

Fairweather, Tuckson and Wlodarczak to feature at TarraWarra Museum of Art this summer, in exhibitions addressing the dynamic art of the drawn line

Ian Fairweather: The Drunken Buddha, Guest Curator: Steven Alderton

Tony Tuckson: Paintings and Drawings, Curator: Victoria Lynn

Gosia Wlodarczak: Found in Translation, Curator: Victoria Lynn

29 November 2014 – 15 March 2015

TarraWarra Museum of Art presents three exhibitions this summer which address the dynamic art of the drawn line. The works by Ian Fairweather (1891 – 1974), Tony Tuckson (1921 – 1973), and Gosia Wlodarczak (b. 1959) rely on the dexterity of the artists' hand. Whether it is Fairweather's imagery about the Drunken Buddha, the abstract mark making of Tony Tuckson or Wlodarczak's celebrated drawing performances, each artist has created a visual energy and vitality in their work through the use of line.

The three exhibitions also highlight the cross-cultural interests of the artists. Fairweather was born in Scotland and spent many years living in China, Tuckson was born in Egypt and travelled to Arnhem Land, Melville Island and the Sepik region, collecting art of Indigenous peoples while he was Deputy Director of the Art Gallery of NSW, and Wlodarczak was born in Poland, immigrating to Australia in 1996. The ways in which culture can be translated in and through drawing is a key concern of the three exhibitions.

Victoria Lynn, Director of TarraWarra Museum of Art, says: "these three artists, shown in tandem, present a unique opportunity to view the important stories of modernism through the filter of the present. Drawing is not so much a representation, it is a process and an embodied experience".

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Background on the Three Concurrent Exhibitions, 29 November 2014 – 15 March 2015

Ian Fairweather: The Drunken Buddha

This fascinating exhibition will bring together all the available works from Ian Fairweather's *The Drunken Buddha* series for the first time in almost 50 years, providing a rare opportunity to see these compelling paintings. Fairweather held a lifelong fascination with Chinese culture which saw him translate into English the popular Chinese novel *The Drunken Buddha*. This story, based on the exploits and misadventures of the 13th century Buddhist monk Chi-tien who was born Li Hsiu-yuan (meaning 'prepare first') either on 22 February 1192 or in the year Wu-hsiu (1178) in T'ai-chou prefecture in the district of T'ien-t'ai. He died some sixty years later. Chi-tien, like Ian Fairweather, was an unconventional figure, and the story traces his misadventures.

The story was published by the University of Queensland Press in 1965 and illustrated with the artist's iconic paintings.

These works have not been seen together for almost fifty years, since their first showing at Macquarie Galleries in Sydney in 1965.

The book has been reprinted in its original form especially for the exhibition, which is guest curated by Steven Alderton, Deputy Director of the Australian Museum, Sydney.

Two works are from the TarraWarra Museum of Art collection. Many have been lent by private lenders. We also have borrowed from the University of Queensland and Queensland Art Gallery. One painting, 'On the lake' was missing until very recently. Despite exhausting all leads and tracing it to a sale at Christies in 1970, it was an installation crew member of the Museum who suggested that they contact a Fairweather enthusiast Rod James. Through him they contacted a former employee of the art dealer Joseph Brown and she helped with contacting Brown's son, providing key information on how to understand the records. With an auction date, amount, first initial, surname and post-office box, the Museum tried White Pages. The owner still has the painting, still lives in the same house, and has generously agreed to lend it.

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Ian Fairweather's father was a doctor in India when he was born and at 6 months he was left with some aunts when his mother went to India. He did not see his parents again until he was ten years old. He was schooled in London and Jersey. He was a soldier in World War 1 and spent four and a half years in a German prisoner of war camp. After the war he went to the Slade School of Art but he could not make a living. He studied Mandarin while he was at the Slade. He emigrated to Canada, from there to China in May 1929 and stayed for three years. On his way from China to Australia he stayed in Bali, arriving in Australia in February 1934. He took a dislike to Australia initially, and went back to China, arriving in Beijing in January 1935. He stayed until April 1936 and never returned. Although he led a tough life in China, it continued to influence his life's work. During WWII he went to India and worked with the English Army looking after prisoners of war. He then resettled in Australia. Most famously, on the night of April 29 1952, aged sixty, Fairweather sailed his homemade raft out of Darwin. The journey lasted 16 days until he collided with a reef off the coast of Timor. He built a Polynesian style hut on Bribie Island in 1953 and spent the rest of his life there.

One of Australia's most important and influential artists, Fairweather's style is unique. A combination of abstraction and figuration joined through a meandering use of the line, Fairweather's paintings use a limited palette of blacks, greys, blues, pinks and browns. Marks are made in and through layers of paint that are as much in conversation with Chinese calligraphy as they are with Aboriginal mark making. His was a life of journeys, and these experiences pervaded his art practice.

The Guest Curator, Steven Alderton, Assistant Director, Public Engagement and Culture, **Australian Museum** will give a guided tour of the exhibition on Sunday 30 November at 3pm.

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Tony Tuckson: Paintings and Drawings
Curator: Victoria Lynn

Tony Tuckson: Paintings and Drawings includes a group of works that are related to the two splendid Tony Tuckson paintings in the TarraWarra Museum of Art collection: *Black and White, large upright* c. 1958-61 and *Untitled* c. 1973. Tuckson's highly intuitive abstract mark making and the physical gestures embodied in his paintings register a vast range of feeling and temperament. A number of works on paper are also included which highlight his interest in the art of Ian Fairweather and his progression from figuration to abstraction.

Tony Tuckson was born in Egypt and spent his early childhood on the Suez Canal in the 1920s. His schooling was in England, where he also went to art school in London 1937-40. He was in the Royal Air Force from 1940 – 46 and met Margaret Bisset, his wife to be, in 1942, while he was posted in Sydney. After the war he settled in Australia and studied at East Sydney Technical College from 1946-49. Influenced by the likes of Paul Klee, Pablo Picasso, Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse, it is significant that Tuckson also owned a small work by Ian Fairweather, which hung in his living room, acquired in 1954. Between the time Tuckson joined the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1950 and the time of his first solo exhibition at Watters Gallery in 1970, he remained basically an 'underground' artist, with his works seen only by family members and a couple of select friends. His first one man show was held in 1970, three years before his untimely death.

Terence Maloon writes in the catalogue for the exhibition:

The early paintings all feature an internal echo of their framing edge. They are characteristically small, contained, bounded – typical easel-paintings in this respect. Tuckson's subsequent work grows dense and tumultuous with pent-up energy ... and then he breaks-out. The format of his later paintings and drawings becomes an open field, spacious and radiant – an arena in which to act.

Like Fairweather, Tuckson was concerned with a truth to materials, a sense that the painting would exhibit a raw and haptic energy. Many of these works have been borrowed from the Tony Tuckson estate along with key loans from the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the National Gallery of Victoria.

Terence Maloon, Director of the ANU Drill Hall Gallery and Art Collection, will present a keynote lecture entitled 'Tuckson, Fairweather and the Crisis of the Easel Picture' on Sunday 8 February at 4pm.

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Gosia Wlodarczak: Found in Translation
Curator: Victoria Lynn

In 2013, between 10.30 am and 5 pm daily for 17 days, Gosia Wlodarczak was enclosed in a specially designed sensory limitation cube in RMIT (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology) Gallery, drawing without any exposure to the outside world – literally ‘drawing’ what she could see in the space around her. The project, entitled *A Room Without A View*, used the language of drawing to investigate what she describes as “an ongoing search for the reassurance, for the ‘material proof’ of my existence”.

This new exhibition, *Found In Translation*, will feature the walls and ceiling of this room deconstructed in the North Gallery of TarraWarra Museum of Art. The artist will also create an ‘interpretation drawing’ employing an abstract alphabet derived from 29 small details taken from the *A Room Without A View* performance whereby each represents (respectively) the 26 letters of the alphabet and three punctuation marks. This drawing will visually translate or encode on the gallery wall a poem from Ian Fairweather’s *The Drunken Buddha* (1965), which is itself a translation of a well-known Chinese tale. Not unlike a musical score, the work literally presents another way of ‘reading’ *The Drunken Buddha*, and sits on the cusp of language and art.

There are two instructions for the work: *Instruction for the Maker* (a manual to reconstruct the drawing) and *Instruction for the Viewer* (a key to decode the drawing and read the encoded poem).

In addition, Wlodarczak will perform a drawing on the iconic large window in the North gallery framing the landscape of Long Gully. Entitled *Shadow Drawing of Long Gully, Frost Drawing for TarraWarra*, the work will be performed on 6 – 8 February 2015. Wlodarczak’s performances engage with both a physical site and a social space. At times the artist converses with visitors while incessantly drawing on the window. Like her translation of Ian Fairweather’s own translation of *The Drunken Buddha*, the drawing performances recognise the living energy of discourse which is in turn translated into line.

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