



**ART GALLERY
OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Australian Surrealism

THE AGAPITOS/WILSON COLLECTION

25 July – 12 October

Since their first acquisition in 1990, Sydney art lovers and philanthropists **JAMES AGAPITOS** and **RAY WILSON** have been passionate collectors of Australian Surrealist paintings, photographs, prints and drawings. Their Surrealist collection of over 300 works – unrivalled by any other public or private collection – is the subject of a new exhibition to tour Australia, coordinated by the **ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**.

Adelaide audiences will be the first to view *Australian Surrealism: The Agapitos / Wilson Collection*, which showcases around 90 paintings and works on paper from this impressive collection.

Surrealism was one of the most dynamic and diverse art movements of the twentieth century. Inspired by the writings of **André Breton** and the paintings of **Salvador Dali** and **René Magritte**, Australian artists in the 1930s and early 1940s examined their own culture through a similar lens, producing distinctive results. Employing dream imagery, poetry, precarious and suggestive juxtapositions, artists responded to a political environment which was drawing the nation toward war.

“The complex composition [of Surrealist works], the symbolism and the vision of their creators stimulated us greatly” says **James Agapitos OAM**, a Greek businessman who migrated to Australia in 1952. He met his Melbourne-born partner, **Ray Wilson** in 1967 and together they began to purchase works of art. However it was not until 1990 when they acquired a major work by

/ more ...

Australia's seminal Surrealist artist **James Gleeson**, that their collection began to take shape: "the painting was totally different from anything we had seen before and we were mesmerised" James explains, "this one painting was the foundation stone around which the Agapitos / Wilson Collection was built."

The exhibition features highlights from the collection by many of Australia's best known artists of the period including: **James Gleeson, James Cant, Russell Drysdale, Jeffrey Smart, Max Dupain, Adrian Feint, Ivor Francis, Donald Friend, Robert Klippel, Joy Hester, Dusan Marek, Sidney Nolan, Douglas Roberts, Peter Purves Smith, Eric Thake** and **Albert Tucker**.

"Australian Surrealist art has been largely ignored internationally and neglected in Australia...until now" says Ray Wilson. **This is the first time the collection will be extensively displayed in public.**

Australian Surrealism is curated by noted art writer and broadcaster, **Bruce James** who is the curatorial consultant to Agapitos and Wilson. James is the author of a comprehensive new book about their collection.

"Works of art have both public and private lives and should be enjoyed by as many people as possible" enthuses Ray Wilson. To this end the exhibition, coordinated by the Art Gallery of South Australia's Curator of Australian Art **Sarah Thomas**, will travel to selected venues around Australia in 2004.

The Art Gallery of South Australia has planned a diverse public program to complement the exhibition beginning with **Agapitos and Wilson's personal guided tour of the exhibition on 25 July**, and an **illustrated lecture by the curator, Bruce James on 26 July**.

Australian Surrealism: The Agapitos / Wilson Collection, is on display daily at the Art Gallery of South Australia from Friday 25 July until Sunday 12 October, 2003.

Art Gallery of South Australia

www.artgallery.sa.gov.au

North Terrace, Adelaide

Daily 10am – 5pm

James Agapitos and Ray Wilson are highly recommended for interview

For more information contact:

Miranda Starke Public Relations Manager 08 82077032 or 0409919510