

Exhibition Opening - Second of the Friends

Friends of the South Australian School of Art

6.00 – 6.45 pm

Tuesday, April 12

Adelaide Festival Centre Foyer

Good evening,

It's a delight to be here tonight to open the second major visual arts exhibition of the Friends of the South Australian School of Art (SASA).

To begin, I would like to acknowledge this land that we meet on is the traditional lands of the Kurna people and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their country.

I also like to acknowledge:

- Councillor Sandy Wilkinson, Adelaide City Council
- Dr Ian Gould, Chancellor, University of South Australia
- Jack Condous, President, Friends of the South Australian School of Art

- Gloria Goddard, Chairperson, Friends of the South Australian School of Art
- Professor Mads Gaardboe, Head of Art, Architecture and Design, University of South Australia
- Professor Kay Lawrence, Director, South Australian School of Art, University of South Australia
- Dr Elizabeth Ho, Director, Hawke Centre, University of South Australia
- Sponsors

Following in the steps of their inaugural show, this exhibition showcases the artistic talents of 32 of the SASA Friends, from recent graduates to established artists, past and present students and teachers.

Some interesting and unusual materials and mediums feature in the artworks, including hologram, embossed copper, bitumen and galvanised iron, echoing the environment around us.

As you can see, many of the artworks are like explosions of vibrant colour against the foyer's dark wooden panelling, with landscape references a recurring theme.

With a mix of styles ... abstraction, semi-abstraction and representation ... the works illustrate both the diversity and prowess of the SASA Friends.

These wonderful works will adorn the walls of the Adelaide Festival Centre Foyer while it buzzes with activity generated by the season of the musical Wicked, attracting some much-deserved attention and highlighting the work of the Friends of SASA.

So who are the Friends?

A passionate and creative group of people, linked by their association with SASA, either as past and present staff or scholars, who harness their considerable talents and skills to promote the School.

Through this exhibition, the hard-working event organising committee are highlighting SASA's role in the South Australian visual arts sector, as well as elevating the profile of individual members *and* boosting the Friend's coffers for future projects.

One of these projects is the SASA History Project.

As one of the oldest art schools in Australia, the South Australian School of Art has a rich history to mine.

Established in 1856, it evolved from the School of Design, the School of Arts and Crafts to the current South Australian School of Art.

In its 155-year history and its different guises, the South Australian School of Art has embraced a number of different arts movements, from imitative to modern and contemporary styles, *and* educated and employed some of Australia's most celebrated artists, including Stella Bowen, Margaret Preston, Jeffrey Smart and Barbara Hanrahan.

SASA's claim as the first arts school in Australia to appoint a female teacher, Elizabeth Armstrong in 1892 ... just before South Australia

gave women the vote ... helps to paint our State as a guiding light in women's advancement.

The School's fascinating and lively past is being painstakingly researched and recorded by Dr Jenny Aland and Dr Pamela Zeplin.

The resulting publication will trace the influential role the school has played in shaping the arts scene in South Australia, particularly those heady years of the 1960s and 1970s when the school, then located at Stanley Street in North Adelaide, was at the forefront of arts practice across the country.

This was an era noted for growing political awareness, increasing freedom in artistic expression, and expanding hairlines.

I understand the SASA experience during this era was no exception.

One of today's exhibitors, former SASA student, lecturer, and Adjunct Research Fellow, Margie Hooper, remembers it an *"exhilarating" time, "when art was simply made for art's sake"*.

Another project that deserves recognition is the Friends of SASA scholarships.

Two scholarships are awarded each year.

One of the contributors to this exhibition, Nina Rupena, won last year's travel scholarship, and went on to win the Brunswick Street Gallery first prize of \$10,000 for works on paper.

In her piece for this exhibition, titled *When it Rains it Pours*, Nina has worked with pigment, ink and soft pastel on canvas.

Clearly, Nina has a bright future and, like her fellow exhibitors in this show, is an outstanding artist.

We are very fortunate that South Australia produces so many talented artists blessed with such varied ideas and vision.

Since the early days of our State, the South Australian School of Art has nurtured the talents of many South Australian visual artists ... and continues to do so today.

Before I finish, I must make mention of the passing of a dedicated advocate of the arts, Kym Bonython.

Fired by his passion for art, Kym fostered the careers of many of Australia's most distinguished artists, giving their work exposure through his galleries.

Kym was also a steadfast patron of the Friends of SASA and I know that his presence at Friends events will be sorely missed.

Congratulations to the artists featured, the Friends of the SASA exhibition committee and their helpers on this impressive exhibition.

I look forward to more alumni artworks showcased in future Friend's exhibitions.

It gives me great pleasure to declare this exhibition open.

Now let's take a closer look at these impressive works.