



Rare Hans Heysen watercolours go on show for Australia Day

The earliest extant landscape by South Australia's most famous 20th Century artist, Hans Heysen (1877-1968), will be among a number of rare Heysen watercolour pictures to go on display at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, from this Friday in celebration of Australia Day.

The wet road 1893 (pictured below), painted in suburban Norwood when Hans Heysen was only 16 years old, will hang alongside the artist's later watercolours of Adelaide city and plains, Fleurieu Peninsula, Flinders Ranges and his beloved Adelaide Hills, revealing Heysen's exceptional skill and subtlety as a watercolourist.

"Hans Heysen's prominence as a traditional 'gum tree' oil painter has meant that his watercolours are often overlooked" says Rebecca Andrews, the Gallery's Acting Associate Curator of Australian Art who has coordinated this display. "These works show just how modern Heysen really was and how, with watercolour, he was able to perfectly capture the light and depth of atmosphere in the Australian landscape" she explains.

The Art Gallery of South Australia holds the largest and most representative collection of works by this famous South Australian, including more than two thousand drawings, oils and watercolours; however the fragile nature of watercolour paintings means they can be only rarely displayed. This Australia Day display precedes a large-scale exhibition of Heysen's oeuvre which the Gallery is currently planning for late 2008.

Born in Germany in 1877, Heysen emigrated to Adelaide with his family at the age of seven and became a popular national figure during his seventy year career. Says Andrews, "Australia Day is the perfect occasion to celebrate the work of one of this country's greatest landscape painters, whose pictures came to symbolise the way Australians saw and identified with their natural landscape."

Hans Heysen's watercolours will be on display in the Gallery's Elder Wing of Australian Art daily 10am to 5pm from Australia Day, Friday 26 January. Admission is free.

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