Adam Dutkiewicz, and his Assistant, Doris E Unger spend hours fossicking in dark places to uncover amazing art works from days past - paintings, drawings, prints, wood carvings, ceramics, fine art photographs, textiles, and mixed media.

Occasionally part of the Collection is let out of The Cage to complement themed or historical shows mounted by the Society. This time we see some hidden and overlooked facets of the expanding Collection, and a number of new works that have come in over the last several years. It's becoming a powerful and substantial beast.

The Catalogue – *Re Collection* celebrates over 100 artists and their work from the RSASA Collection spanning almost 200 years.

The Exhibition – *Re Collection* (6 to 28 May 2022) (a subset of the catalogue) is in the RSASA gallery in the cultural heart of the city of Adelaide as part of History Month 2022.

You will observe their stories in image and word. Stories of the time and place, the people, everyday life, success, and hardship in South Australia over almost 200 years. You will see the faces of artists and confront their skills and imaginations.

Enjoy engaging with the stories and seeing glimpses of the world and each other through their eyes.

Dr Adam Dutkiewicz, BA Communication Studies [Honours], PhD (Art History & Theory), was a Past President of RSASA and the second recipient of the Department for Environment and Heritage South Australian Built Heritage Research Fellowship at the Architecture Museum, Louis Laybourne Smith School of Architecture and Design, University of South Australia. He is the second son of prominent Adelaide post-war modern artist Wladyslaw Dutkiewicz, for whom he has curated several exhibitions. Adam was founder of WAV Publications in the 1980s, and since then has worked as art critic for *The Advertiser* newspaper (1992–2005) and as a freelance critic for *Business Review Weekly* and *Art Monthly Australia* online. In 2000 he completed his thesis titled “Raising ghosts: Post-WWII European émigré and migrant artists and the evolution of abstract painting in Australia ca.1950-1965”. In the 2000s he worked as visual art critic for *The Independent Weekly* in Adelaide. He has held several exhibitions of his own paintings and photography, and until recently was the editor and publisher of Moon Arrow Press (2006 –21). Over the last two decades he has produced, written, co-written, contributed to, or edited over 20 books on South Australian art, architecture and design.

Doris E Unger, Bachelor of Fine Art (South Australian School of Art), was a Post Graduate in Animation and Film (Swinburne University of Technology), Advanced Diploma in Electronic Design and Interactive Media (Swinburne University of Technology), and Post Graduate in Information Management (University of South Australia). She has worked on accessioning and maintaining the health of the RSASA Collection and entering details in its database since 2015.