



ROBERT DOWLING

Tasmanian son of Empire

A National Gallery of Australia Travelling Exhibition.

A national travelling exhibition honouring Australia's first major colonial-trained professional artist, Robert Dowling (1827–1886), is opening at the Art Gallery of South Australia.

Organised by the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, *Robert Dowling: Tasmanian son of Empire* comprises more than 70 works borrowed from London, New Zealand and around Australia. The exhibition brings to light one of the most significant artists of the late-colonial period and demonstrates the sheer diversity of Dowling's oeuvre during his 36-year career.

Ron Radford AM, Director of the National Gallery of Australia says, "This exhibition aims to place Robert Dowling in his proper place in Australian cultural history. When Dowling first advertised himself as an artist in Launceston in 1850, he became the first locally trained Australian artist and went on to be the first to achieve success overseas. He was Australia's most successful portrait and figure painter when he returned to Australia in the mid 1880s yet surprisingly he remains little known today."

The exhibition curator and author of the first book dedicated to the work of Dowling, John Jones said, "Robert Dowling: Tasmanian son of Empire is the culmination of many years of research discovering and tracking down lost works held in collections all over Australia and overseas."

In his research for the Robert Dowling exhibition, John Jones has made exciting discoveries. For example, his investigations have helped reinstate the attribution to Dowling of one of the artist's finest works, *Breakfasting out* 1859, Dowling's first Royal Academy exhibition success. The Museum of London acquired the painting in the 1950s bearing the false signature of the better known English artist Charles Hunt and the false date of 1881. Similarly, at the British Museum Jones' research has reclaimed for Dowling a group of the artist's paintings of Indigenous Australians that had been incorrectly attributed to fellow Australian artist Thomas Bock.

"As well as portraiture, Dowling painted subjects from history, literature, modern life and orientalist and biblical works. His body of work includes the largest number of images of Australian Aborigines in Victoria and Tasmania in the mid-19th century," says John Jones.

The Art Gallery of South Australia has loaned a number of its own works to this important national exhibition, including some of the most iconic paintings from its colonial Australian collection such as *Jeremiah Ware's stock on Minjah Station* 1856 and Dowling's seminal work, *Group of Natives Tasmania* 1860.

Art Gallery of South Australia Director Nick Mitzevich says, "Robert Dowling's works have been admired by visitors to the Art Gallery of South Australia for many decades and so we are delighted to have the opportunity to showcase them in the context of Dowling's wider oeuvre, to reveal the true depth of Robert Dowling's contribution to Australian art".

Robert Dowling: Tasmanian son of Empire is a National Gallery of Australia Travelling Exhibition. The exhibition is supported by the National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach Program, an Australian Government program aiming to improve access to the national collections for all Australians and Visions of Australia, an Australian Government Program supporting touring exhibitions by providing funding assistance for the development and touring of cultural material across Australia. The Exhibition Partners for *Robert Dowling: Tasmanian son of Empire* are Manteena and the National Gallery of Australia Council Exhibitions Fund. The exhibition is also supported by Media Partner ABC Local Radio.

Robert Dowling: Tasmanian son of Empire is showing at the Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide from 19 November 2010 until 13 February 2011.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Miranda Starke Young 08 8207 7035 or 0409 919 510 StarkeYoung.Miranda@artgallery.sa.gov.au

Heidi Chamberlain 08 8207 7554 Chamberlain.Heidi@artgallery.sa.gov.au

To access images for news and review visit: <http://nga.gov.au/AboutUs/MediaCentre/Dowling/>

ROBERT DOWLING

Tasmanian son of Empire

A National Gallery of Australia Travelling Exhibition

EXHIBITION CURATED BY JOHN JONES

Coordinated in Adelaide by Rebecca Capes-Baldwin, Associate Curator of Australian Paintings & Sculpture, Art Gallery of South Australia.

ON VIEW

Art Gallery of South Australia, North Terrace Adelaide

SEASON

Friday 19 November 2010 – Sunday 13 February 2011 (closed 25 Dec)

OPENING HOURS

Daily 10am to 5pm (last admissions 4.30pm)

TICKETS

Adult \$10, Concession \$8, Students \$6, Members \$6, U16 free

Members' Season ticket: \$10 for unlimited entry, available only to Art Gallery Members

Purchase tickets at the door or online: www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/events

GUIDED TOURS

Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, public holidays at 1pm (free with exhibition entry)

Book a private group tour, phone 08 8207 7578

FLOOR TALKS

Curator John Jones presents talks in the exhibition on Friday 19 November at 12noon and 2pm. Free with exhibition entry.

Gallery Guide Pamela Harding speaks about Robert Dowling, *Self-portrait* 1852 and *Tasmanian Aborigines* 1856–57 in the exhibition.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Phone 08 8207 7000 Visit www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/exhibitions