BRAGS 50 Years: The Art of Giving

GALLERY GUIDE RESEARCH
“People say my work is ugly and vulgar,” Baldessin noted, but he was a product of his times. The brutality of World War II, the displacement of refugees, the sexual revolution of the ‘60s all had lasting influences on his work. Sexual motifs, the female body and alienated figures embodied all he had remembered and experienced.

Baldessin was born in North Italy and came to Australia in 1949. He studied at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) 1958 -1961, the Chelsea School of Art in London in 1962 and the Brera Academy of Fine Art in Milan 1962 -1963.

At 17 he worked as a waiter at Melbourne’s Menzies Hotel, where the lavish formal dining and banquets showed him the social rituals of a class very different to his own. The visual atmosphere - tablecloths, napkins, silver - made a lasting impression and would later appear at the core of his etchings and sculpture.

After gaining a diploma of Fine Art in 1962, Baldessin travelled abroad. In London he was impressed by Moore and Hepworth and encountered Pop Art; David Hockney and the tortured figures of Francis Bacon intrigued him, while European film-makers such as Louis Bunuel inspired his fascination with the female body.

Consumed with his English and European experiences, he returned to Australia in 1963 and held his first exhibition at the Argus Gallery, Melbourne. Baldessin worked productively through the 1970s until he was fatally injured in a car accident in 1978.

Irene Morrison and Denise Payne
Sydney Ball was a “colourist” and a pioneer in Australian abstract art. He studied architecture and worked in advertising before travelling to New York in 1962 where he enrolled at The Art Students’ League. While in America, Ball was influenced by “The Irascible 18” which included Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. Returning to Australia in 1965, Ball brought new abstract techniques and his work was included in the ground-breaking “Field” exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1968.

Ball often worked in series across different mediums, experimenting in oils, acrylics, aerosol paints and various printmaking techniques. Byron Springs is from the artist’s stain series, which reflects Jackson Pollock’s practice of throwing paint and moving it with sticks or squeegees. Of Ball’s new direction, his gallery, Sullivan + Strumpf, observed: “Gone were the precisely defined edges, the flatness of colour that had characterised earlier series, displaced with canvases flooded with splashes and splatters of colour, permitting a fresh openness and luminosity.”

Each of Ball’s series was marked by significant changes in techniques but throughout each period he maintained his obsession with form, colour and light.

Denise Payne

“For me it’s the scale that envelopes the viewer, that whole nebula of colour, the ocean of colour, which just soaks you in.”
—Sydney Ball 2014
Ray Beattie

Irish-born Ray Beattie migrated to Australia in 1967. Two years later, he was conscripted to serve in the Vietnam War. Upon his return to Australia in 1971, he settled in Perth and studied art at Claremont Technical School, later specialising in printmaking at Perth Technical College.

Meat Hatchet is part of Beattie’s Blade series. In the late 1970s when this print was created Beattie shared a $15-a-week studio in Fremantle with artists Marcus Beilby and Ken Wadrop. In 1980, Lou Klepac curated the High Street Studio Realists exhibition at the Art Gallery of WA. The exhibition featured Beattie and his two flatmates and travelled to the Eastern States to much acclaim.

In 2014, the exhibition was re-created as Fremantle Realists and reviewed by Lyn Diciero for The West Australian, who observed, “While art institutions in the 1970s delved further into abstraction, [Ken] Wadrop says the three were at the bottom of the rung. We were the scummy realists. Fortunately punk rock arrived which gave us that rebel stance.”

In the article Beilby reflected: “We were mucking around with traditional realism, exploring what it is to see and perceive, which is what photorealism is about. We liked the idea that we were not elitist and anybody could tap into the pictures. We depicted the everyday - the more ordinary the better.”

Jean Thatcher and Denise Payne
Janet Dawson

Sydney-born Janet Dawson spent her childhood in Forbes, in the central west of New South Wales. She studied at the National Gallery of Victoria Art School in Melbourne during the 1950s and was awarded a travelling scholarship to London where she attended the Slade School of Fine Art, studying lithography under Ceri Richards. She exhibited with the Young Contemporaries, won first prize for lithography and obtained a Boise Scholarship, which enabled her to work in Anticoli, outside Rome, before moving to Paris where she printed works by artists such as Pierre Soulages, Fritz Hundertwasser and Kumi Sugai.

In 1961, Dawson returned to Australia aware of all the latest developments in international art. She had a solo exhibition at Sydney’s Gallery A, curated an exhibition of Bauhaus work for the Gallery, and contributed to the revival of printmaking in Australia when in 1963 she established a print workshop, working with such artists as John Olsen, Fred Williams, Russell Drysdale, Albert Tucker and Colin Lanceley.

In 2006, the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery staged Janet Dawson: Survey 1952 – 2006, curated by Christine France. In the accompanying catalogue, Dawson reflected, “Printmaking forces one to think conceptually, one has to be economical, one has to consider various states of the print as being vital in themselves, with no possibility of erasure or alternation. If one puts on anything one doesn't like, one has in the next stage to do something about it.”

Denise Payne
During the 1970s, Sydney-born Helen Eager studied at the South Australian School of Art. In 1980 she travelled in America and Europe and worked in California for a year. While abroad, she studied four printing techniques: etching, relief printing, lithography and silk screen. An extract from an exhibition catalogue at Watters Gallery, Sydney:

Helen is one of few Australian artists working in colour lithography, continuing in the tradition of Australian women artists, Grace Cossington Smith and Margaret Preston. Helen portrays a highly individual style, scenes of everyday life. Her coloured drawing technique and distribution of colours enhances these genre scenes, infusing them with a radiating warmth.

9 AM depicts a domestic interior setting with sun streaming through the window, a chair and books suggesting the human presence, and the delicate shading of the walls. In an interview with Linda Slutkin 1983, Eager admitted:

“I get a great deal of satisfaction not only out of drawing and planning a print but also from actually printing it, although it is time-consuming and physically and mentally demanding. I don’t think anyone would print my prints as I would like them or as I would print them.”

Of her working progress, Eager explained, “Once you have the plan worked out, it takes about 2 to 8 hours to draw up a plate and prepare the paper, ink and press. Then if the printing runs smoothly you could print, say, 20 prints in 2 hours With an assistant it is faster to process than etching and slower than relief printing or screen printing.”

Denise Payne
MERRAN ESSON

BRAGS acquired Untitled slab from the 1985 Bathurst Art Prize. Merran Esson observed that Bathurst was one of the few galleries offering prize money for ceramics in the 1980s and she was “truly encouraged” by the purchase of her work.

She draws inspiration from her rural childhood combine with the urban confines of city life to produce large containers connecting in ways that explore mutual survival. She observed that clay as a material that can mimic a metal surface. The coloured textured Untitled slab was created as a result of Esson visiting castles and gardens in Scotland; she was fascinated in particular by the markings on the flat-surfaced sundials.

Esson recently retired from the National Art School, Sydney, where she was Head of Ceramics. She had studied ceramics at Caulfield Technical College from 1974 to 1976, and gained a Master of Art Degree from Monash University in 2004.

Margaret Marshall
ROD EWINS

BRAG Volunteer Judith Nash:

“Would you please explain the technique/process you used in Edge of Memory?”

Artist Roderick Ewins:

“Edge of Memory is a photo-etching. It was made nearly 20 years before the advent of Photoshop, and at the time the process involved taking black-and-white photos, using an enlarger to expose the 35mm negatives onto positive film of the appropriate size. I did not use half-tone film to produce the tonal range on the positives, but used a Kodak developer called Microlith to produce a very fine grain in the images. It was far more subtle than one can get using Photoshop today, but the materials I used are now obsolete and unobtainable, so the procedure could not be replicated ever again.

Before producing the positives, I started making small drawings, placing the bits of an idea together and deciding what would go where. The parts of the image were then placed on a large light table and cut together manually and the pieces stuck together with sticky tape.

The final product was then exposed onto a sensitized zinc plate using a special blue-light arc lamp. A fine aquatint ground was laid on the exposed and developed plate, using a resin dust box, so that the larger areas of dark did not open-bite, but produced a fine texture throughout. The plate was then bitten progressively in nitric acid, varnishing out lighter areas as it proceeded, in the exact manner that Rembrandt used, to produce the desired tonal ranges. The tonal range involved biting times from five seconds to about an hour. It was printed on pre-dampened paper using hand-ground ink of carbon black and burnt linseed oil, dabbed onto the plate and hand wiped.”
GEORGE GITTOES

Portrait of Larry Smith is from the Heavy Industry series of etchings created by George Gittoes with the involvement and support of mine workers. As a result, the etchings convey an empathy and understanding of the hard labour and harsh working conditions of the miners at Broken Hill, Wollongong and Newcastle.

This print depicts Larry Smith, a bushman who was forced to work in the zinc mines at Broken Hill due to tough times in the rural sector. Taking a break in the fluorescent light of the underground crib room during smoko, Smith stares out warily, aloof, isolated and uncomfortable with the unwanted attention. These brief breaks were the only relief from the subterranean coldness of the mine.

As the writer Gavin Fry reported, “There is often a pride and confidence in the men as they feed the roaring furnaces or guide the giant machines kilometres beneath the ground but there is also an edge to many of the portraits, a dullness in the eyes which could be fear or just the oppression of being a tiny, perhaps expendable cog in a giant machine.”

Gittoes was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia medal in 1997 for service to art and international relations as an artist and photographer portraying the effects on the environment of war, international disaster and heavy industry.

Judith Nash
Red Field is one of a sequence of encaustic paintings from the White Garden series exhibited at Bathurst Regional Art Gallery in 2007. In the accompanying exhibition catalogue, Paul Flynn, Editor of Art Profile magazine, observed:

“Painting is often read as a mirror of the time in which it was created, not only through the choices the artist makes in their methods but also what they choose to represent, if anything at all. Brad Hammond employs a slow and ancient encaustic process that might appear to buck the trend of contemporary painting. But to better understand the paintings of Brad Hammond, they must be considered in the context of his other fields of interest, video and digital media.”

Red Field 2006 is part of a larger cumulative project, Detuned Channels, begun when Hammond was living in South Africa. These are engraved wax images based on photographs of detuned television screens. They represent a freeze-frame of video transmission, painstakingly made by manipulating layers of pigmented wax to create an image that resembles screen static or interference.

In the artist’s work, the mesmerising qualities of digital media are transformed into hand-crafted, contemplative still images – TV snow becomes a hypnotic visual mandala. Hammond asks us to stare into the void of empty cyberspace as something vast, open, beautiful and unsettling.
Canberra-based artist Patsy Hely is credited with paving the way to a “new style of brighter, bolder and more refined contemporary ceramics wheel throwing, hand building and decorating and later slip casting porcelain” (All Hand Made Gallery).

*Bowl Set* is slip-cast white earthenware, vividly patterned in an Art Deco style that demonstrates her joyful and spontaneous approach to form and decoration. Preferring to create work in sets, Hely’s delicate, porcelain objects are functional domestic ware, often with a conceptual thread running through each body of work. Hely said, "I like the paradox between substantial and insubstantial - on the one hand it is the toughest material, dense and hard when high fired, yet when it is translucent it seems so barely there."

Hely trained at the National Art School during the 1970s, has a Master of Arts from Southern Cross University and her PhD from the ANU School of Art, “Ceramic Objects and the Articulation of Place”, was completed in 2007. She is an Emeritus Fellow at the ANU School of Art and Design, Canberra.

Hilary Stitt
Euan Heng is a printmaker, painter, sculptor and teacher of Chinese-Scottish heritage. He completed undergraduate and post-graduate studies at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, in 1975. Two years later he emigrated to Australia with his family.

Sheridan Palmer (Imprint 1997) describes Heng's printmaking: “He responds to the medium not in an exploratory way but more for the sheer joy of cutting and for the intimacy of the art. Linocut for Heng shares a not dissimilar immediacy with that of drawing, but whereas his drawing is ultimately used as a vehicle towards resolving the pictorial concepts for his paintings, print making appears as more of an autonomous medium.”

Prelude to the Dance was created in Victoria and was commissioned by the Print Council of Australia. It depicts Heng’s use of stark black-and-white to clearly convey the details and decoration in the linocut. Both the linocut and the painting versions of Prelude to the Dance were exhibited in An Exhibition of Paintings and Prints by Euan Heng at the Australian Galleries, Melbourne, in June 1984, the year before BRAGS obtained this print.

Margaret Linton and Denise Payne
“Art is a meditative experience. There is no quick answer. The artist creates a visual parable which the beholder is invited to contemplate,” reflected Czechoslovakian-born artist Petr Herel. He trained at the Prague College of the Visual Arts under artist Karel Svolinsky from 1957 to 1961 and received a Master of Arts from the Prague Academy of Applied Arts in 1969. In 1972, Herel married Australian fabric designer Dorothy Davis and moved to Australia the following year.

From 1978, Herel was heavily involved with the Graphic Investigation Workshop at the Canberra School of Art for two decades. He founded the Artists Books Limited Edition Portfolio Collection, located in the rare books room in the National Library of Australia.

The etching Dictator of Metamorphosis displays an element of fantasy that underlies the rich and ancient tradition of Bohemian graphic arts. The dwarf-like dictator figure blindly controlling human and animal life appears in many of Herel’s works of this period. He was most likely influenced by the harrowing events of August 1968, when the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia to crack down on reformist trends.

Of Herel’s practice, art critic Sasha Griffin observed: “Herel’s prints exhibit a very refined sensibility with plates being worked on over a long period of time and the chance encounters with forms and thoughts preserved as faint nuances caught within a captured passage of time.”

Amanda Nash
This pencil drawing was a study for a portrait in oils titled Ruth, painted when Heysen was just 21 and now in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia. The young model, from Handorf, South Australia, was recommended by Heysen’s mother because she felt Ruth had strong features befitting portraiture.

Although Nora’s formal study started at the School of Fine Arts in Adelaide when she was 15, she had already learnt much from her artist father, Hans Heysen, when she accompanied him to the Flinders Ranges to paint plein air. From 1934 to 1937, Heysen continued her studies overseas, studying fine arts at the Central School of Arts and Craft in London. There she met Bernard Meninsky, who mentored other Australian artists, including Donald Friend and Hal Missingham, who were her contemporaries.

In 1938, Heysen became the first female artist to win the Archibald prize for portraiture, with an oil painting of Madame Elink Shuurman, the wife of a Dutch diplomat. In another first, Heysen was the first woman appointed as an Official War Artist, travelling to New Guinea in 1944 to fulfil this assignment.

Kerry Mahony
Homage Tank 1 provides an early indication of the direction that artist Les Kossatz’s career would take, exploring his lifelong fascination with humanity and the interaction of man and his impact on the natural environment.

The print depicts dead rams lying around the base of a corrugated-iron water tank, perhaps victims of a prolonged drought or misadventure. Kossatz’s interest in sheep stemmed from his upbringing on a farm at St Andrews, north of Melbourne. However, for Kossatz, the sheep represented two extremes, a passive, animistic spirit of the land and also a symbol of “squattocracy” and conquest of the land. During the 1970s, this tension developed into a deep concern at “the human desecration of the Australian landscape” causing erosion and threatening native species.

Judith Nash
Russian-born George Lambert is regarded as one of Australia’s leading portrait painters and war artists. He migrated to Australia at the age of 14 and lived on a rural property at Nevertire, NSW. Lambert began sending his portraits of country people and bush life to the Sydney Bulletin, gaining reputation as an accomplished artist. He attended evening classes at the Julian Ashton Art School and aged 27 he won the Society of Arts Travelling Scholarship, enabling him to undertake further study in Paris and London.

This portrait of a family solicitor was completed by Lambert while living in London. It demonstrates Lambert’s consummate skill as a draughtsman: the strong form of the face is created by tonal values, and the use of line in the collar and lapel accentuates the strength of the subject’s character.

Judith Nash
Bruce Latimer is a painter and printmaker who completed a Fine Arts Degree at the National Art School, Sydney, in 1973. During the 1970s and ‘80s, he lived and worked in New York, returning to Australia in 1991. He has lectured in Printmaking at the National Art School, the University of Sydney and at the University of NSW College of Fine Arts since the 1990s. His most recent exhibition, Bruce Latimer: Paintings and Etchings, was held at the Australian Galleries, Paddington last year.

In an interview with Michael Lawrence, Latimer discussed inspiration for his work: I select eccentric aspects of the world to try to understand the world.... I pick out human follies. ...Humans are animals in their habitat..... I try to understand what we have done to the environment... degradation....I work with the urban environment more than the rural...the world is beautiful...amusing.

Denise Payne
This bowl was purchased by the gallery guides when they visited Col Levy’s workshop and gallery at Bowen Mountain in 1985. He gave a tour, explaining the philosophy behind Japanese Bizen pottery. This Bizen tradition emphasises honesty and truth in materials and method—“nothing is hidden or camouflaged.”

While the Bizen potters used red pine to fire their pots, Levy uses black wattle wood from Kurrajong to fire his pots, which are formed from clay found in the Sydney basin. This use of raw indigenous materials gives Levy’s ceramics an essentially Australian nature.

Levy’s ceramics are not glazed in a second firing; rather, the glaze forms from the wood ash in the anagama or cave, which is a huge mound of wood built up over and under the pots and fired over six to seven days. The kiln reaches such high temperatures that the clay vitrifies into stoneware that is tough and waterproof.

Levy insists that his ceramics are “to be used in daily life and that their beauty and enjoyment should improve with the patina of use and time.”

Kerry Mahony
GWYN HANSSEN PIGGOTT

Gwyn Hanssen Pigott OAM was an Australian ceramic artist. She was recognized as one of Australia’s most significant contemporary artists. By the time she died she was regarded as one of the world’s greatest contemporary potters. She worked in Australia, England, Europe, the USA, New Zealand, Japan and Korea. In a career spanning nearly 60 years, influences from her apprenticeships to English potters were still apparent in her later work. But in the 1980s she turned away from production pottery to making porcelain still-life groups largely influenced by the Italian painter Giorgio Morandi.

Gwyn Hanssen Piggott was born in Ballarat where she grew up and went on to study a Bachelor of Arts before becoming infatuated with pottery and undertaking her first internship with pioneering potter Ivan McMeekin at Sturt Pottery in Mittagong NSW. McMeekin inspired Hanssen Piggott and she would later cite him as her greatest influence and was very grateful for sharing “A Potter’s Book” by Bernard Leach with her which would remain a constant source of inspiration. McMeekin also gave her a lifelong appreciation and understanding of the basic of ceramic beauty in materials and firing, Hanssen saying “He didn't just look at pots he studied their most intimate details.” After honing her craft in the early years of her career with McMeekin, Gwyn moved to England in 1958 which was where she first found the notoriety that would snowball for the rest of career.

She became Australia’s most distinguished potter, creating a new language for ceramics through her idea of Groupings. Gwyn received the medal of the order of Australia. Followed by a rare retrospective at the national gallery of victoria, where 50 years earlier she had first fallen in love with ceramics.

After the death of her first husband Gwyn went to live in The Loire valley France for a few years before returning to Tasmania where she married John Piggott and continued to have solo shows in Britain, US, Germany, Canada, Switzerland, Japan, Italy and Australia.

In 2002 she made her last move to a studio in Ipswich, Queensland.

Mary Cuppaidge
In this painting, Bathurst artist Graham Lupp captures the riverside by the Bridle Track, which leads to Hill End. His meticulous attention to detail takes the viewer to the edge of the creek to feel the texture of the lichens, rocks and scrub and to enjoy the subtle colours of the Australian bush.

While an avid photographer, Lupp enjoys capturing the minutiae of nature in paint. He explained, “Devotion to the subject is more than acknowledging what it looks like.” He aims to embody the life cycle of birth, growth, death and renewal through the various mediums of gouache, pastel and oil paint.

Bathurst Regional Council commissioned Lupp to write about the 19th-century architecture of Bathurst for the Bathurst Bicentenary. Lupp seeks parallels between architecture and his painting. He described Riverside, Bridle Track as “almost like a bas-relief in that the voids and gaps and cracks between the rocks define the shapes and volumes of the rocks.”

Kerry Mahony
Drawing upon his trademark spontaneous graphic marks, John Olsen has created a portrait of Brett Whiteley in which the use of line and title allude to the character of his fellow Australian artist.

In his diary Drawn from Life, Olsen reflects: “Line, I saw, could organise and compose the picture. It has a mystical quality. To make the line is an urge, a passion…..I think the aim of a picture is to say something about nature using pictorial means to express that statement...”

This print, commissioned by the Print Council of Australia, was a product of collaboration between Olsen and master printmaker Fred Genis. At the time of its creation, both lived at Dural, a north-west suburb of Sydney.

The technique used is lithography, which involves drawing on a porous limestone with greasy materials such as lithographic crayons or greasy ink called tushe. The lithography technique is capable of varied effects of colour, tone and transparency.

Joyette Swane-Fitzpatrick
Simon Porm was the Artist-in-Residence at Haefliger Cottage at Hill End in 2000. Once owned by artists Jean Bellette and Paul Haefliger, the cottage has provided inspiration for many artists, including Russell Drysdale and Donald Friend.

This beautiful pastel, looking from the darkness of the garden at night into the glowing warmth of the interior studio, creates a feeling of intimacy and appreciation for the beauty and value of Haefliger Cottage in the rich history of Australian art at Hill End.

Porm graduated from Sydney College of the Arts in 1995. The same year he was awarded the Mosman Youth Art Prize.

Judith Nash
DAVID ROSE

David Rose gained a degree in Forestry at the Australian Forestry School in Yarralumla, Canberra, in the late 1950s. Although he chose a career in art, his passion for nature and his forestry training remained with him.

An Australian Artists series produced by the ABC in 1978 reported: David Rose has developed an almost conservationist’s enthusiasm and appreciation for the Australian countryside.

Berry’s Hill Lane with low flying Kookaburra was created not long after Rose and his family moved from Sydney to the NSW Central Coast where he could immerse himself in nature—the surrounding bays and landscapes. When you look closely, you can see the different colours of the eucalypts; Rose would use up to 40 screens to achieve this level of detail.

His wife, Jenny, had supported him as he established himself as a self-taught artist in Sydney in the early 1960s. Under the label Dajer they produced hand-printed greeting cards with joyful, striking designs that were screen-printed, cut and folded by hand. In 1964, they travelled widely in Europe and Rose studied lithography in Barcelona.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s Rose taught printmaking at Sydney’s National Art School and School of Art, Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education before eventually moving to Ourimbah on the NSW Central Coast, where his interest in the Australian bush—its trees and landscape—replaced his abstract works. In 1978, he was commissioned to produce a range of postage stamps featuring four Australian trees, the Illawarra Flame Tree, the Ghost Gum, the Grass Tree and the Cootamundra Wattle.

Rose died in December 2006. At his funeral, one of his printmaking colleagues observed, “I can think of no silkscreen printer-artist in the world who has explored nature with the same persistence, the analytic insights, the sense of poetry, and the instinct for telling design, as David.”

Eva Engelman and Denise Payne
Born into a well-known local family, Josephine “Jo” Ross grew up at Penrose, one of Bathurst’s icon properties on the White Rock Road. From 1956 she worked as an art teacher at various Sydney high schools, including Leichhardt, Canterbury and Riverside Girls, eventually returning to Bathurst in the late 1960s to teach art at Bathurst High School. In 1969, she became a Lecturer in Art at Bathurst Teachers’ College (later Mitchell College of Advanced Education, then Charles Sturt University), a position she held for two decades.

In a letter to gallery guide Margaret Linton in 2000, Ross reflected on The River painting: “The memories are of my sons scrambling around a very beautiful area, but somehow menacing to two small and strained boys who were trying to come to terms with such a different life after the death of their father.”

The surface of the painting is given interest by the varied ways in which the paint has been applied; brushwork overlaid by heavier areas of paint which appear to have been applied with a palette knife and horizontal areas of highlight possibly scraped on with cardboard.

Sarah Jones, Nancy Merritt and Margaret Linton
Regarded as the father of studio pottery in Australia, Sydney-born Peter Rushforth was known for stoneware vessels that combined traditional Chinese and Japanese ceramic techniques with Australian influences. He was renowned for a range of luscious glazes that he refined over the decades.

Rushforth became interested in ceramics while studying at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Scheme, which had been established to offer training to those who had served during World War II. His discovery of A Potter’s Book (1940) by British ceramic artist Bernard Leach (1887-1979) began Rushforth’s lifelong commitment to the exploration and mastery of stoneware ceramic production.

Rushforth was the first full-time ceramics teacher at East Sydney Technical College (now the National Art School); he was appointed head of the Ceramics Department in 1952 – a post he held until his retirement in 1978. During this period, he fostered cross-cultural exchanges with leading ceramic artists from Japan, China and Korea and was involved in the establishment of the Potters’ Society of NSW (now the Australian Ceramics Association).
Luke Sciberras resides in Hill End, and considers the region a sacred site in modern art. The historic former gold-mining village has a long association with many noted Australian artists since the 1940s and boasts the Hill End Artist-in-Residency Program overseen by Bathurst Regional Art Gallery.

Sciberras discovered art through studying books in his school library and spending time in the art room. He was stimulated by and collected things from nature, and was fortunate to have the opportunity to learn and be mentored by such notable Australian artists as Martin Sharp, Elizabeth Cummings, John Olsen, John Firth-Smith, Gary Shead and Tim Storrier.

Sciberras often works in the landscape using gouache and pastel on paper and returns to his studio to produce large oil paintings. At first glance the painting Road to Hill End appears to be a semi-abstract composition. However, on closer inspection the composition reveals the dry fields and jagged gullies of Hill End with a glimpse of a blue sky.

Of his practice, Sciberras reflected: “It’s all about the marks, painterly phrases and self-contained layer or longer strokes of paint... and the creative part continues with revision of the artwork as one can erase, reshape or paint over, for example, scratching abrasions, using wide house brushes or knives and scalpel ... The act of painting is to me the ultimate intoxication and addiction.”

Joyette Swane-Fitzpatrick
In 1999, Stephanie Sheppard undertook a Hill End Artist-in-Residency at Haefliger Cottage. During her residency, she set out to create a series of paintings and studies, focusing on natural flora and fauna as her subject matter.

The watercolour Study with cicada was created during this period. Of her practice, the artist revealed: “I place myself in the environment with all kinds of information—for example, memory of temperature, wind on the face, inner feelings. By painting in the landscape, you absorb heat, cold [and] can best capture its essence.”

Artwork created during her residency was exhibited at BRAG in the Light and Disappearance exhibition curated by Anne McLaughlin and gallery director Amanda Lawson in 2000. Sheppard trained at the National Art School in Sydney during the 1980s and obtained a Masters of Art from the University of NSW College of Fine Arts (COFA) in 1997. She was a finalist in the Sulman Prize in 1993.

Joyette Swane-Fitzpatrick
SANDRA TAYLOR

Sandra Taylor graduated from East Sydney Technical College in 1966 where Peter Rushforth had been one of her tutors. She then had a career of teaching for 26 years at secondary schools and TAFE Colleges in Sydney and at the Sydney College of the Arts. She moved to Northern NSW in 1982 where she taught at TAFE Colleges while establishing a cattle breeding property. In 1992 she taught ceramics to Aboriginal students at Malabugilmah near Grafton. Her works are held in many regional collections, in all state galleries and in the National Gallery.

Dance of Indecision had been exhibited in her Yarns from the Bush exhibition at the Macquarie Galleries in Sydney in 1992 before entering the 1993 Bathurst Art Purchase. Robyn Tudor once wrote that ‘Sandra Taylor is one of Australia’s most significant ceramic artists...Irony, satire and a peculiarly homespun sense of wry humour transform her ceramics into poignant visually communicated social commentary. Her choice of subject matter celebrates the rural character. She captures the raw Australian essence, the powerful and particular character of its people. Her drawings of dogs, dingoes, cattle, fish and dead trees form part of a narrative.’

Taylor described her coiling technique saying that coiling ‘brings you closer to the clay eliminating the need for tools and simplifying the making process. It allows the pot to grow and respond to the maker’s hands.’

Taylor described the conceptualising behind Dance of Indecision and the importance of a works title:

‘The title, Dance of Indecision, was very important. At the time I ran a cattle property and there was a drought. Having experienced the devastating effects a drought can have on a herd of cattle I was faced with taking another huge risk or selling the herd. This was my “Dance of Indecision”. It was a tortuous sort of dance. I’d run out of money so couldn’t count on hand-feeding the herd. If I sold the cattle I was admitting defeat. I’d left the city 10 years or so earlier and embarked on a very different path, not knowing one end of a cow from the other! I was now at the crossroads. The dance was excruciating. I rang for the trucks to take the cattle to the saleyards. I was defeated but the cattle would stand a chance...Titles of works have always been important to me. They seem to help me make sense of the confusion of life and add an edge to my work. My work has always reflected my life experience.

Taylor had her last ceramic show in 1996 after being awarded an Australian Fellowship. She is currently working on a retrospective exhibition of her work at the Grafton Regional Gallery in 2017.

Denise Payne
In the early 1980s, when BRAG purchased *Nightfall* and *Whirl*, Ann Thomson was identified as an abstract expressionist, preoccupied with expressions of flight, exploring the possibilities inherent in kite and sail shapes and movements through time and space.

In the catalogue essay for a 1986 exhibition at the Coventry Gallery, Paddington, Thomson stated: When people ask me [if] my works abstract or figurative, I answer “Yes!” What I am trying to do is go somewhere further than I know. I like to absorb things which then go through some sort of process of the subconscious before they emerge in my work. I have a language and everything I do becomes part of that language.

*Sheila Keenan and Denise Payne*
Martine Troy’s Parrot Teapot was the winner of the Cash Chapman Memorial Award at the 1991 Bathurst Art Purchase. It exemplifies a love of vibrancy, fun and nature that runs throughout much of her work.

Martine would often work in themes and completed series of usable domestic pieces and utensils. She made a large range of works featuring colourful birds, animals, fish, flowers, faces and human figures. Her pet poodle featured in a series of platters on a bright yellow background. One judge at the time of the Art Prize was full of praise for Martine and remarked that her ability to draw on a curved surface appeared similar to that of Picasso.

As a child Martine showed a constant creative urge, always drawing, painting, making clay objects, writing and sewing. She wrote and illustrated a children’s book, remade Op Shop clothes into fashionable wearables and was a passionate gardener.

Martine completed a Graduate Diploma Art and Art Teaching, followed by Diploma of Creative Arts at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga and Bathurst. She continued her ceramics whilst teaching at Lithgow High and lecturing in Art Teaching at CSU. Martine has works in private collections and galleries in Australia, Mexico and United States.

Poor health has prevented Martine from continuing a productive life as an artist of extraordinary talent. Shirley Troy, a fellow artist and former colleague of Martine’s at Charles Sturt University says, ‘Martine could see possibilities to create all her life, and was ever ready to share her skills and her ideas.’

Margaret Marshall
Moira studied Functional Pottery at Armidale TAFE in 1984 followed by several courses at Wollongong and Bega TAFE. She exhibited in various shows from 1985 to 2000. Most of her work appears to have been shown on the far South Coast of NSW, at Bega, Cobargo and Canberra.

Moira’s ceramic vase titled *Where I live - Spirit House* appears to be a hand coiled pot. Ambiguous symbols of animals and figures pattern the vase, like a pirate’s treasure map it even has directions scrawled in to it. Inscribed on the work are the following words ‘Turn left at Cobargo bridge, wander now up the mountain. Turn left at Old Creek Road. Left again.’ These mysterious though explicit directions may be describing how to find the Spirit House, appearing to suggest where Turnbull was living at the time the vase was made.

Unfortunately Moira Turnbull has been difficult to track down, adding to the mystery surrounding this beautiful treasure from the BRAG collection.

Please inform a member of staff at Bathurst Regional Art Gallery any information about Moira Turnbull.

Barbara Holmes
In the late 70s, after graduating in Science from Melbourne University, Prue Venables travelled to the UK to study music. However, after attending classes in pottery, she redirected her life and says 'when I first touched clay, I was instantly diverted from science and music into a world of making. I had no choice but to follow this path'. After studying and working in a pottery studio in London she returned to Australia in 1989. In London her work was characterised by highly decorative surfaces, back home in Australia a growing interest in simplifying forms and reducing their dependence on surface decoration led to a radical change in her work; 'I made the decision to move away from the soft fragility of earthenware to the clear, hard, ringing translucency of porcelain. New approaches to making emerged...New forms developed.'

The simple forms of the vessels in both Two Jugs and Three Jugs belie the technical complexity and painstaking work required to achieve their elegance and delicacy. For Three Jugs the vessels were thrown without a base and after some drying but while still soft (timing is important here and depends on the climate) pushed into shape. A base is cut out using the jug to measure and then carefully joined. The handles are shaped when soft and attached when leather hard/nearly dry. Throughout this process the piece is smoothed and excess trimmed. After drying the jugs are glazed and, in this case, a fine cobalt blue line painted to accentuate the changing planes. They are packed into a gas kiln for firing to 1300 degrees centigrade, under reduction (reducing the amount of oxygen).

The same can be said for Two Jugs, the forms look simple and refined but the making process is laborious and complex. The forms were thrown initially on the wheel and then reshaped while still soft. The bases are added when leather hard. The pieces are reduction fired (reducing the amount of oxygen) in a gas kiln. For every 20-30 pots Prue Venables makes, 10 will be of acceptable quality.

Prue Venables is interested in placing her pieces together as a way of creating dialogue and narrative and perhaps also as a reference to her earlier interest in the pauses, rhythms and harmonies of music. 'I enjoy the way in which objects alter the space around them, at times enlivening, at times bringing a sense of stillness.'

The initial influences on her work come from her childhood. She has recalled being thrilled by an illicit play with her mother’s small opaque white glass jar of cold cream and the reverence and ceremony of her grandmother’s bone china tea service. The jugs may start as functional objects, their clear lines reminiscent of industrial production, but the slightly askew forms create sculptural objects that appear both traditional and modern. The fall of light and luminescence provided by the porcelain and glaze give the objects great calmness and purity. The jugs transcend their ordinary everyday use to become ritual objects for contemplation. In 1995 Kevin White of Pottery in Australia wrote that ‘Prue Venables’ pots have always been finely made, and like their maker serious and gentle.’

In the same year, Prue Venables won the prestigious Fletcher Challenge Ceramic Award in New Zealand with a group of three jugs. The judge, Takeshi Yasuda, noted ‘such simplicity is hard to achieve, free expression is much easier. They are very quiet, they don’t shout out loud, but once you notice them, they are very difficult to ignore.’

Kathleen Oakes
Peter Wilson has two works that entered the collection at Bathurst Regional Art Gallery through the Bathurst Art Purchase Prize in 1991 and 1993 respectively. Jar won the Cash Chapman Memorial Award in 1991 and two years later Earthwork II was selected for purchase. In the early 1990s Peter Wilson was vigorously experimenting with new textures and forms and developing some of his signature glazes. He described it as a period of prolific growth and production.

Peter explained that in 1991 when Jar was made that he ‘had been using iron and chun glazes since 1983 and loved the variety of glaze qualities that you could get, ie; purples through to light blue to white are possible depending on the variables as mentioned, thickness of application, temperature and kiln atmosphere are all variables as well as the ingredients of the two glazes, the tenmoku and chun so controlling these variables was crucial to consistent results but even then, variability was always part of the process- akin to gambling!’ Tenmoku is stoneware glaze which is deeply stained by iron oxide. Tenmokus are usually dark brown and black with some rust patches, but occasionally they are yellow, green or purple ‘Chun’ or Jun is pale blue, opalescent stoneware glaze named after a town in northern China where it was first made in the 11th century. The Jun glaze is related to a celadon glaze, being a feldspathic glaze on a buff body and fired in a reducing atmosphere.

Two years later, Peter Wilson entered the Bathurst Art Purchase Prize successfully again with Earthworks II. He reflected on this period saying ‘At that time, I was studying with Owen Rye, a major ceramic artist at Monash University and had met many other ceramic artists all working with him, so there were many new ideas to which I was exposed, wood firing, raku, and ideas from many sources. I also had commenced working with John Olsen who was living at Rydal and we had begun a collaboration which lasted 7 years. There were lots of ideas, discussions, the influence of the Spanish painters, Miro, Picasso, Tapies, and this impacted on the work we produced for several exhibitions of work. Olsen had spent several years in Spain painting with his family courtesy of a private benefactor in the 1950s and this had been a huge influence on his work. It was also to influence a subsequent body of work that I produced using raku techniques, the Earthworks series-some of the best work aesthetically that I have done.’

Peter continues his ceramics creations and his learning experiences today. He is a revered asset and friend to many within the Australian ceramics community. He lives locally and recently had a solo exhibition here at Bathurst Regional Art Gallery.

Susanne Griffith