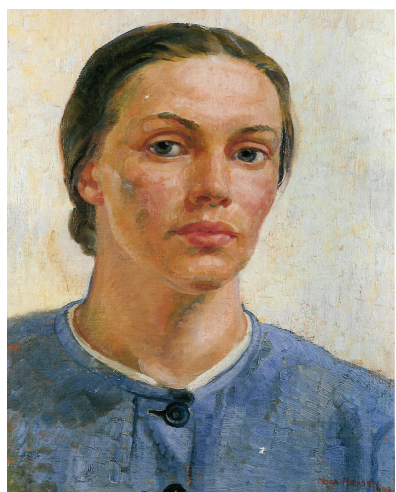


REMBRANTIA

REMBRANTIA SUMMER 2005/06

INAUGURAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NORA HEYSEN FOUNDATION INCORPORATED.



Self portrait, 1938

Best wishes to all Foundation Members – our first official newsletter and with it an apology for the delay involved!

Our aim is to circulate a newsletter to coincide with the seasons, that is, four times a year.

REMBRANTIA was a name used to describe Nora Heysen by her fellow artists. The word acknowledged the immense talent and skill of her drawing. We think it quite appropriate.

The idea for the establishment of a Nora Heysen Foundation was formulated during the very successful exhibition of her work at the National Library of Australia in Canberra 2000 – 2001.

This retrospective exhibi-

FOUNDATION BEGINNINGS

tion played a crucial role in presenting the creative work of an artist of national significance whose achievement had been long overlooked.

Nora Heysen was born in Hahndorf, South Australia on 11th January 1911.

By the 1930s she had carved her name into art

history. In 1938 she became the first woman and youngest artist ever to win the prestigious Archibald Prize for portraiture.

During World War II she was the first Australian woman to be appointed an official war artist.

Yet for the next four decades her work was largely overlooked and very few exhibitions were offered to her during this period.

Post Canberra and largely due to the efforts of exhibition curator and author Lou Klepac, Nora Heysen has regained the status she so rightly deserves as an Australian woman artist of dedicated professionalism and historical significance.

The proposal for the es-

tablishment of a foundation was put before the artist in 2002 in her 92nd year and received her full blessing.

Due to the time frame of the legal requirements, the Foundation was not finalised until after Nora's death in December 2003, 11 days short of her 93rd birthday.

Her return visit to *The Cedars* in June that same year had proven a great success as Nora was able to view her fully restored studio hung with her work.

As a result of this memorable visit to her beloved family home, a significant bequest was implemented for the return to South Australia of a unique collection of her paintings, drawings, books and precious artefacts. The collection was to be placed in her studio.

The primary aims of the Nora Heysen Foundation will include the continued acquisition of her oils and drawings as well as the ongoing restoration of her studio. The conservation requirements of the present collection as advised by ArtLab Australia, will also be addressed.

We will also investigate the future possibility of a travelling exhibition, particularly favouring State Regional Galleries

throughout Australia.

Another definite aim is the accumulation of funds to finance further publications of the artist's work.

Funds will also be needed to provide the necessary (and costly) insurance coverage of the entire collection.

Your membership of the Foundation will make a positive contribution towards achieving these goals.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE
FOUNDATION
HAS NOW REACHED
OVER 200

NORA HEYSEN FOUNDATION INC

The Cedars
Heysen Road
Hahndorf SA 5245

Phone: 08 8388 7277
Fax: 08 8388 1145
E-mail:

hans.heyse@bigpond.net.au

Curator:
Allan Campbell

OUR NEWEST ACQUISITION

Thanks to the generosity of Mrs Deidre Cowell, Nora's 91 year old sister, this superb small oil is our newest acquisition.

Entitled *Little Village Girl* was painted in Nora's studio at Hahndorf in 1933. The subject Doreen

Schneemilch would have been around 4 years of age at the time the portrait was painted and lived with her family on the outskirts of the Hahndorf village.

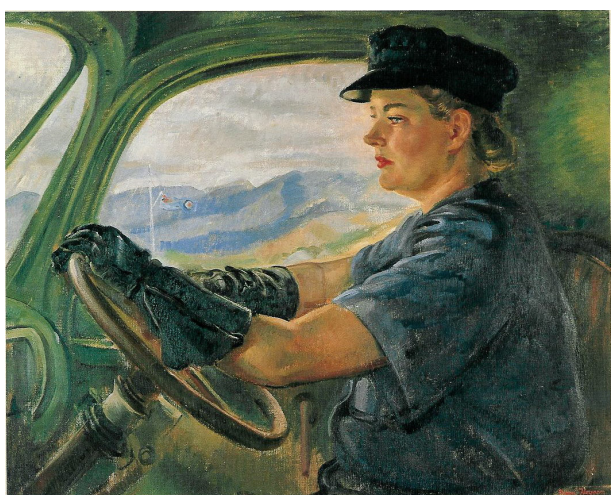
Nora was quite captivated by the little girl's impish face and captured

this on canvas in a most charming way.

The Foundation extends its sincere thanks and appreciation to Deidre for this most generous gift to the Collection.

Little Village Girl, 1933





*Transport Driver, Aircraftwoman Florence Miles,
Cairns, Queensland, 1945*



Cataloguing continues

on the extensive collections returned to *The Cedars* as part of the bequest in Nora Heysen's will.

These include her private

library of books and art magazines, photographs, artefacts, furniture and a repository of hundreds of letters spanning some seventy years of correspondence, both forwarded and received by the artist.

A FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

'WHERE IS NORA HEYSEN BURIED?'

After a farewell gathering at the Northern Suburbs Crematorium in Sydney in January 2004, Nora's ashes honouring her last request were returned to the Hahndorf Cemetery and placed on her father Hans Heysen's grave.

A simple inscription reads 'The ashes of Nora Heysen rest with her Father'.

A large and significant gathering of the Heysen Family and close friends attended this ceremony.

A sizeable Sydney gathering attended the S H Ervin Gallery at Observatory Hill for a fitting farewell and addresses were heard from

Lou Klepac, author and art publisher : Lola Wilkins, Head of Art at the National War Museum, Canberra : fellow artist and close friend Margaret Woodward : Nora's 88 year old brother from Adelaide, Stefan Heysen : Allan Campbell, Curator of *The Cedars* : and another close friend Dr Andrew Flateau.

An equally significant assembly was witnessed at the auditorium, Art Gallery of South Australia as the state's official farewell.

The highlight was a wonderful eulogy by our own much respected curator and art historian, Jane Hylton.

CARRICK HILL

NORA HEYSEN EXHIBITION 2008

Curated by Jane Hylton

This important retrospective has been logged into Carrick Hill's programme for some time now and investigation is underway regarding the feasibility (finance permitting) of it becoming a travelling exhibition. *Fingers Crossed!*

NORA'S BEEN TO CANADA!

The exhibition entitled *Shared Experiences Art and War – Australia, Britain and Canada in the Second World War* officially opened at the Canadian War Museum, Ottawa in May this year. It will then travel to the Australian War Memorial, Canberra where it will be on display from November 2005 until 26 February 2006.

The final venue is the Imperial War Museum, London where it will be on display from 23 March until 25 June 2006.

The well known oil paint-

ing by Nora Heysen, *Transport Driver, Aircraftwoman Florence Miles, Cairns Qld 1945*, acquired under the official war art scheme in 1945 was selected as an appropriate canvas representing Australia's first appointed woman war artist.

It is an exhibition of quite unique significance, the work of which will never be seen collectively again.

So if you can catch it in Canberra during that four month period it would be well worth the visit to the Australian War Memorial.

PRIORITIES AND PROJECTS

As Funds accumulate in favour of the Foundation the following projects must claim recognition as priority projects for appropriate and necessary dollar investment:

1. Installation of a split system unit in Nora Heysen's Studio, primarily for the purposes of heating and temperature control for the long winter months. There is presently no system operational in the Studio for winter or summer.

2. Replacement of roof iron and internal ceilings of the Studio. This building is actually the oldest on the property being the original cottage dating back to possibly the late 1860's.

3. The reinstatement of shelving either side of the fireplace in the front Studio sitting room requires some carpentry expertise. These shelves would then be able

to house and display much of the book and artefact collection returned as part of Nora's bequest in her will.

4. The professional designing and printing of a stylish and informative Foundation brochure which could then gain a more confident circulation amongst State Galleries, museums, historic homes, etc.

5. Continued restoration and conservation work by Artlab Australia looking particularly at some of Nora's significant early drawings dating back to the late 1920's.

6. Also the three very fine pieces of her father Hans Heysen's work allocated to hang back in her Studio which have been subjected to fifty years of Sydney humidity.



*Basket of
Flowers,
1993*

THE HEYSEN ROSE—SOUVENIR DE LA MALMAISON

Souvenir Roses, 1946

One of the most beautiful of the French Bourbon roses, it remained a particular favourite of both Hans and Nora Heysen.

It was painted repeatedly and expertly by both artists either mixed with other garden flowers or as a singular arrangement.

It is known as 'Queen of Beauty and Fragrance' and was reputedly raised by the gardeners of the Empress Josephine of France at her chateau at Malmaison.

Hans Heysen first brought back pieces from the Hahndorf cemetery in the 1920's where it had been planted on certain graves and successfully struck them in the garden at *The Cedars*.

Six of the original bushes on their own roots still flourish to this day.

Walter Duncan, the respected South Australian rosarian and a cousin to the Heysen family, has recognised it as one of the finest old strains of Malmaison he has budded from, due to its unique habit of opening perfectly in the ubiquitous wet Adelaide Hills spring weather.

In summer and autumn in somewhat drier conditions it opens yet again to absolute

perfection. Nora Heysen had been given as a gift from her father, a small bush of Malmaison when she and her husband Robert Black first purchased their historic old home 'The Chalet' at Hunters Hill, Sydney in 1954.

Nora nurtured this rose for a period of close to fifty years and in the decade following her father's death, would regularly pick a perfect bloom and place it in a special Celadon Chinese vase under the last pencil portrait she had sketched of Hans Heysen aged 90 in 1968.

Both the portrait and the vase now have pride of place in Nora's Hahndorf Studio as part of her will bequest documented in November 2003 one month before she herself died.

The card enclosed of *Souvenir Roses* painted in 1946 is intended as a small gift to you in appreciation of your membership.

This gesture we are sure the artist would greatly approve because of the wonderful support of her newly established Foundation.

The original hangs next to two other still-life favourites of Nora, forming a rather beautiful trilogy on entry to her studio.



ART GALLERY OF NSW

AUSTRALIAN FOCUS EXHIBITION

THE DRAWINGS OF NORA HEYSEN

Hendrik Kolenberg, Senior Curator of Australian Prints, Drawings and Watercolours is curating a small exhibition of Nora Heysen's drawings belonging to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Domain Place, Sydney.

The exhibition is continuing from:

21 December 2005 until 15 February 2006

FOUNDATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM held on Friday 17 June 2005 was well attended with over sixty people braving a cold June winter's evening to drive to *The Cedars*.

The positive response, the enthusiasm and the obvious optimism for the future of the Nora Heysen Foundation was just great and I personally felt that it was such an encouraging way to commence 'the journey'.

The foundation has a great

future - the fact that it honours the life and achievement of such a fine Australian woman artist secures Nora Heysen's place in the history books.

This ensures that she will certainly not be forgotten or placed into a secondary position as often happens in the unique world of art!

Allan Campbell

Chair
Nora Heysen Foundation
Inc.

FOUNDATION PROMOTION

As discussed at the 2005 AGM at some length, one of the primary problems faced on a daily basis at *The Cedars* is a definite lack of identification as to not only the existence but the uniqueness of this **National treasure.**

The fact that it remains the artistic home of two exceptionally fine artists,

both father and daughter, reinforces its unique status.

As we all know word-of-mouth is definitely the most effective form of advertising.

So your own role as members of the Foundation in verbally promoting *The Cedars* is invaluable.

NORA HEYSEN FOUNDATION INCORPORATED - CUSTODIAN OF THE ART OF NORA HEYSEN

Trustees

Chair and Curator

Allan Campbell

Heysen family representative

Tim Heysen

Curator and Art Publisher

Lou Klepac

Art Gallery of South Australia Nominee

Tracy Lock-Weir, Curator, Australian Paintings & Sculpture

Minister for the Arts Nominee

Jane Hylton, Curator and Art Historian

Hahndorf Academy Foundation Representative

Lyndell Davidge, Academy Chair

Public Officer

Dr Peter Heysen

DRAWN TOGETHER

THE DRAWING LIVES OF NORA HEYSEN, JUDY CASSAB AND MARGARET WOODWARD

This exhibition presents the drawing skills of three significant Australian woman artists, Nora Heyesen, Judy Cassab and Margaret Woodward.

'The three' met every month over the last ten years usually in Judy Cassab's studio at Double Bay to draw from the life model.

The primary reason for the initiation of these occasions was to reinforce to Nora, suffering declining eyesight, the necessity to meet socially with fellow artists and keep up the all important discipline of drawing as a regular and enjoyable exercise.

Because of her sight deterioration and in respect to

her own standards, Nora had made the decision to cease painting in oils in 1984, but continued to draw with pastel and indeed to achieve some of her most exquisite pieces well into her late 80's.

The three artists shared a genuine and absolute passion for drawing and thus they continued until the last months of Nora's life at 92 years of age to meet regularly and draw from the model.

They were joined in latter years by Charles Blackman to make up a foursome. Periods of intense artistic concentration and line achievement would then culminate

with the reward of good coffee and Judy's famous cherry strudel.

These monthly meets proved invaluable for Nora for the dual purposes of both social and artistic stimulation.

The exhibition which is travelling for two years reinforces the unique relationship of these three women, as well as conveying their own individual philosophies on art and life, and of course the visual achievement of their superb drawing talent.

The regional galleries hosting the exhibition are (and yes the bad news is that you are going to have to go across the border!)



For Margaret, 1994

Wangaratta Exhibition Gallery	20 January — 19 February 2006
Grafton Regional Gallery	1 March — 2 April 2006
Ballarat Fine Art Gallery	6 May — 3 July 2006
Burnie Regional Gallery	11 August — 24 September 2006
Albury Regional Gallery	13 October — 26 November 2006
Hazelhurst Regional Gallery	16 December 2006 — 11 February 2007
Orange Regional Gallery	23 February — 8 April 2007
New England Art Museum	20 April — 10 June 2007
Muswellbrook Art Centre	22 June — 5 August 2007
Wagga Wagga Regional Gallery	24 August — 21 October 2007
Hawkesbury Regional Gallery	26 October — 17 December 2007

"THE THREE"
MET EVERY
MONTH OVER
THE LAST TEN
YEARS USUALLY
IN JUDY
CASSAB'S
STUDIO AT
DOUBLE BAY TO
DRAW FROM THE
LIFE MODEL.

WORKS ON PAPER

The Foundation now owns the largest collection of Nora Heyesen's *Works on Paper*.

Spanning a drawing period of some seventy seven years from the initial student assignments at 15 years of age

through to sketches from the life model completed when Nora was 92.

The collection also offers an exciting diversity in subject strands lending itself to a scope of numerous independent exhibitions accord-

ing to different themes, namely:

- ☒ Portraiture
- ☒ Motherhood-mothers and their children
- ☒ Still life
- ☒ Early Hahndorf
- ☒ Family and friends

- ☒ London
- ☒ The War-New Guinea
- ☒ Post War-New Guinea
- ☒ Cats

There will be advice on these events in future newsletters.

PAINTING GHOSTS—AUSTRALIAN WOMAN WAR ARTISTS IN WARTIME

AUTHOR CATHERINE SPECK: DISTRIBUTED BY THAMES AND HUDSON

An apology to Dr Catherine Speck in regard to my comment in the inaugural Foundation notes to prospective members at the June 2005 meeting.

I made mention of the fact that "it would be a definite aim to accumulate funds to finance a publication of the artist's work (ie Nora Heyesen) as at present there is nothing whatsoever available which is indeed a sorry

state of affairs".

This is not quite correct as indeed Catherine Speck has written (2004) a comprehensive and unique book titled *Painting Ghosts – Australian Woman Artists in Wartime* in which over twenty pages are devoted to the war work of Nora Heyesen.

Catherine justifiably has drawn my attention to this

oversight and offered to perhaps host a talk to Foundation members on this historic strand of Nora's creativity and the further acknowledgment of her book.

So again my apologies Catherine and we would accept with great pleasure your offer – perhaps an evening talk with supper at *The Cedars* in the early months of this year.

I am sure members would

afford good patronage and the book would be available on the night for purchase. It is currently stocked at our bookshop.

On confirmation of a suitable date for Catherine, members will be issued an invitation through the post.

Allan Campbell,
Curator, *The Cedars*