

Art Gallery unveils \$3.6 million refurbishment and over \$5 million in gifts



The Art Gallery of South Australia will open the doors to the newly refurbished Elder Wing of Australian Art on Saturday 18 June, following a ten month, \$3.6 million refurbishment. The opening marks the 130th anniversary of the Gallery for which over \$5 million in gifts has been received.

Modernised to meet international museum standards in lighting and environmental control, the Elder Wing's interior has been refurbished to reinstate it as perhaps Australia's most beautiful museum interior.

"Visitors will have a different sense of the Gallery from the moment they enter from North Terrace. The refurbished vestibule and Elder Wing have now taken on a more contemporary feel but one which still honours the building heritage," said Art Gallery of South Australia, Director Nick Mitzevich.

The refurbishment was designed by award winning architecture, design and urban planning firm HASSELL. Christie Bailey, HASSELL Senior Associate Architect, said the refurbishment respected the original symmetrical design of the space and incorporates contemporary, minimalist design pieces such as a new granite concierge counter.

"We worked closely with the Gallery to develop a solution which balanced the old with the new and meets the functional needs of the public and gallery staff," said Ms Bailey.

State of the art lighting has been installed throughout the Elder Wing by US museum and lighting design firm George Sexton and Associates. This renowned firm has an extensive history of involvement with complex museum and architectural projects, as exemplified through work with the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Denver Art Museum, and the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in Norwich, England.

Along with the architectural refurbishment, the Australian pre-colonial, colonial, federation and modern art that the Elder Wing houses has been rehung to introduce a fresh narrative, one that makes new connections between works of art.

Curator, Australian Paintings and Sculpture, Tracey Lock-Weir, said that the new displays tell a revised story of Australian art, one that reflects a greater understanding of who we are at this point in time.

“From the first chapter of this new narrative, major works of Aboriginal art introduce the pre-contact period and the continued presence of Aboriginal culture. Aboriginal art in all its various disciplines will be an integral component of the whole story of Australian art as never told before,” she said.

Included in the rehang are twenty spectacular new, multi-million dollar gifts in honour of the Gallery’s 130th anniversary. Highlights include several stunning works by Hugh Ramsay from the ever-generous Diana Ramsay and Richard Noble’s striking painting of *Elizabeth Solomon*, 1862, and Tom Roberts’s pivotal work *Winter morning after rain, Gardiner’s Creek*, 1885, both of which are recent major gifts from Max Carter, AO.

“Our hope is that visitors feel a sense of comfort when they visit the Elder Wing – like seeing an old friend, but also delight in seeing things afresh, both the architecture and the collection,” said Mr Mitzevich.

The refurbishment of the Elder Wing would not have been possible without the significant grant from the South Australian Government and the generous support of the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation, the Ian Potter Foundation and the Thyne Reid Foundation.

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MEDIA CONTACT

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Images can be downloaded directly from:

http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/agsa/home/Media_Centre/2011/Elder_Wing/Index.html