

THE NOLAN COLLECTION HAS A NEW DEDICATED HOME AT CANBERRA MUSEUM AND GALLERY

Canberra Museum and Gallery
11 September 2019

A new dedicated gallery for **The Nolan Collection** was launched by ACT Minister for the Arts, Creative Industries and Cultural Events Gordon Ramsay on Thursday 8 August at Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG). The gallery provides a welcoming new space for the display of Sidney Nolan's important gift of major works to the people of Australia dating from the most critical period of his artistic life from 1945 to 1953.

The extra space allows for a new regular program of temporary exhibitions and events that will complement the Nolan Collection.

With a new curatorial approach to the works, visitors are introduced to the young Sidney Nolan who went from St Kilda lad to an internationally renowned artist over the time period of the collection on display.

Drawing from original letters and documents, visitors will be able to follow Nolan's personal and creative journey during the making of the *Ned Kelly* series in 1945.

The series begins with smaller experimental works as Nolan starts to refine his idea of the abstracted square mask with the narrow slit for eyes that has now become one of the most recognised images in Australian cultural life.

But it is not all about the *Ned Kelly* series. Nolan personally included two iconic St Kilda paintings reflecting memories of his childhood in the waterfront park and fun fair and a group of five works from his travels in the dry desert landscapes of Queensland and the outback of Australia from 1947 through to 1953.

In no other gallery in Australia are visitors able to see such a complete grouping of works from this artist on display together.

New lighting, glazing and conservation work has revealed the fresh brightness of the paintings. Recent awareness of Nolan's innovative use of enamel paints in this period can be fully appreciated, as these works on display – unlike most of his other paintings from the same period held elsewhere – have never been varnished.

Threads and Connections is the first in a series of complementary exhibitions that includes additional Nolan works held at CMAG and shows how the artist drew themes from his early work into his later practice.

MEDIA RELEASE

The gallery refit is the first stage of a project to upgrade facilities at CMAG with additional capital funding of \$350 000 from the ACT Government. The Australian Government has supported CMAG to carry out the conservation, cleaning and re-glazing of the works. Providing an insight into the conservation challenges associated with Nolan's work, on Thursday 12 September, CMAG will host Dr Paula Dredge, Head of Conservation at the Art Gallery of NSW. With direct access to Nolan's actual paint tins recovered from his Sydney studio, Paula has been able to shed new light on just how ground breaking his practice was at this time.

CMAG also launched the *Young Nolan Project* with an inaugural display of the creative works of Year 1 students from Ainslie Primary School. Their work is the result of a learning program at CMAG developed by Kay Whitney, Nolan Access and Learning Officer. These programs, offered to hundreds of students each year, allow access to the work of Sidney Nolan through exploration in the gallery and practical art-making sessions in the CMAG studio.

Educational groups are encouraged to pick up a children's trail guide from the front desk which includes translations in Mandarin. There will be a lunchtime talk in Mandarin on Thursday 3 October.

CMAG also proudly presents a brand-new acquisition of a work by Sidney Nolan for the collection. *Rite of Spring* is a design for Nolan's commission for The Royal Ballet at Covent Garden in 1962. Nolan had an active artistic interest in the performing arts throughout his whole career. The acquisition reflects CMAG's location within a cultural precinct of performing and visual arts. The launch of the new gallery space is an opportunity to grow the Nolan collection through donations and cultural gifts from collectors who may wish to see their works join a dedicated collection of the artist's work.

CMAG proudly recognises and celebrates the enduring legacy of Sidney Nolan's magnificent gift to the people of Australia and the new space is a must-see destination within Canberra's rich cultural offerings.
CMAG manages the Nolan Collection on behalf of the Australian Government.

Cnr London Circuit and Civic Square Canberra City Monday – Saturday 10 – 5pm
Entry is Free

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