



Elizabeth Smith (McIntosh) 2006 - 2007 had the rewarding opportunity to be Director (2006 - 2007) in a virtually new gallery and took the Gallery into cyber space. The increase in attendances at the new gallery is testimony to the community's appreciation of the wonderful facility. Tamworth being chosen to launch the National Gallery of Australia's, 25 Years Anniversary Touring exhibition Ocean to Outback was confirmation of the community and Council's achievement in building a worthy asset for the arts in regional New South Wales. Having the Director of the NGA Ron Radford in Tamworth was "quite special" and a big success for the gallery and community.

The new building engenders community pride and confirms the value placed by



Ocean to Outback installation view Gallery 2 2007. Image Lou Farina

visiting regularly especially high school art teachers and their students. The arts gives soul to the community, creates a broader outlook on things, and grows tolerance.

There is a special feeling evoked by the purpose built, professionally run Gallery, offering the best for the people of the Tamworth region and its' visitors because whether in the city or the country, we are considered worthy of the best. The enthusiasm of those involved in bringing the arts to the community is due to their belief in the importance of art for everyone. The Tamworth Regional Art Gallery forms part of our identity, offering a space for the soul of our community to reconcile with its creative side in a peaceful atmosphere.



Proximity Instal 2008 Image PDB

Suzanne Holloway
Interviewer and Writer

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Archibald Prize 2006 installation view Gallery 1 Image Elizabeth Smith (McIntosh)

Council and the people of Tamworth region on the arts. The Gallery's own website has been a huge asset for visitors and researchers. The educational opportunities the Gallery offers are unique and ever changing. The community is now more embracing of the arts than it used to be. Unusual exhibitions, for instance panel beaters art and a footy exhibition held in the 80s, *It's a Guitar shaped world* and more recently *Dream On* in 2006 and *Proximity* in 2008 helped de-mystify the Gallery.

The Gallery plays an important educational role and schools are very tuned in,



Dream On 2006 school visit. Image PDB

The Tamworth Regional Art Gallery's history is part of Tamworth's history. The gift of John Salvana in 1919 marked the beginning of the Gallery's permanent collection. Further gifts of both art and time by devoted art lovers within our community has led to this wonderful development and the proper care of a unique permanent collection.



A brief history of Tamworth Regional Gallery

Tamworth Regional Gallery first opened on Sunday 1 June 1919 as the Tamworth Art Salon and Art Library. The gallery was established from a gift of 76 artworks and art reference books by artist and collector John Salvana. The first Gallery was housed in the Tamworth Municipal Council Chambers which is now the Community Centre in Darling Street.



The circumstances surrounding Salvana's gift to Tamworth are somewhat romantic. Salvana had thought of providing a collection of art works as an educational resource years beforehand and he finally decided to act on his idea. Salvana wrote to 5 or 6 councils in New South Wales and he selected the Council who replied promptly and who agreed to his request for adequate display and storage facilities.

Salvana remembered his early days, when he first heard the call to pursue the thorny track of art. His nature responded to the beauty around him, but the handicap was heavy. Sydney was a long way off. There were no opportunities at Wellington or Mudgee for the study of art – no picture gallery, no art atmosphere. The bush was his only school.

It became a dream of his to provide a rural centre with an Art Gallery, so that young children and those with an interest in art may be encouraged to study art and be able to learn from viewing original artworks first hand. Salvana included in the collection artworks that were not finished pieces so the students may have a better understanding of the construction of a painting or drawing. Salvana also thought that it was important for the public to develop an appreciation of Australian artists and their work. In making his gift Salvana also made conditions which included the care, storage and preservation of the artworks for future generations. This would be the responsibility of Tamworth Municipal Council with the assistance of two artists. The catalogue produced with practical instructions was sold at 1 shilling; with the proceeds from the sale of the catalogue assisting in the cost of the care and maintenance of the Collection. The Salvana Collection consists of paintings, works on paper, plaster reliefs and books.

In 1961 The Burdekin Bequest, a substantial collection of 19th and early 20th century Australian and European works was left to the people of the Tamworth region by Mrs Margaretta Emilie Burdekin of *Plumthorpe* Barraba upon her death in 1958, and her husband Mr Norman Weeks Burdekin who had predeceased her in 1947. Norman Weeks Burdekin had lived in England from the late 1880s; he married his first wife Margaret Gant on 28 April 1890 at Bournemouth Hampshire. The Burdekins were art lovers who had developed and built their collection over many years, amongst their friends and associates were Australian artists including Hans Heysen, Will Ashton, Sydney Long and John Salvana who would visit *Plumthorpe* to draw and paint.



The V Guy Kable Memorial Arts Building was opened by His Excellency the Governor of New South Wales Sir Eric Woodward K.C.M.G., C.B., C.B.E. on Friday 16 June 1961. The first exhibition in the new Gallery was selected works from the Burdekin Bequest, four landscapes by John Salvana from the 1919 Collection, *After the Storm* by Ernest – Gaston Amas and Carl Plate's *Young Parrot Alarmed* the winner of the 1960 Tamworth City Council's 100 guinea prize. This exhibition was followed by an exhibition of 26 paintings from the Australian War Memorial featuring works by George Lambert, Ivor Hele, W. A. Dargie, Harold Herbert, Fred Leist and Arthur Streeton. The works came from First and Second World Wars and the Korea War. The exhibition finished at the end of October. This was followed by 30 selected works from the Art Gallery of New South Wales that would exhibit until the beginning of 1962. An interesting feature was the transportation of these exhibitions in crates via goods train. Visitors to the Gallery were encouraged to sign the visitors Book which was located on the Library Counter.

The Regan Silverware Collection of early Australian silver was gifted to the gallery in 1963 by Mr and Mrs Lyttleton – Taylor. Several other smaller collections and individual works were also gifted including the Miss Perry, W. J. H. Treloar, Ivan Maunder and Greenfell Collections.

Over its 90 year history the Gallery collection has developed into a diverse and varied collection with works ranging from wood carving through to delicate textiles. 1960 saw the start of the Tamworth City Council Acquisitive Art Prize. The winning entries in each annual prize would be acquired into the collection. The Prize was short lived and was eventually taken on by the Tamworth Art and Craft Society. In 1974 the judge's comments brought about a change in the focus of the prize from painting to Fibre. In 1981 Tamworth Art and Craft Society donated a collection of fibre textile works to the gallery and a policy for the development of a Fibre textile collection was initiated. A particular strength of regional galleries is their specialisation in a particular media thus ensuring that they can acquire works systematically and develop collections of significance. Since 1975 the Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial has developed from a survey exhibition showing the most innovative fibre textile works from the previous two years to a curated exhibition recognised nationally as Australia's pre-eminent textile exhibition.



Image Lou Farina

In 2000 the gallery added the Utopia Collection, a bequest consisting of historically and culturally important silk batiks textiles, works on paper, ceramics, and wooden carved ceremonial figures from the Utopia Cultural Centre in Central Australia.

The gallery closed its door on 29 August 2004 in the Guy Kable Building and reopened on 10 December 2004 in Peel Street.

Celebrating 90yrs

Tamworth Regional Gallery

1919 to 2009

exhibition 13 June to 2 August 2009



Image on front John Salvana Landscape Boggabri NSW (detail) oil on wood 200mm x 325mm undated. Image Lou Farina

Celebrating 90 yrs of the Collection

This is a significant milestone for the Gallery, one of which Tamworth Regional Council and the community can be proud. Since opening its doors 90 years ago much has changed. The Gallery has moved venues and the collection has grown and diversified, but John Salvana’s original aim when he generously gifted his collection to the City of Tamworth in 1919 remains; that the people of Tamworth and the surrounding region continue to enjoy the benefits of having access to a range of quality artworks.

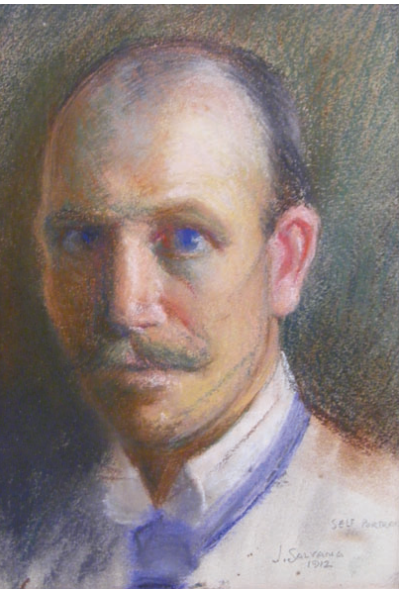
I would like to thank Suzanne Holloway who has spent many hours interviewing various members of the community gathering information for this publication, to all the Volunteers and Friends of the Gallery who assisted her and who, without their continued support the Gallery would not be able to operate, and in particular to Pam Brown, Public Programs Coordinator who has played a pivotal role in the development and realisation of this exhibition.

I would also like to acknowledge Tamworth Regional Council for their ongoing commitment to the development of Arts and Culture in our region through the continued support of the Tamworth Regional Gallery.

Sandra McMahon
Director
June 2009

John Salvana
B 1871 Ironbark NSW – 1956 Wyong NSW Australia

Painter: Studied Royal Art Society School Sydney 1897, Frank Calderon’s Art School London 1912 – 1913. Salvana worked as an art decorator and graphic artist in Sydney and as a theatre artist and sign writer in Brisbane. He was Honourable secretary of the Queensland Art Society 1916 – 1918. A Fellow of the RAS of NSW, Vice President Australian Art Society Sydney 1944 – 1950



John Salvana Self portrait 1912 pastel on paper - Image PDB

Awards: Reeves Prize Sydney 1936, NRMA Prize Sydney 1947, Albury Prize 1949. Rep AGNSW, QAG, Regional Galleries Armidale, Manly, Newcastle and Tamworth.

John Salvana was born John Salvana Stevens son of Italian born miner John Baptiste Salvana and Elizabeth Stevens 22 September 1871 at Ironbark now known as Stuart Town in the Wellington region of NSW. His father John Baptiste Salvana was born at Piedmont Italy c 1837, he arrived in NSW in 1859. From Salvana’s own account of his life the family lived at Wellington and Mudgee and things were hard for the small family. Salvana Sr would have been mining gold. A rush started at Ironbark in the early 1870s the claims tended to be individually worked or by small groups. The settlement was named Ironbark after the trees in the area and is the Ironbark mentioned in Banjo Paterson’s well-known poem *The Man from Ironbark*.

At a Smoke Night for the Art Society of NSW in September 1897, it was reported: 'But to draw lightning sketches, with all the disadvantages of brown paper, in front of a gallery of critics, and gain not only a favourable verdict but a storm of cheers - that is something of which to be proud; and so Messrs A.R. Coffey, Ferry, Spence, Leon Pole, G. Taylor, and Salvana are to be complimented on that often mentioned but seldom realised event - an artistic success' (Sydney Morning Herald 13 September 1897, 3).

John Salvana died 12 February 1956 Wyong NSW



Image to right Interior View Tamworth Art Salon and Art Library 1919

Tamworth Regional Gallery: A Community Perspective

The Tamworth Art Gallery Association was formed in December 1979 at the instigation of Winsome Busby. Winsome had been looking after the Gallery in a voluntary capacity, with assistance from library staff, for several years since the opening of the Guy Kable Building in 1961.

Present on 20 December 1979, were “Mesdames W. Busby, R. Blakely, M. Hardie, J. Dabron, Messrs B. Dowe, B. Graham and Fran West.” The Committee’s three objectives were to, “foster the practice and appreciation of Art in the City of Tamworth and surrounding community; to acquire art-works for public display, and co-ordination of all the Arts” to work towards the establishment of a Cultural Centre in Tamworth. This led to the renaming of the organisation to Tamworth Art and Gallery Association. The acoustics within the Guy Kable building proved to be an advantage with fundraising musical events. It was acknowledge that professional staffing of the Gallery was required to ensure its future. The contribution made by Winsome Busby was gratefully acknowledged.

The Association and volunteers were pivotal to the continued running and growth of the gallery. Their belief in the value of art for all members of the community fuelled the Association’s ambitions. Volunteers’ time was put to good practical use such as catering for fundraising suppers, hanging exhibitions, patching and painting walls, in addition to being on call to mind the gallery when open. The contribution made by volunteers has been described by past and present directors and Council staff, as totally invaluable and after thirty years many original members are still here!

A review of the gallery’s premises and conservation was undertaken by Michael Goss, Executive Officer of Regional Galleries NSW at the invitation of Tamworth Art and Gallery Association in 1980. Council became more pro-active after departmental reviews and agreed to increased operational budgets. State Government Grants became available for establishing regional galleries but in order to be eligible certain requirements needed to be met.

In March 1981, James Giddey became the first employed Curator, then later given the title as Director, of the Tamworth Art Gallery. James recalls being quite horrified by the Guy Kable building’s cold grey walls, dark grey ceiling, and windows covered with green blinds and the fluorescent lighting. The lighting was potentially damaging to paintings and led to the necessity of works from the permanent collection being stored downstairs in what became known as the dungeon, where if left unchecked everything would soon be covered in dust. Under the direction of James Giddey the necessary changes to the gallery were implemented. He began by cordoning off an office area, building a storeroom, arranging installation of air conditioning, changing lighting and repainting in a more appropriate colour scheme. New window coverings were bought as were conservation desks. Cataloguing the collection and the writing of gallery policies and business plans all became part of the busy Director’s job description. This led to big improvements and exciting new programs with touring exhibitions being funded and held in the Tamworth Gallery.



Gallery View Y Guy Kable Building pre 1980. Gallery tile copy

To encourage more community participation within the Gallery, groups such as the Lions Club and Rotary were invited to come for drinks and hold their meetings there. James remembers Ian Sinclair arriving one evening and calling him out to sort out which badge from his pocketful he should put on before entering. Many volunteers have fond memories of catering for such events. The little kitchen sink area was used for a range of activities and became a useful spot for preparing food for suppers.

In 1989 Michael Rolfe became Director and very much enjoyed the community support and involvement. His experience could only have been enhanced by the benefit of additional staff. Michael was the Director for nine years. He was disappointed at times that Council didn’t recognise the extent of the gallery’s potential. Creativity is part of our makeup, and exhibitions, collections, workshops and public programs enhance a community’s vitality. Bringing art out of the gallery with the Blueboy exhibition by Maria Kozic was an exciting highlight and very different for Tamworth. The inflatable artwork was displayed on the Post Office tower, and the opening of the exhibition was held on the roof of Ray Walsh House.

The popular series of It’s a Guitar Shaped World exhibitions curated by Reg Lynch started in conjunction with the Country Music Festival in 1995 with the exhibitions continuing through until 2000. During these years the Art Gallery Association also took part in the annual Country Music Cavalcade.



Maria Kozic Blueboy 1990 inflatable Tamworth c 1994 image Graeme Michel

Brian Langer took over as Director from Michael in 1998.. Brian was at the helm before, during and after the move to the new gallery building. In 2001 research and design consultations for a new gallery building officially began. Meg Larkin, then Manager Community and Cultural Services with Tamworth Regional Council, described the process as extremely exciting and satisfying work. The architects understood the functional needs for storage, mechanisms for installations, large friendly spaces for display, lighting and atmosphere. Community consultation enabled expectations to be met and the resultant pride in the new building brings a balance to Tamworth between sport and the arts. The new building’s achievement indicates the gallery and its supporters are truly connected with the desires of the community. The design and construction team were delighted to bring the project in on time and budget.



Tamworth Art and Gallery Association Float 1997 Tamworth Country Music Cavalcade

Brian commented that Tamworth now has a major regional Gallery with workshop and meeting facilities catering for both the present and future needs for the next 50 to 70 years. Artists enjoy exhibiting in the new space. Due to better finance, expertise in management and curatorial skills, the Gallery now operates on a professional level. For this reason, Friends of the Gallery’s role has now changed. They were pivotal in getting the Gallery started by encouraging Council to fund professional staff. This enabled receipt of government grants for touring exhibitions. They can now concentrate on raising funds for acquisitions and helping in the many other supportive roles.

The Marius Street Gallery closed to the public with a Farewell Party on 29 August 2004. The big move to Peel Street involved the help of many Friends and Volunteers. Rediscovering long lost treasures and administrative documents was both interesting and time consuming. Excitement and satisfaction in packing the beautiful old paintings and other artworks for their new large and clean purpose built storage room was very rewarding. Wallowing in bubble wrap and sticky tape was a unique opportunity to be hands on. To touch the textiles, turn them over, literally dismantle the collection then see it being unwrapped and given its new home was a valuable time for many faithful Friends and Volunteers.

Helping assemble exhibitions meant many Volunteers learned the finer points of hanging pictures. The hands on experience of hanging and dismantling exhibitions enabled a unique intimacy with the works to develop. The trick to make sure paintings are hung straight is measuring and maths. While many enjoyed the intimacy of the Guy Kable building, after experiencing the new building, they have realised how disadvantageous it had become, due to the growth of the collection and larger touring exhibitions.



a matter of time 16th TFT Biennial installation view Gallery 1 2004 Image Lou Farina

The new Gallery opened to the public on 10 December 2004 with exhibitions in two gallery spaces, *a matter of time: 16th Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial* and *Collection Treasures* selected works from the Burdekin Collection. Since 1982 the Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial has developed under each Director to become a touring national survey exhibition of the work of Australia’s most progressive and innovative textile artists.

Volunteers say the front desk is a lovely place to spend time helping out and meeting people. If you are new to Tamworth, it’s a wonderful opportunity to ease yourself into the community. You don’t need any qualifications, artistic talent or be an extrovert. The desire of gallery staff and volunteers to enhance your visit with information, friendly conversation, or privacy to enjoy your own meditations, is understood. The new Gallery offers peaceful stimulation of the mind and spirit, a refuge right in the middle of the city. The quality of art, range of ever changing exhibitions, promotion of local and new artists in both workshops on offer and exhibition opportunities, invites everyone to enjoy everything the facility has to offer. There are no turnstiles at the top of the stairs, the gallery is free, and everyone is welcome to come and enjoy.



John Peart Paintings 1964 - 2004 installation view Gallery 1 2005. Image Lou Farina

The inclusion of major touring exhibitions such as *John Peart Paintings 1964-2004*, *the Archibald Prize 2006* and *Ocean to Outback in 2007* attracted new visitors and larger crowds to the Gallery; however there is always opportunity to enjoy complete serenity. On visiting the Archibald in Sydney, a regular Gallery user remarked how peaceful it was the second time round in Tamworth, without the big city crowd.