

DISCOVERING DOBELL

27 May to 13 August, 2017



William Dobell, *Mrs South Kensington* 1937, oil on wood panel, 38.2 x 33.2 cm
Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased 1943 © Sir William Dobell Art Foundation

The *Discovering Dobell* exhibition at TarraWarra Museum of Art, 27 May to 13 August, provides a fresh and original perspective on the work of one of Australia's most important 20th century artists, William Dobell.

The exhibition examines in detail three key phases of Dobell's work: the London years; the portraits of Sydneysiders; and the more experimental New Guinea paintings.

Curated by Christopher Heathcote, *Discovering Dobell* explores the processes and methods by which the artist developed his ideas through several drawings and studies to reach one or more paintings. In this way the exhibition brings to light a new understanding and insight into Dobell's practice and his vital contribution to Australian visual culture.

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Featuring 8 works from the outstanding Dobell paintings from the TarraWarra Museum of Art collection, the exhibition will also include significant works from the Art Gallery of New South Wales, National Gallery of Australia, Australian War Memorial, Newcastle Art Gallery, and National Gallery of Victoria, as well as a number of private collections. *Discovering Dobell* will include a number of Dobell's most iconic works, including *Cockney kid with hoop* (1936), *Mrs South Kensington* (1937), *The billy boy* (1943), *Dame Mary Gilmore* (1957), and *Helena Rubinstein* (1957).

The notorious portrait of fellow artist Joshua Smith that initially caused widespread controversy when it was awarded the Archibald Prize in 1943 is also included in the exhibition. This painting was the subject of further debate following its extensive restoration after it was damaged in a fire.

Shown concurrently with *Discovering Dobell*, is an exhibition of paintings and drawings from the TarraWarra Museum of Art collection entitled *Dobell's Circle* which features significant members of the lively community of artists Dobell mixed with in Sydney, including: Godfrey Miller, John Passmore, Donald Friend, Margaret Preston, Justin O'Brien, Elaine Haxton, Russell Drysdale, Lloyd Rees, Jeffrey Smart, John Olsen, Jeffrey Smart, Ralph Balson and Sali Herman. Dobell forged close friendships with many of these artists and in the 1940s Dobell was a Trustee of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, becoming an influential advocate for rising artists, highlighting how central he was to the mid-century Sydney scene. *Dobell's Circle* provides an opportunity to reconsider this painter's formative influence within Sydney's artistic community, and deepens our understanding of his vital contribution to Australia's cultural life.

In association with Wakefield Press, the Museum will produce a major new publication to accompany the exhibition featuring a new insightful analysis and appraisal of Dobell's achievement by Christopher Heathcote.

Christopher Heathcote, one of Australia's foremost art critics, has written extensively on a broad range of creators—from Arthur Boyd and Edvard Munch to Virginia Woolf and Michelangelo Antonioni. An authority in twentieth century culture, he is the author of several books including the highly acclaimed *Inside the Art Market: Australia's Galleries 1956-1976*, as well as *A Quiet Revolution: The Rise of Australian Art 1946-1968* considered the definitive account of the period. Dr Heathcote has also written several artist monographs, including *A Quest for Enlightenment: The Art of Roger Kemp*, and the groundbreaking *Russell Drysdale: Defining the Modern Australian Landscape*, which was published jointly by the TarraWarra Museum of Art and Wakefield Press.

TarraWarra Museum of Art director, Victoria Lynn, says the exhibition provides a unique opportunity to reassess Dobell in the context of the Museum's collection and broader questions of modernism.

"Dobell's instantly-recognisable art is highly valued for its luminous layers of paint, its refined brushwork, and the tracery of lines that create forms in the works.

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"This exhibition and book show that Dobell was a keen observer of human nature, and of the uncertainties of life.

"Our Museum's founding patrons, Eva Besen AO and Marc Besen AC, began collecting the work of Dobell in the 1950s. Impressed by the pathos in his work – Robert Hughes called Dobell 'a romantic portraitist' – Eva and Marc Besen forged one of the largest private collections of Dobell's work in the country.

"TarraWarra Museum of Art is the fortunate recipient of their gift of many of these works, and as such, we present this book and exhibition in celebration of their passion for his oeuvre," Ms Lynn said.

ENDS

To arrange interview with Dr Christopher Heathcote or supply of images please contact:

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T +61 (0)3 5957 3100 <http://www.twma.com.au/exhibition/discovering-dobell/>

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am to 5pm Open all public holidays except Christmas Day

Exhibition Admission: \$7.50 Adults; \$5.00 Seniors; pensioners, students and children are free

Forthcoming Keynote Lecture by Dr Christopher Heathcote, from 2pm, Saturday 22 July 2017



William Dobell, *Early version of 'The thatchers'* 1950
oil on hardboard, 11.2 x 29 cm, Private collection, © Sir William Dobell Art Foundation

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