

## Dr Pamela Zeplin: ASA History Project Report, July 2011



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History Project.

It is a great pleasure to report that the **South Australian School of Art History Project** continues to make steady and exciting progress.

### School Centenary

As has been posted on the *FriendsSASA* website, the official date for the School of Design's establishment by the South Australian Society of Arts with Charles Hill as Drawing Master, was **September 2, 1861**. This was announced in the *South Australian Register* on August 26<sup>th</sup> 1861. Charles Hill was a founding member of the Society of Arts which had been formed at a meeting held at his home in Pulteney Street,

Adelaide, on Monday 13th October, 1856. Among the chief objectives of this group was the formation of an art school: until recently, the 1856 date had been assumed to mark the School's official opening.

On 7<sup>th</sup> September 1861 in an article about the Society of Arts in the same newspaper, the (anonymous) author noted:  
*... It is refreshing in the midst of the great activity of the colonial mind in the direction of business to see that there are some persons amongst us who find the time and have the inclination to promote the interests of art. Let them depend upon it, they will not go unrewarded...*

This historical gem was discovered by our dedicated Adjunct Researcher, Dr Jenny Aland (see previous *FriendsSASA* Newsletters for further information and links).

So as its proud descendant, the South Australian School of Art (incorporated in the School of Art, Architecture & Design in 2009) will be celebrating its *official* Centenary from September 2011 through to next year which coincides with the University of South Australia's 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday Celebrations.

**So, HAPPY BIRTHDAY – and congratulations - to all the thousands of people who have been associated with the School!!!!**

### Archives

Some more wonderful news came through my email box on June 23 from Kate Sergeant, Repository and Archive Metadata Services Coordinator at the University of South Australia Library. Her message to me read:

*I wanted to let you know that the Library has recently made available some historical documents relating to the South Australian School of Art. As you are leading the School's history project, I thought you would be interested in these resources. These documents include:*

- *5 volumes of newspaper clippings collected by the School from 1895-1982*
- *The School of Design Art Club Magazine (1889-1908) the magazine produced by the School*
- *The Paint Pot (1925) a short-lived magazine produced by the students at the School of Fine Arts, North Adelaide*
- *The Forerunner (1930-1938) another later magazine produced by students at the South Australian School of Arts & Crafts (an initiative of teacher/artist Mary Packer Harris)*

*To find them search the University Research Archive using the terms "art special collection" or simply [click here](#).*

*Further to this, there are 2 volumes of photographs from the School and a minute book from the committee who initiated the HP Gill Memorial medal (pictured right). These resources will be loaded*

*when I return from leave in early July. We have also identified and are in the process of sending 3 more volumes for digitisation. These volumes are a collection of notes written by HP Gill in 1878 (notes from lectures by Dr Zerffi on the history of art, and other notes on savage and native art) and 2 volumes of correspondence from the School dated between 1900-1922.*

*Kind regards,*

*Kate Sergeant*

### SASA History Project work

Since most of the School's archives were believed to be lost and/or scattered when we began this project 4 years ago, much SASA History Project work has involved painstaking searches. We are delighted with this new digitised treasure trove and Jenny has already been accessing this new information and aims to post a few of these 'nuggets' on the *Friends* website and in issues of this Newsletter. She had already spent time scanning these magazines (!), as well as many years of *Kalori* magazines, published by the Royal South Australian Society of Arts but this wider access is a great step forward for information about the School's history. It is also amazing how news clipping books can cast unexpected light on an 'epoch' of institutional history. These are recommended for lively, forthright, opinionated, and sometimes scandalous, reading.

### H P Gill Monograph

Jenny is also currently exploring the possibility of publishing an edited monograph of an as yet unpublished manuscript on Harry Pelling Gill by the late Gerald Lyn Fischer, a former State Archivist who died in 2010. Gill was a controversial figure as **Master (Head/Principal) of the School of Design from 1882 to 1915** and **Honorary Curator of the Art Gallery of South Australia (1892 to 1909)**. Jenny's Master's Thesis was titled *Art and design education in South Australian schools, from the early 1880s to the 1920s: the influence of South Kensington and Harry Pelling Gill*, so, who better to undertake this task of



This is the front face of the Harry P Gill Medal which is awarded annually to the student at the South Australian School of Art with the highest grade point average in the field of design. It features Gill in academic dress as an Associate Member of the Royal College of Art (ARCA) London, a position he claimed from 1889)

honouring Fischer's work?

### SASA Board Sub-Committee

In April I convened a *Friends* SASA Board sub-committee, with Jenny Aland, Bill Morrow, and inaugural SASA History Project Committee member, Jack Cross to clarify roles and funding of the SASA History Project and the *Friends*. The report confirmed that the SASA History Project is an independent research project which pre-dates *Friends* SASA, from whom it currently receives research funding. All *Friends*' support is gratefully acknowledged.

For more information on SASA History Project activities, go to the [Friends SASA website](#).

**Since Friends SASA members receive SASA History Project news hot off the press, don't forget to become 'part of history' by renewing your Friends SASA subscription!**

**Dr. Pamela Zeplin  
Chair, SASA History Project**