



MARGARET PRESTON ART AND LIFE

ART GALLERY of SOUTH AUSTRALIA

26 May – 13 August 2006

South Australian born Margaret Preston (1875-1963) is Australia's most famous woman artist. Her iconic depictions of urban and outback landscapes and her vibrant floral still-life pictures from the 1920s, 30s and 40s remain among the most loved Australian works of art ever produced.

Margaret Preston: Art & Life is a major national travelling exhibition organised by the Art Gallery of NSW and showing in Adelaide at the Art Gallery of South Australia from Friday 26 May to 13 August. It features around 200 of Preston's paintings, woodblock prints and linocuts as well as ceramics, drawings, photographs and documents relating to her extraordinary life and fifty year career.

Margaret Preston was born Rose McPherson in Port Adelaide in 1875. Strongly opinionated and often described as a red-headed firebrand, she lived in Adelaide throughout her formative years, working and teaching from her King William Street studio. Hans Heysen was an early teacher of the artist and reportedly labelled her a “shameless hussy” for unabashedly sitting immediately in front of a nude model in a life drawing class. Today, Preston rivals Heysen for the title of South Australia’s great artistic prodigy.

After travelling and studying in Europe for a number of years, Margaret Preston returned to Australia to pioneer the modern art movement. She promoted the need for a national art form and was the first artist to advocate Aboriginal art. Her pictures incorporating native flora and Indigenous motifs were instantly recognisable and many appeared as cover illustrations for magazines such as *Woman’s World*, *Home* and *Art in Australia*.

Exhibition Curator, **Deborah Edwards** from the Art Gallery of NSW says “Margaret Preston was the best known of her generation of Australian artists with her commanding compositions – predominantly still-lives, landscapes and scenes of Sydney. These works have continued to be, over the past 70 years, amongst the most popular of all Australian artists’ images.” Edwards and co-curator, Rose Peel have spent 5 years locating works for this exhibition which includes works drawn from public and private collections in Australia, the UK and New Zealand, including the Art Gallery of South Australia’s own outstanding Margaret Preston collection.

Margaret Preston: Art & Life showcases the artist’s long and successful career, bringing together the most significant aspects of her practice, her nationalism and her relationship to Aboriginal art, as well as the lesser-known aspects of her career, including her ceramics and her mature development as an imposing landscapist during the 1940s and 1950s.

Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, **Christopher Menz** says “Margaret Preston has always had a strong following in her home city of Adelaide and we expect this highly-anticipated and very beautiful retrospective to be our most popular exhibition this year”.

The exhibition’s Adelaide season is proudly sponsored by **Cinzano** and will be complemented by an extensive program of special events including: a Preston-themed tour of the Adelaide Botanic Garden; floor talks and lectures by curators, artists and celebrities; workshops in still-life painting, linocut printing and ceramic decoration; activities for children and families; and a one-day symposium on Saturday 1 July examining the art of Margaret Preston and that of her friend and fellow artist, Gladys Reynell whose own retrospective goes on show at the Gallery on 30 June.

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26 May – 13 August 2006 Art Gallery of South Australia North Terrace Adelaide

On view: Daily 10am – 5pm (last admissions 4.30pm)
Admission: Adults \$12 / Concession \$10 / Members & Students \$8 / U16 Free
Season Ticket: \$25 – unlimited entry to this exhibition and *The Art of Gladys Reynell* (showing from 30 June). Available only to AGSA Members.
Guided tours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday & Public Holidays at 2pm (free with exhibition entry)
Public information: Tel: 08 8207 7000 or visit: www.artgallery.sa.gov.au

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Image: Margaret Preston, Australia 1875–1963, lived in Europe 1904–07, 1912–19, *Self portrait* 1930, oil on canvas, 61.3 x 51.1 cm. Art Gallery of New South Wales. Gift of the artist at the request of the Trustees, 1930. © Margaret Preston Estate. Licensed by VISCOPY, Australia. This exhibition is supported by Visions of Australia, an Australian Government Program supporting touring exhibitions by providing funding assistance for the development and touring of cultural material across Australia.