

# **HANS AND NORA HEYSEN TWO GENERATIONS OF AUSTRALIA ART**

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*Hans and Nora Heysen: Two Generations of Australian Art* brings together the work of Hans and Nora Heysen, father and daughter artists whose work spanned more than a century during which Australia and the world underwent numerous social, political and artistic transformations. In many ways, theirs is an archetypal twentieth-century Australian story of migration, family life, wartime separation and a deep connection to place. Both artists travelled in Europe and their work demonstrates both international influences and engagement with their Australian contemporaries. While Hans devoted his mature practice predominantly to the depiction of landscape, Nora became renowned as a portraitist and painter of still life.

Hans and Nora's lifelong written correspondence offers rare insight into a mutually loving and supportive relationship, as well as into their working methods, inspirations and thoughts on the key artistic debates of their time. Their shared reverence for the natural world, manifested in Hans's evocative landscapes and Nora's vibrant flower paintings, strengthened their bond. In 1936, Hans wrote to his daughter of what he perceived as the key to a fulfilling life and a source of sustenance in difficult times: 'A great love for Nature – who will ever unfold all her secrets in any one of our lives'.

# Hans Heysen

Born in Hamburg, Germany in 1877 to Maria and Louis Heysen, Hans Heysen and his family moved to Australia in 1884. In 1892, aged fourteen, Hans left school and was apprenticed to a sawmilling and hardware business near Adelaide, buying art materials with his wages and drawing in his spare time. In 1893, he enrolled in James Ashton's Norwood Art School, where he was identified as an unusually talented pupil. A four-year scholarship in Europe followed, initiating a period of profound artistic growth. Within a year of returning to Australia, he set up his own studio, won the Wynne Prize and married Selma (Sallie) Bartels.

Hans's comfort and success in later life were hard-earned: he had overcome the traditional barriers of an aspirant artist lacking funds and connections, and also the burden of anti-German prejudice, which saw him watched by police during the First World War and cost him important professional opportunities. That he was able to regain his place among the most-loved Australian artists of the twentieth century is testament to both the quality of his work and his personal charisma. He won numerous prizes and awards and was knighted in 1959. Hans painted and drew almost until his death in 1968, at the age of ninety.

# Nora Heysen

Nora Heysen was born in 1911, the fourth of Sallie and Hans's eight children, and the only one to pursue an artistic career. Although not formally taught by her father, Nora observed his work, accompanying him on painting trips from an early age. In 1926, at age fourteen, she enrolled at the North Adelaide School of Fine Arts, studying full-time for five years. After selling her first painting in 1930, Nora began painting in a converted shed at the family home and over the next three years her works were acquired by national collections around Australia. From 1934 until 1938 she studied in Europe, developing a looser, more high-keyed style. She then moved to Sydney, which remained her home for the rest of her life.

In 1938 Nora was the first woman to be awarded the Archibald Prize for portraiture and subsequently became the first female official war artist, serving from late 1943 to early 1946. Although Nora fell into obscurity from the 1950s, she continued to paint and draw until her death in 2003 at the age of ninety-two. *Hans and Nora Heysen: Two Generations of Australian Art* is the most extensive exhibition of her works to date and demonstrates her profound and affecting mingling of sensitivity and strength.

Although his family had settled in Adelaide, from a young age Hans visited Hahndorf, a small town in the Adelaide Hills that was an important centre of German immigration. Hahndorf's Lutheran churches, German businesses, brilliant sunshine and abundant nature were at once familiar and seductively exotic. Following their marriage, Hans and Sallie Heysen moved to a rented cottage in Billygoat Lane, Hahndorf. In the same year, an enormously successful Melbourne exhibition of Hans's work was opened by the prime minister, Alfred Deakin; this was an important milestone for Hans on the path to widespread recognition and financial stability.

In 1912, the year after Nora's birth, and following another successful Melbourne exhibition, the family purchased The Cedars, an expansive country property in Hahndorf. The house was furnished in the Arts and Crafts style, in keeping with the 'truth to nature' doctrine that permeated Hans's, and later Nora's, art. In England, Hans acquired decorative arts from Morris & Co. and furniture in the style of Liberty and Co. Later, he collected Chinese and Japanese textiles, which featured as backdrops in both his and Nora's still-life painting. The much-loved home and Hahndorf landscape provided comfort in times of isolation and a secure base from which both artists could branch out with assurance.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Settler's cottage

1899

oil on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne

This rare example of Hans's early work dates to his student days, when he was a member of the Adelaide Easel Club. It was during this time that Hans began travelling regularly to Hahndorf. The region's rustic architecture and abundant nature became favoured subjects. Hahndorf was settled in 1839 by German Lutherans fleeing religious persecution, and it retains a strong European character to this day, in its architecture and culture, and in the many introduced trees and flowers which grow around the town.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## On Prescott's farm

1899

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
M. J. M. Carter AO Collection, 2004

20044P24

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The water pump

1899

oil on canvas

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

This early work dates to before Hans's first trip to Europe; however, the influence of international art is already becoming clear. The cherry blossoms that occupy the centre of the composition were a major subject for Japanese artists, and for European Impressionists and Post-impressionists who studied Japanese art closely after it was imported to Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. Hans had a particular enthusiasm for the work of Vincent van Gogh, who painted cherry blossoms numerous times over the course of his career. The image of the rusted pump is an early example of a lifelong interest in rural vernacular subjects.



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Windmill on the Hill, Hahndorf

1899

oil on cardboard

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Paech Homestead

1899

oil on composition board

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20132P4

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Bronzewings and saplings

1921

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
South Australian Government Grant, 1937

0.924

Arguably Hans's most spectacular watercolour produced in 1921, *Bronzewings and saplings* was the culmination of several years' musing on the subject of turkeys, with Hans exhibiting at least five finished turkey subjects in his 1915 exhibition in Melbourne. Hans wrote to Lionel Lindsay: 'The picture is treated in the manner of a mosaic – & each mass of colour is laid down freshly with a crisp edge', and later: '... quite a lot of trouble and study went into the making of it. In fact I can easily say it is the most complicated piece of design I have tackled'.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The coming home

1904

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1904

5733

*The coming home* is both a depiction of rural life, and a highly symbolic work, reflecting Hans's love of nature and his profound sense of attachment to place. Bathed in soft golden light, this gentle image of cattle returning at the end of the day evokes the European pastoral tradition in art. Painted shortly after his return to Australia after a period of study in Europe, the work suggests the influence of the French Barbizon School, and of British artist John Constable, whose works provided a lifelong source of inspiration.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The promenade

1953

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased, 1959

NGA 59.22

A continuation of a subject first exhibited in watercolour in *Bronzewings and Saplings*, 1921, Hans returned many years later to this oil version. In April 1953, he wrote to Nora, then staying in New Guinea: 'I have just completed the oil I started about 20 years ago of *Bronzewings and Saplings* – somehow I have a feeling it's turned out trumps. Full of sun and movement. Something to have ready for an exhibition'.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The toilers

1920

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1969

695G99

*The toilers*, which was awarded the 1920 Wynne Prize, was among Hans's favourite works and remained in his possession until his death, to be bequeathed to the Art Gallery of South Australia thereafter. It was reportedly inspired by an early morning visit that Hans had made to Hahndorf to collect the post. The ploughman had lifted one of the horse-drawn harrows and was cleaning earth from the tines of the implement, his back outlined by light. The two draught horses, Polly and Jack, were favourite subjects for Hans's studies and appeared many times across several media.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Sewing (the artist's wife)

1913

oil on canvas

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

In *Sewing (the artist's wife)*, Hans depicted Sallie seated at a window, picturesquely immersed in her work at the sewing machine. Sallie was pregnant at the time, occupied in making baby clothes, as she did for all their children. Her blue dress and the light radiating through the window lend the work some of the qualities of a composition by the seventeenth-century Dutch artist Vermeer. Heysen admired Vermeer's work and reproductions of his paintings *Girl with a pearl earring* and *A painter in his studio* decorated the dining room and studio walls of The Cedars.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Cedars interior

c. 1930

oil on canvas on composition board

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

Even before she had seen it ‘in the flesh’, the colours and compositions of seventeenth-century Dutch painting manifested strongly in Nora’s work. An unfinished *Interior*, c. 1930, painted at The Cedars prior to Nora’s departure for London in 1934, shows a reproduction of Johannes Vermeer’s *Girl with a pearl earring*, 1665. Vermeer’s contrasting palette of rich blues and earthy browns, as well his choice of delicately composed and dramatically illuminated vernacular subjects, was to provide a major prototype for Nora’s early painting. The interior of The Cedars remains largely unchanged to this day.



**New Home, Massachusetts**  
manufacturer  
United States 1877–1960

**(Sallie's sewing machine)**  
c. 1900  
wood, iron, brass

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The Cedars, Hahndorf

1966

pencil and coloured crayon

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

In 1912, the year after Nora's birth and following another successful exhibition in Melbourne, the family purchased The Cedars, an expansive country property in Hahndorf. Named for the monumental Himalayan cedar trees that sheltered the house, the family went about renovating the property and furnishing it in the Arts and Crafts style. It was to become a hub for artistic and cultural life over the next fifty years, hosting visits from world-famous names such as actor Sir Laurence Olivier, opera singer Dame Nellie Melba, ballet dancer Anna Pavlova, French mime Marcel Marceau and mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary.

Left to right

## **Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

### **My three sisters**

1928

pencil

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of the artist, 1990

143.1990

This engaging triple portrait depicts Josephine, Freya and Deirdre Heysen, sketched together in the family home just as Nora was beginning her artistic training. Nora's siblings all modelled for her at some time in their lives and the family resemblance is striking. Tragically, Josephine, pictured at the top of the composition, would die very young, following the complicated birth of her first and only child, also called Josephine, but known to the family as Jill. Hans and Sallie went on to adopt Jill and she too was raised at The Cedars.

## **Hans Heysen**

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

### **Mother's hands**

c. 1910–1920s

charcoal and chalk

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

...continued overleaf

# **Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

## **My sister's feet**

c. 1926

pencil

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

# **Hans Heysen**

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## **Study of Nora Heysen as a child**

c. 1920

charcoal

National Library of Australia, Canberra

PIC/4010

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Sallie (the artist's wife)

1913

charcoal

Private collection, Adelaide

In 1903, the year after he returned from Europe, Hans married Selma (Sallie) Bartels. While Hans lacked family connections, Sallie's father was the mayor of Adelaide and she socialised widely with the city's most fashionable and prosperous families, many of whom would later become key patrons for Hans. While Hans possessed talent and artistic ambition, Sallie's practical abilities as a hostess and maker of introductions, as well as her understanding of business and well-informed interest in art, undoubtedly enabled his success. This sensitive and beautiful drawing was made the year after the young family moved to The Cedars.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Lilian in bath

1912

watercolour

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

Lilian Heysen, depicted as a toddler in this delightfully tender domestic scene, was the youngest of the Heysens's daughters. While the adult figure is often assumed to be a nanny or nursemaid, it was in fact Sallie Heysen who, despite the family's social and financial ascendancy, maintained an active role in her children's day-to-day care. Tragically, in 1925, Lilian died suddenly of meningitis, just before her sixteenth birthday. The family was heartbroken and Hans wrote to his friend Lionel Lindsay that her death 'left us with no hearts to feel with. Even Nature could arouse no response'.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Hans Heysen

1925

pencil

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Study of Nora Heysen as a child

c. 1925

pencil

National Library of Australia, Canberra

PIC/4011

Sometime in 1925, Hans made a sketch of his young daughter Nora. She is depicted in profile, her hair practically drawn back, and her expression indiscernible. By this time, Nora had already begun to draw and to draw well. Her portrait of Hans, made two years later, shows unusual proficiency for a teenager: the features of her sitter are unmistakable, her shading and modelling subtle and competent. Although she was not directly taught to paint by her father, Nora observed his work, and accompanied him on painting trips from an early age.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## David

1918

pencil

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

David Heysen, here sweetly depicted as a young child, was Hans and Sallie's eldest son, and a regular subject for both Hans and Nora. David remained particularly close to his father throughout his life, often accompanying him on sketching trips and assisting him later in life as his eyesight failed. When Hans died in 1968, the family property passed to David, who took over the running of The Cedars and opened it to the public as a house museum in 1990.



# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Pines, The Cedars, Hahndorf

1932

wood engraving

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of the artist, 2003

368.2003

This rare wood engraving by Nora is the only impression known and was made the year of her first solo exhibition in 1932. The subject is the trees surrounding The Cedars, where Nora was still living with her family. Evidently an experimental work for Nora – the elements of flattening and graphic simplification demonstrate a clear awareness of the work of her modernist contemporaries working in the print medium, including Margaret Preston and Dorrit Black. The only other known print by Nora is a small etching of trees, which was printed after her death from a plate found in her estate.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Spring

1925

watercolour

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Purchased with the assistance of the Members Acquisition Fund, 2010

2010.573

Among Hans's most intimate and domestic animal pictures is this delightful watercolour of two cats in a tree, *Spring*. Painted for the amusement of the artist's children rather than for public exhibition, it is a simple and idyllic moment of life – with the cats stretching, crouching and basking in the sun and perhaps awaiting unsuspecting birds.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Turning the plough

1918, printed 1920

etching with plate tone

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1921

515

Images of farm workers ploughing the fields around Hahndorf were some of Hans's earliest experiments with incorporating human figures. As he declared in a letter to his friend Lionel Lindsay in 1918: 'The Ploughing pictures ... were in a sense a new departure in introducing the human element – although the main theme still remains "Light" ... I came across them at "the moment" – when the animals were still sweating and steaming from their graft – and I had to work hard to get my impression of the form and general construction before the truth of the moment vanished'.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Billygoat lane

1909

watercolour over pencil

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

Gift of Mrs J. K. Webb in memory of her sister, Miss Eleanor Melba Irwin, 1960

1:0813

In November 1908, Hans and Sallie Heysen moved to a rented cottage in Billygoat Lane, Hahndorf, and in the same year, an enormously successful exhibition of Hans's work was held in Melbourne, aided by E. Phillips Fox and opened by Australian prime minister Alfred Deakin. This work, with its opalescent pastel hues and charming rural subject, was to become emblematic of many others that would follow, bringing both critical acclaim and, as a consequence of their considerable popular appeal, financial stability.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The track to the farm

1926

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Purchased, 1926

626

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Ducks

early 20th century – mid 20th century  
charcoal and chalk

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH617

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Study for The way home

early 20th century

charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH708

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The farmyard

1938

watercolour over pencil, with touches of gouache, blue  
chalk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Gordon Moffatt AM through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2017

2017.67

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Cats, goats and landscape (outlines)

early 20th century – mid 20th century  
charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH879



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Study of goats

1907

pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased, 1944

1374-4

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Cow feeding calf

c. 1908–12

pencil

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1311

Throughout his life, Hans sketched constantly in purpose-made books, but also on scraps of paper, napkins, receipts and, as is the case here, on used envelopes. These works demonstrate not only the emergence of favourite subjects and the experimental nature of his sketching technique, but also his extraordinary productivity. A collection of around 2700 of these works were a bequest of the artist to the Art Gallery of South Australia after his death, forming an invaluable record of his day-to-day practice.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Oxen team hauling logs

early 20th century – mid 20th century  
charcoal, brown chalk

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH809

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Sheep

early 20th century – mid 20th century  
charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1237

**Sibyl Dunlop** designer  
**W. Nathanson** manufacturer

**Cup**

1924–25

silver, chrysoprase

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

# **William de Morgan & Co., London**

manufacturer

England 1872–1911

## **William de Morgan** designer

England 1839–1917

## **Plate**

c. 1890

earthenware

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

When the Heysens moved into The Cedars in 1912, they furnished the house in the Arts and Crafts style. In England, Hans acquired ceramics by William de Morgan from Morris & Co. and furniture in the style of Liberty & Co. Later, he collected Chinese and Japanese textiles reminiscent of those favoured by James Abbott MacNeill Whistler and Oscar Wilde, and these featured as backdrops in his still-life painting and later in Nora's as well.

# Unknown manufacturer

## Tea kettle and stand

1900–10

copper, brass, enamel

The Cedars, Hahndorf

The Hans Heysen Estate. Gift to Hans Heysen from Dame Nellie Melba

This tea kettle and stand in the Art Nouveau style was a gift to the Heysen family from Dame Nellie Melba. Dame Nellie Melba was an early patron of Hans's work, and one of the first to acknowledge Nora's artistic potential. She visited the Heysen home on many occasions, provided Hans with several commissions and opened exhibitions of his work. This gift alludes to a shared love of the fin de siècle decorative style of sinuous organic motifs, the influence of which were also reflected in Hans's painting from this period.

**Unknown** manufacturer

## **Picture frame**

c. 1890

silver, wood, (other materials)

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate



**Pilkington's Royal Lancastrian Pottery  
Company, Manchester** manufacturer  
England est. 1913

**Covered ginger jar**  
1920  
earthenware

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

# Royal Doulton, Burslem, Staffordshire

England est. 1815

## Vase

c. 1905

stoneware

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

In 1899, Hans was awarded an informal scholarship by four Adelaide business owners to study in Europe. In Paris, he studied at the Académie Julien, the École des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Colarossi before travelling to the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands. Hans received instruction of a standard unavailable in Australia; his frames of artistic reference expanded exponentially, and the experience paved the way for an internationalism that would, perhaps paradoxically, infuse his treatment of Australian landscape. Hans later explicitly disavowed concepts of nationalism, asserting that 'while as an artist I love Australia, art has no country, but is in essence cosmopolitan'.

Thirty years later Nora underwent a similar evolution. At the end of a nine-month family tour of Germany and the United Kingdom, the Heysens travelled to London to see Nora safely installed. She enrolled at the Central School of Art, studying over the next two years under Bernard Meninsky, James Grant, Alfred Turner and John Skeaping. This was a period of tremendous excitement and evolution. In 1934 she wrote home, 'I want to paint people, homely interiors, skies and trees and water and all that is living and vibrating around me ... I feel freer and surer of myself, and I know what I want'.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Adelaide Railway Station

1906

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Elder Bequest Fund, 1948

0.1398

While Hans Heysen is today viewed as a typically Australian painter, internationalism was at the core of his practice. Travelling in Europe as an art student, Hans encountered the work of the French Impressionists, including Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro and Pierre-Auguste Renoir. Hans's luminescent pastels and watercolours dating to shortly after his return reflect the lightness of Impressionist technique, and his choice of subjects – in particular the Adelaide railway yards, with its debt to Monet's *La Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1877 (Musée D'Orsay, Paris), evoked the changing pace of modern life.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Adelaide railway yards

1908

coloured pastels and crayon

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Bequest of Mary Meyer in memory of her husband

Dr Felix Meyer 1975

75.667.15

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## From the studio window, Paris

1901

oil on canvas on composition board

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased, 2010

2010.331

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## From the apartment window, Paris

1901

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Bequest, 2009

20093P11

During his two-and-a-half years in Paris, Hans lived in Montparnasse, then the centre of the Parisian art world. He rented a room on the fifth floor of the Grand Hôtel de la Haute-Loire, which allowed easy access to the city's numerous museums and galleries. The elevated view along the snowy tree-lined Boulevard du Montparnasse shows a large six-storey building with balcony windows, which housed the Café du Dôme on its ground floor, a renowned meeting place for artists and writers. The vantage point of this painting also demonstrates the influence of nineteenth-century French painters such as Manet and Degas.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## On the Isle of Capri

1903

oil on canvas composition board

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

*On the Isle of Capri* was one of the last paintings that Hans completed in Europe, after nearly four years of intense and dedicated study. He spent three months in the summer of 1903 with friends who owned a cottage on Capri, where he sketched and painted the picturesque scenery and architecture. This work was inspired by landscape masterpieces he had seen on his travels – the seventeenth-century work of Claude Lorrain and nineteenth-century work of Camille Corot. In June he made excursions to Sorrento and Amalfi and later to the Neapolitan mainland before returning, invigorated, to Australia.



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Interior of St Mark's, Venice

1902

watercolour

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

Hans arrived in Venice in September 1902, the beginning of his fourth and final year in Europe. He spent eight weeks there, and sketched along the canals, on the piazzas and in the churches, delighting in all aspects of the city. Writing the following year, he declared: 'Venice ... was revealed to me – beautiful, rich, harmonious colours, with all the tints and play of the opal, everywhere. Every twist and corner of canals revealed fresh material for the sketchbook. A real artistic paradise this, where alone one can see the old Venetian masters in all their power and strength, and with the surroundings which influenced them'.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Dutch luggers, West Wemyss

1901

oil on canvas on composition board

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Springtime bluebells, Scotland

1902

oil on canvas

Private collection, Adelaide

In 1902, Hans travelled to London and then Edinburgh, and returned to Wemyss for another three months. During this period, he painted the coastal landscapes *Meadowsweet, Scotland* and *Springtime bluebells, Scotland*. When *Springtime bluebells* was returned to Adelaide for exhibition, it was critically acclaimed in the press as ‘... pregnant with art ... weird and mystic ... It indicates inspiration, and there is a suggestiveness about the whole painting which makes you want to look at it more than once’.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Meadowsweet, Scotland

1904

oil on canvas

Private collection, South Australia

This work has particular significance for the Heysen family history. The story goes that Selma Bartels (later Sallie Heysen) declared, upon viewing *Meadowsweet, Scotland*, in a South Australian Exhibition in 1903, that she was going to marry the man who had painted it. And marry him she did, having first engineered their acquaintance by enrolling as his student. Painted in West Wemyss in Scotland, two very similar versions of the work exist, both of which demonstrate Hans's vibrant use of foreground vegetation to add decoration to traditional landscapes.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Dutch farm worker gathering wood

1901

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of M. H. Joyner, 1993

937P70

Hans's rural subjects and the palette in which these are rendered shows a debt to the Barbizon School of nineteenth-century French painters, who made tonal images of the land and the people who worked it. His images of farm workers, painted in Europe and later back in Hahndorf, also suggest the realist influences of French artists Millet and Courbet. The school's Dutch followers were also significant for Hans, who noted during his travels in Europe in 1900: 'The modern Dutch School of painting impressed me considerably – I like their simplicity and truth of nature and solid techniques'.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Woman at the washstand

1901

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of M. H. Joyner, 1993

937P69

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## London breakfast

1935

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased, 1996

96.1046

*London Breakfast*, is perhaps the most beloved example of the Dutch influence in Nora's painting. The subject of the simple composition is Nora's close friend, West Australian sculptor Everton Stokes, or Evie as she was affectionately known, who had recently arrived in London. The furnishings of the room itself are carefully selected for their complimentary tones. The golden pumpkin on the table amplifies the deep blue of Evie's dressing gown (actually Nora's dressing gown – a gift from her parents which she had recently received with great pleasure) and both are offset against the rich browns of the table and chairs.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Down and out in London

1937

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
South Australian Government Grant, 1994

944P4

In *Down and out in London*, Nora reveals a rare moment of vulnerability. The work was begun in 1936, when she was under some financial strain, and shortly after she had sought advice about her painting from the artist Charles Holmes, whose work she respected. Holmes was nearing the end of his life and was perhaps not as sympathetic to upcoming artists as he once might have been. His criticism of Nora's work left little scope for optimism but she later concluded that Holmes's own painting left her unmoved and that the matter was one of simple incompatibility.



# Unknown, England manufacturer

## Chair

19th century

oak (*Quercus sp.*), leather, brass, cotton, (other materials)

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

Nora purchased this chair soon after arriving in England and it was to remain in the family for the rest of her life. Its heavy simple structure and dark wood was characteristic of the taste with which she had been raised at The Cedars and it made a natural component of her Northern European–inspired paintings of interiors. While at the time she believed it to be Jacobean, it is now thought to date to the nineteenth-century revival period.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Tower and wall

c. 1901

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH42

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Two sketches village and farm scenes

c. 1901

charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH264

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Landscape, ruins of viaduct and grazing cows – Romantic

c. 1902

sepia wash

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH133

Some of Hans's artistic references were literal, as in the case of early monotypes and sketches after Cotman and Corot, but others were more oblique, as in this delicately fading sepia work, reminiscent of J. M. W. Turner. Romanticism was a significant influence for Hans – the imposing forests of the great German painter Caspar David Friedrich, and the more softly modulated, symbolic works of British artists such as Samuel Palmer and William Blake. Shades of Turner's evocative imagery of ruined abbeys and castles in picturesquely overgrown landscapes are clearly apparent in this work.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Rain clouds over village

c. 1902

charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH274

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Road leading to walled town, stream in foreground

c. 1902

charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the Artist, 1971

711HH1695

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## A corner of Rouen

c. 1905

monotype printed in brown ink

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund, 1905

058G2

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Two outlines building

early 20th century

charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH244



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Farmer, sheep and farm buildings

early 20th century – mid 20th century  
charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH247

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Landscape south of England**

1935

watercolour

The Cedars, Hahndorf

Nora Heysen Foundation

# Everton Stokes

Australia 1906–86

## Portrait mask of Nora Heysen

1934–38

bronze

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

Evie's bronze portrait mask of Nora was modelled during their time in London. Both young women were studying and, having each other at hand and little money for models, Nora and Evie posed for each other on alternate days in their studio. Though Evie was never to attain the degree of recognition that Nora experienced, this strong timeless portrait with its undeniable likeness to its subject attests to her considerable talent. The mask was to become one of Nora's most treasured possessions, visible in the background of some of the last photographs taken of her.

# Everton Stokes

Australia 1906–86

## Nora at work, London flat

1935

charcoal

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

Like her father, Nora was constantly productive and here she is depicted propped up in bed, a paintbrush clenched between her teeth. This quick sketch by Evie is one of several made of Nora during their time in London together, a delightfully informal document of this happy and productive, though short-lived period. Following the disapproval of Nora's parents, Evie moved out of the flat and within months had married her husband, Henry. However, the paths of Evie and Nora were to cross often into the future, coloured perhaps by the shared excitement of this formative stage in their lives.

'I am trying only to paint as truthfully as I can, and that which my eyes see and perhaps what I unconsciously feel. Truth to Nature after all is the goal, but Truth interpreted through temperament.'

So declared Hans in a letter to Lionel Lindsay in 1919, espousing a personal variation of the Arts and Crafts doctrine. His early drawings alternate between intricate botanical studies and mystical fairytale imagery, testament to a fascination with the particularities of his immediate environment, and with the mythical themes of fin-de-siècle Symbolism and Art Nouveau. The influence of the great German artist Albrecht Dürer, and of British critic/artist John Ruskin, is discernible. There are elements, too, of Romanticism; of rustic spirituality and the sublime.

As a young artist Nora drew many of her father's favourite subjects and her pencil studies of eucalypts are almost indistinguishable from his. When Nora returned to Australia in 1938, she and Hans reached an informal agreement that she would focus on portraiture and still life, and he on landscape. The precise reasoning is unknown; however, both artists may have wished to avoid more comparison of their work than was already inevitable because of their shared name.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Hahndorf landscape

1932

pencil and chalk

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

This drawing, made before Nora's departure for Europe in 1934, demonstrates clearly her considerable ability as a landscape artist. During her student years, Nora produced numerous pencil studies of the trees around the family property, and many of these are almost indistinguishable from those made by her father. Although she later focused on still life and portraiture, her reverence for nature was expressed just as equal lucidly within these genres.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Sunshine and shadow

1904–05

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Felton Bequest, 1906

248-2

This painting was the first by Hans Heysen to be acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria, shortly after it was exhibited in Melbourne, to considerable acclaim. It is undoubtedly related to the slightly earlier *Mystic Morn* but, interestingly, Hans here eliminates the cattle from the composition, placing sole emphasis upon the saplings. It is among Hans's largest works, which lends an additional quality of immersiveness to this highly evocative, even spiritual landscape.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Mystic Morn

1904

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Elder Bequest Fund, 1904

0.335

This was one of the first large-scale works painted by Hans after he returned to Adelaide in 1903, demonstrating a new confidence and ambition. A large four-by-six-foot canvas, it was exhibited in Sydney in 1904 to great public acclaim, thereby launching Heysen's national career. It won the 1904 Wynne Prize for Australian landscape, and that same year it was included in Adelaide's Federal Exhibition and subsequently purchased by the Art Gallery of South Australia. *Mystic Morn* remains one of the Art Gallery of South Australia's best-loved landscapes. Sallie composed the evocative title for this Symbolist-inspired painting, and she would do the same for many others.



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Study for Mystic Morn

1904

charcoal on paper on cardboard

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Elder Bequest Fund, 1970

705D8

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Study for Mystic Morn

1904

watercolour

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## **A seated boy gazing out to sea**

1911

charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH967

Left to right

## **Hans Heysen**

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

### **A boy in a landscape, leaning on a tree and playing a flute**

1907

monotype printed in brown ink

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH964

## **Hans Heysen**

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

### **A boy in a landscape, seated under a tree**

1907

monotype printed in brown ink

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH966

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Trees by a pool (Autumn)

early 20th century

monotype printed in brown ink

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH331

Monotyping is a printmaking process of drawing or painting on a smooth non-absorbent surface. The surface, or matrix, was historically a copper etching plate but could also be zinc or glass. It is a particularly challenging process, which produces a single one-off print, and Hans's mastery of this technique is testament to his great proficiency across media. The scale, palette and subject matter of this series evoke the work of early nineteenth-century English Romantic Samuel Palmer, whose intimate, sometimes naive rural views were imbued with a delicate and uncanny mysticism.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Landscape

1907

monotype printed in brown ink

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
David Murray Bequest Fund, 1967

678G19

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The river path

1904–05

monotype printed in brown ink

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund, 1905

058G1

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Edge of the Lake, Lake Torrens

1905

monotype printed in brown ink

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
M. J. M. Carter Collection, 1969

695G98



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The lake

1905

monotype printed in brown ink

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
M. J. M. Carter Collection, 1969

695G99

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The bushman

c. 1905

monotype printed in brown ink

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
M. J. M. Carter Collection, 1969

695G97

# **Hans Heysen**

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

# **John Sell Cotman, after**

England

1782–1842

# **Breaking the clod**

1907

monotype printed in brown ink

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased, 1979

NGA 79.1291

**Nora Heysen**  
Australia 1911–2003

**Self-portrait**  
1926  
pencil

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of the artist, 1999

154.1999

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Hahndorf cottages in moonlight

1910

pastel

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Gums in moonlight

c. 1915–20

charcoal

Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat  
Purchased, 1937

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Evening in the hills

1897

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide Bequest in memory of Josiah Henry and Mary Eleanor Symon

0.1294

There is a quiet poeticism to many of Hans's early landscapes, grounded in the intimate knowledge of a particular place in all its transitions of weather and time. As critic James Stuart MacDonald observed, Hans's work was 'packed with a sort of Virgilian wisdom, the simpler and higher awareness of the meaning of the soil and all its progeny and products: halcyon days ... rain-laden clouds, and winds made visible'. This little watercolour provides a window into the moment of delicate softness as day fades, all the more affecting for its transience.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Midsummer morning

1908

watercolour over pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Felton Bequest, 1908

377-2



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Murray River cliffs

1916

watercolour

New England Regional Art Museum, Armidale

The Howard Hinton Collection

Gift of Howard Hinton, 1939

1939\_24

From 1915 to 1917, Hans embarked upon four painting trips to the Murray River, travelling by paddle steamer from Murray Bridge upstream to Nildottie. In a letter home to their children, Sallie described ‘... great walls of cliffs shining all gold and red – they look just like the pictures of the old castles with turrets and battlements straight as a wall ...’ This impressively scaled watercolour depicts the monumental ancient ochre walls, towering above the water. Typically, the dramatic composition is framed with Hans’s beloved eucalypts.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Gums under mist

1917

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Bequest of the artist in memory of his wife, 1969

696P30

Painted as a gift to Sallie Heysen on her forty-first birthday, *Gums under mist* is the first finished watercolour in a series of watercolours and drawings produced from studies of a particular gum tree at the front gate of The Cedars. The distinctive form of this tree fascinated Hans and he was to return to it countless times in all conditions. The work demonstrates the extraordinary fluency and luminescence of Hans's watercolour technique, built up from a series of translucent layers, one on top of the other, transitioning from light to dark.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The clearing, early morning

1919

watercolour, charcoal and pencil

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Bequest of Sir James McGregor, 1974

74.149

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Gums in sunlight

1923

pencil and watercolour

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Bequest of Dr and Mrs Sinclair Gillies, 1952

8966

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Summer

1909

pencil and watercolour

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1909

4804

*Summer* is one of the most beloved works in the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, acquired in 1909 after it won the Wynne Prize. This is a typically virtuoso expression of Hans's proficiency in watercolour – the intense drying heat of the summer sun almost obscuring the distant hills. The large eucalypt that dominates the right hand side of the composition was a particular favourite of the artist, depicted many times over the course of his life. It can be seen again, on a smaller scale, in *Summer light*.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Summer light

1910s–1940s

watercolour over pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Presented by Esso Australia Pty Ltd, 2018

2018.1257

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Red gold

1913

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Gift of the Rt Hon. Sir Charles Booth, 1913

0.403

Hans made 'portraits' of trees, and the two great old eucalypts that majestically frame the composition of *Red gold* were among his favourite subjects. The view is taken from the main road that ran from Hahndorf to Mt Baker Junction, its dusty surface stirred by the movement of a herd of cattle. Beyond, the distant hills are illuminated in the pastel late-afternoon glow. As in many of Hans's landscapes, the work also contains a degree of artistic licence. Mt Barker in the background could not actually be seen from the artist's vantage point and the view has been manipulated and condensed for aesthetic effect.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The pomp of parting day

1912

watercolour over pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

660-2



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The three gums

1914

charcoal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Felton Bequest, 1943

1256-4

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The three gums

1915–1920

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat

Purchased with funds from the Laurence Clark

Bequest, 1921

No 1921.6

This painting was first exhibited as *White gums* in 1915 and the Trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria expressed an interest in acquiring it. The purchase was deferred, however, because in the height of nationalistic anxiety surrounding the First World War, the Trustees mistrusted Hans's German heritage. This was a persistent problem for Hans in the war years and after, and he was excluded from a number of major exhibitions as a consequence. Several years later, he repainted the foreground and retitled the work *The three gums* before selling it to the Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat in 1921.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Sketch for The three gums

1914

pencil and blue pencil

Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat

Purchased with funds from the Maude Glover Fleay and L. J. Wilson Bequests, 1999

1999.18

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Droving into the light

1914–21

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth  
Gift of Mr W. H. Vincent, 1922

1922/00P1

Many of Hans's most-loved heroic subjects began as explorations of weather, the seasons or beloved trees. *Droving into the light*, with its magnificent river red gums, is now celebrated as 'one of our greatest Federation pictures' and was originally titled *Into the light*. Not so much nationalist as pantheist, Hans's landscapes do not refer merely to what it is to be Australian but rather explore what it is to belong to nature in a more holistic sense. In the year that he purchased *The Cedars*, Hans declared, 'The sun – its light and its warmth – is my religion'.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## A lord of the bush

1908

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Felton Bequest, 1908

376-2

*A lord of the bush* derives from Heysen's experiences at Gumeracha in the Adelaide Hills, where he stayed for some weeks at the end of 1907. The central focus is a single tree, the grandeur of which is also indicated by the personification present in the title. Heysen was struggling with *A lord of the bush* when the Adelaide-born Scottish artist Edward Hornel visited Adelaide. He recommended a freer use of the palette knife to give a purity to the tree trunk and a feeling of breadth to the foreground. The palette knife technique did not come easily to Heysen, and he used it only sparingly after this time.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Riverbank

1916–17

from the *Murray River* series 1916–17

black pencil

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased from the estate of Hans Heysen,  
1973

NGA 73.32.5

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

# Pewsey Vale

1933

watercolour over pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Gift from The L. W. Thompson Collection, 2003

2003.460

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Pewsey Vale

1947

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Gift of Miss Eva Waite, 1954

0.1578

In the 1930s and 1940s, Hans made several paintings depicting Pewsey Vale, a pastoral property in the Barossa Ranges. Here, he captured the great looming sky, filled with clouds, over the soft green landscape. While Hans ostensibly rejected many of the tenets of modernism, including, for the most part, abstraction, elements of modernist simplification are clearly evident here, and the high-keyed palette is also suggestive of contemporary developments in landscape painting.



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Gum tree trunk

early 20th century

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1360

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Thistles – two drawings

early 20th century

pencil

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH21

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Dogwood

early 20th century

pen and ink and chalk

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH15

Hans's aptitude for the challenging and meticulous genre of botanical drawing and painting is clearly manifested in this collection of works, which document indigenous and exotic species that grew around the Adelaide Hills. While these works have often been linked to the influence of Hans's German artistic forebears, in particular Albrecht Dürer, there are also clear shades of the British Arts and Crafts and pre-Raphaelite movements, of the 'Truth to Nature' doctrine that infused the drawings of John Ruskin, and of the obsessively accurate floral foregrounds of British artist John Everett Millais.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## **Clematis Viticella (Botanical Study)**

early 20th century

pencil

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH22

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Small blue gum sapling

early 20th century

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1345

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## **Cherubic children dancing in glade**

early 20th century

pencil and gouache

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH127

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Nude female and flowers

early 20th century

charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1519

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Gum tree

early 20th century – mid 20th century  
charcoal and chalk

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1571



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Gum tree trunks

early 20th century – mid 20th century

pencil on blue paper

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH587

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Gum tree trunks

early 20th century – mid 20th century  
charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1523

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Gum trees with range of hills in background

early 20th century – mid 20th century

pencil

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1169

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Men hauling tree trunk

early 20th century – mid 20th century  
charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1398

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Tree studies of men hauling trees with oxen team

early 20th century – mid 20th century  
charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH897

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Study of gum trees

c. 1952

pen and ink, chalk, coloured chalk and charcoal on blue paper

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1524

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Study of gum tree trunk**

c. 1931

pencil and chalk on blue-grey paper

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Gift of the artist, 2003

371.2003

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Gum tree, Hahndorf**

1931

pencil and chalk on grey paper

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of the artist, 2003

372.2003



Although it was surrounded by farmland and ostensibly suitable for agriculture, the Heysens did not farm their property. Instead, they allowed it to gently return to nature. Hans's reverence for the natural world permeated his art and his life. He referred to 'meeting' trees. He also mourned their loss. In 1937, he wrote to Nora: 'that lovely old white Gum I have painted so often at Woodside has gone. It felt like losing an old friend'. This sensibility lends a curious ambivalence to heroic images of rural labour such as *Hauling timber*, 1911. Accounts of Hans paying local councils the price of the timber to not cut down his favourite eucalypts were widely reported during his lifetime and what was once perceived as an endearing mark of eccentricity is today identifiable as a strong and progressive conservationist impulse. In 1938, Hans increased his family's land holding to 150 acres in order to extend his environmental protection. He was, in effect, safeguarding his friends.

'I had my special trees, and they altered their appearance – the time of year and the angle of the sun made all the difference. You could paint a tree one day and get all its various facets. And the next day it would be a different tree.'

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The wet road

1894

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Gift of Sir James McGregor, 1959

0.1826

This was the first painting Hans sold, purchased by his art teacher James Ashton for ten shillings when Hans was sixteen. It was inspired by landscapes by the Scottish artist Peter Graham (1836–1921), which Hans had seen at an Art Gallery of South Australia exhibition in 1894. As a student, Hans was encouraged to develop his technique by copying watercolours, particularly those by British landscape artists. With its depiction of heavy sky and sodden land beneath, this work effectively anticipates Hans's mature fascination with subtly shifting climatic conditions and atmospheric effects.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The storm cloud

1940

watercolour over pencil on paper on cardboard

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane  
Bequest of George Brown, 1977

1:1534

Here, as in many of Hans's landscapes, the primary subject is not the land but what is, intangibly, above it. Late in his life, Hans elucidated the significance of the sky in his work: 'Australian painters generally have paid too little attention to the sky. The landscape painter has to realise that it is not something secondary, like a backdrop, but that it is above you, at the sides of you, and all around. It curves from the horizon to the zenith. The moment you forget this you tend to make it like a backdrop, or something tacked on the top'.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Cumulus clouds

1910s–1920s

charcoal and chalk on grey paper

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1017

An interest in atmospheric affects guided much of Hans's painting. His sketches include numerous cloud studies reminiscent of those by British Romantic painter John Constable. Hans greatly admired Constable, whose devotion to his native region of Dedham Vale in the south of England provided a model for Hans's reverent treatment of the landscape around Hahndorf. Hans reportedly carried a small volume of Constable's work with him in his pocket as a source of inspiration.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Storm clouds over windswept landscape

late 1930s

charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1010

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Approaching storm with bushfire haze

1912

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Gift of the artist, 1944

0.1268

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Study for Approaching storm with bushfire haze

1912

pen and ink and ink wash on grey paper

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1465

Art Gallery of South Australia curator Julie Robinson proposes that this sketch was made from life during the February 1912 bushfires near Hans's home in the Adelaide Hills: 'Heysen appears to have worked in great haste to fix the view before him, exploiting the expressive potential of pen and ink and wash to convey the dramatic atmospheric conditions of the scene. His energetic hatching and cross-hatching marks and ink wash model the forms of nature and suggest volume with the most economic of means'. The sketch was later developed into a small oil painting study for a planned larger canvas.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Study of Approaching storm with bushfire haze

1913

charcoal, chalk and grey wash on grey paper on  
cardboard

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Gift of the artist, 1963

631D1



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Two tree stumps

early 20th century – mid 20th century

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH1355)

In a letter to the local council, Hans expressed his regret and astonishment at the felling of two gum trees, believing that he had successfully saved them: 'I would be very glad indeed if your Council could keep the trees from further molestation ... I have been informed that an offer has already been made for the very large gum on the corner of the main road. If your Council finds it absolutely necessary to sell this tree on account of its monetary value I will gladly give the Council the amount of its selling price – so that it can remain standing'.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Drought sheep

1916–21

pencil and watercolour

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1950

8529

Just as Hans revered nature's beauty and fecundity, so too was he aware of its power and capacity for devastation. Drought was a constant source of danger in the Australian landscape, both for the agricultural and environmental losses that it brought with it, and for its association with the terror of bushfire. *Drought sheep* is just one of several images that Hans produced showing emaciated sheep wandering on a bleak dusty road during a drought, effectively conjuring the stifling heat and oppressive dusty air.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The two white gums, Ambleside

1944

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Sir Malcolm Barclay Harvey Bequest, 1970

709P19

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Morning light

1913

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Ruth Robertson Bequest Fund in memory of Edwin Clive and Leila Jeanne Robertson, 2011 NGA 2011.4

Hans returned to favourite trees over the course of many years, documenting their growth, decline, and response to changing climatic conditions. He wrote in 1939: 'In all its stages the gum tree is extremely beautiful – first for being a tiny sucker with broad leaves, shooting up like a fountain answering to the slightest breeze – at middle age it becomes more sturdy, more closely knit and bulky, yet never losing grace in the movement of its limbs and the sweep of its foliage'. The effects of time on this tree and the landscape are visible in the adjacent watercolour, *The two white gums, Ambleside*, 1944.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Hauling timber

1911

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1911

857

In 1907, Hans travelled to Gumeracha in the Adelaide Hills, where he stayed for some weeks, sketching the landscape and the effects of rural industry upon it. He visited the timber cutters' camp at the end of the year and saw a team of bullocks hauling timber among the monumental red gums in the full heat and brightness of summer. *Hauling timber* depicts felled eucalypts converted to huge logs being carted away. It was awarded the Wynne Prize in 1911, though the artist himself struggled with the composition and did not believe it to be among his strongest.

Just as Hans's work exemplified the notion of 'knowing' nature through the study of landscape, so Nora knew nature through flowers and people. The garden at The Cedars was planted with exotic species – the monumental Himalayan cedar trees that give the property its name and also fragrant bourbon roses, lilacs, irises and dahlias. Souvenir de la Malmaison roses were a favourite subject of both artists. Flower painting was Nora's passion – one to which she returned repeatedly and within which she experimented extensively, in her palette, her style and technique. Her early works are meticulous, shadowed, sculptural – as she declared, 'My nature didn't lend itself to this quick watercolour painting. I wanted to model things and get things in the round'. After studying in England, she brightened her palette and adopted a looser style of brushwork.

Although still life never dominated Hans's art, he was highly accomplished in this genre. His method for still life was different from landscape in that he worked straight from the subject, without making studies or sketches. These paintings include large-scale extravagant arrangements and smaller, more intimate flower studies. Many were painted as gifts for friends and family, and featured flowers and vegetables grown at The Cedars.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Still life with pumpkins and onions

1922

oil on canvas

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

In this warm and richly organic domestic still life, pumpkins and onions are lent heroic status. The brass pot on the left (which remains at The Cedars to this day) and the glass bottle on the right also contribute to the strong sculptural arrangement. Earthy tones are evocative of the ground in which the vegetables were grown and create an appropriately rustic composition. This is further emphasised by large brushstrokes of thickly applied paint, conveying the organic nature of the subject in a rich and striking composition of convincing realism.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Delphiniums and lilies

1924

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1926

6113



# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Still life with onions

1927

oil on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne

During her initial training, Nora adopted the traditional stance of an academic copyist. In *Still life with onions*, she not only followed her father's example but also emulated the work of the then giant of Australian art George Lambert. Hans collected and admired the work of Lambert, and we know that in 1939 Nora borrowed examples of Lambert's painting to copy. Anecdotally, this composition was a source of minor irritation to Nora: having arranged the vegetables to paint herself, she went briefly away and returned to discover her father painting his own version, which you see here alongside it.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Eggs

1927

oil on canvas

New England Regional Art Museum, Armidale  
The Howard Hinton Collection. Gift of Howard Hinton,  
1933

1934\_36

In *Eggs*, the precocious sixteen-year-old Nora presented the local produce in all of its natural glory. As a young artist, Nora approached the still-life genre and its timeless sense of solidity through a sincere academic realism, employing an objective tonalism reaching back to sixteenth-century Italian painter Caravaggio. Similarly, in this painting and others, there are tributes to seventeenth-century Dutch still-life painting. The work was purchased by Howard Hinton, an important patron and benefactor of Australian art, and one of the first to recognise Nora's artistic talent.

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Still life – cabbage**

1933

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Bequest, 2009

20093P14

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Corn cobs

1938

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1987

485.1987

*Corn cobs*, completed shortly after Nora's arrival in Sydney, is among the greatest exemplars of the shift in her technique that resulted from meetings with Orovida Pissaro in London. The short overlaid brushstrokes demonstrate a familiarity with French Impressionism and Post-impressionism. The high-keyed palette suggests not only the marks of Orovida's advice against over-mixing but also all the airiness of British modernist painting that Nora had encountered in London. A sense of ambiguity is created by the blue backdrop, which evokes the form of distant hills but was in fact the artist's painting smock, strategically crumpled for effect.

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Summer flowers**

1933

oil on canvas

Carrick Hill Trust, Adelaide

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Petunias

1930

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1930

828

Speaking towards the end of her life, Nora declared, ‘My nature didn’t lend itself to this quick watercolour painting. I wanted to model things and get things in the round’. The tendency to treat each element in a composition individually is particularly marked in early works such as *Petunias*, provoking some gentle critique from Hans, who questioned the approach of ‘each flower being seen somewhat separately’. Yet this willingness to privilege the detail over the cohesive whole is arguably a mark of Nora’s engagement with modernism and a point of differentiation between father and daughter.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## A bunch of flowers

1930

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Bequest of Nora Heysen AM, 2005

2005.255

**Nora Heysen**  
Australia 1911–2003

**Scabious**  
1930  
oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund, 1934

0.811



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Roses (Souvenir de la Malmaison)

1930

oil on canvas

On loan to The Cedars from the family of Michael Heysen

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Roses (Souvenir de la Malmaison)

1946

oil on cardboard

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

Nora and Hans shared a love of painting roses, particularly *Souvenir de la Malmaison*, which was grown in the garden at The Cedars and then carefully shipped across for propagation in Nora's garden at The Chalet in Sydney. Hans's *Roses (Souvenir de la Malmaison)*, 1930, and Nora's *Roses*, 1941, illustrate the artists' contrasting approaches. Hans's dark background emphasises the sculptural quality of the blooms, and he applies a broader tonal modulation, enriching the surface texture by alternating areas of impasto with thin areas revealing the canvas weave. Nora's paint is less viscous and her palette is higher keyed. Her brushwork has a staccato, flickering effect.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Delphiniums and lilies

1924

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1926

6113

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Spring flowers

1932

oil on canvas

Hamilton Gallery, Victoria

Presented by Elise Clabburn in memory of her parents, Dr Sam and Mrs Moree Fitzpatrick, 1989

1989.033

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## A cottage bunch

1930

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift from The L. W. Thompson Collection, 2004

2004.25

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Autumn fruits

1928

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
William Birkinshaw Wilkinson Bequest, 1928

0.735

Titles such as *Autumn fruits* celebrate the cyclic rhythms of nature in the cornucopia of pumpkins, onions, grapes and other seasonal produce of the Adelaide Hills. Rarely were these forms depicted cut, as in the memento mori allusions in art-historical still lifes. Rather, they were presented whole to emphasise their fullness, assembled in anticipation of a later shared meal. This connectedness with the natural abundance of the earth is paralleled by the concurrent retreat from metropolitanism into the healing spaces of regional and rural life seen in British and European art at the same time.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Tomatoes

1939

oil on composition board

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
South Australian Government Grant, 1998

(986P50)

In London, while admiring the refinement and detail of the Dutch still-life painters, Nora aimed for the 'feeling and body of the Fantin [Latour] flowers ... I love the Fantin best and always pay a visit'. It wasn't only Fantin-Latour's flowers at the National Gallery that she admired. His *Plate of apples*, 1861, is later honoured in her *Tomatoes*, but with an elevated viewpoint to showcase the dramatic circular and almost abstract disc of the Chinese Swatow ware dish.

**Nora Heysen**  
Australia 1911–2003

**Gladioli**  
1933  
oil on canvas

Cruthers Collection of Women's Art, Perth

(764)



# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Still life

1934

oil on canvas

New England Regional Art Museum, Armidale  
Gift of Howard Hinton, 1933

1933\_40

# **Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

## **Pom Pom Dahlias**

1947

oil on cardboard

Carrick Hill Trust, Adelaide

Hayward Bequest, 1983

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Flowers in a Delft vase**

c. 1946

oil on plywood

The Cedars, Hahndorf

Nora Heysen Foundation

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**From a cottage garden**

1935

oil on canvas

Private collection, Sydney

**Nora Heysen**  
Australia 1911–2003

**White cacti**  
c. 1941  
oil on wood panel

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Elder Bequest Fund, 1941

(0.1189)

**Nora Heysen**  
Australia 1911–2003

**Anemones**

1981  
oil on canvas

Private collection, Sydney

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Apples on a chair

1995

oil on canvas

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

In part as a consequence of her failing eyesight, Nora's painting style changed radically in the latter decades of her life. She began to work in pastels and her flower paintings from the 1980s are produced in a consistently high-keyed palette. The result is deft and animated – small strokes of saturated colour lend luminescence and vibrancy to her late work. This late oil on canvas also shows the influence of early masters of European abstraction, in particular Paul Cézanne, whose work Nora greatly admired.

# Unknown, China

## Charger

18th century  
earthenware

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate



# Unknown, China

## Robe

19th century

silk

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

# Unknown, China

## Skirt

19th century

silk

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

Both Hans and Nora were great admirers of Chinese art and Hans collected Chinese textiles and ceramics on his travels, conveying to Nora his admiration of the 'sense of serenity and expression of the infinite' that he found in Chinese art. In London in 1935, Nora became equally captivated after seeing the Chinese art exhibition at Burlington House, writing home, 'I have just come back from the Chinese exhibition and feel stupefied with so much beauty ...' Nora often borrowed from Hans's collection, employing the sumptuous colours and textures of Japanese and Chinese vases and textiles to embellish her compositions.

**Unknown, Germany** manufacturer

## **Vase**

19th century

porcelain

The Cedars, Hahndorf

The Nora Heysen Estate

**Unknown, Ireland** manufacturer

**Comport**

19th century

glass

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

As students, both Nora and Hans trained in portraiture and figure-drawing, and while both artists demonstrated proficiency, it was Nora who was to make her name as an intuitive and original portraitist.

Shortly after arriving in Sydney in 1938, Nora met the Netherlands' consul and his wife, Madame Elink Schuurman, whose portrait she painted and entered in the prestigious Archibald Prize. Much of the reporting surrounding Nora's win focused upon her lineage, and her gender. 'Now 28 years of age', wrote the *Maitland Daily Mercury* critic, 'she has been painting for 13 years under the tuition of her father'. In truth, Nora had been living away from her family for six years, and she was never formally under Hans's tuition. Nora was a skilled and imaginative artist, yet she remained troubled by the possibility that her reputation might be dependent upon her father's, declaring in 1962, 'I don't know if I exist in my own right'. Some of her purpose, it seems, in focusing upon portraiture, and in moving to Sydney, was to escape the inevitability of familial association.

Following her Archibald win, Nora received many important commissions and several more prizes, positioning her among the most respected portraitists of the period, and resulting in her appointment, in 1943, as Australia's first female war artist.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Self-portrait

c. 1900

oil on canvas

Private collection, South Australia

This early self-portrait, dating from before Hans's period of study in Europe, is one of the only examples of its type in the artist's career. Although Hans demonstrated great competence as a portraitist (most clearly seen in his pencil drawings and watercolours of family and friends) portraiture was not a genre in which he worked professionally. The family resemblance between father and daughter is particularly striking here, in both their shared features – light blue eyes, full lips and strong bones – and the direct, somewhat inscrutable expression.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Old man Collins lighting his pipe

early 20th century

pastel and charcoal

The Cedars, Hahndorf

The Hans Heysen Estate

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Reclining nude**

1954–1956

crayon and charcoal

Private collection, Adelaide



**Nora Heysen**  
Australia 1911–2003

**Portrait study**  
1933  
oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance of the Joe White Bequest, Founder  
Benefactor, 2001 2001.48

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Ruth

1933

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
South Australian Government Grant, 1934

0.810

In 1933, the year of her first Melrose Prize win, Nora produced a series of portraits biblically titled *Ruth*. In the pure, sculptural features of her sitter and the luminous hues of the sky, these paintings evoke the work of the nineteenth-century Nazarene painters – polished and technically proficient but with a simultaneous slightly paradoxical air of gentle naivety. The subject, who was not named Ruth, was Ronda Paech, a local farm worker whom Sallie Heysen commissioned to sit for Nora. Ronda had no particular interest in the role of muse but her strong features and sense of self-assurance fascinated and inspired Nora.

**Nora Heysen**  
Australia 1911–2003

**Study of Ruth**  
1933  
pencil

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**The Hahndorf travelling grocer**

early 1930s

oil on canvas on composition board

The Cedars, Hahndorf

Nora Heysen Foundation

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## The faun

1933

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Presented through the NGV Foundation by  
Mrs Lisl Singer, Governor, 2002

2002.139

The subject of this painting was Nora's friend Kester Baruch, an actor, dramatist and journalist, known for his exuberant and theatrical persona, both on stage and off it. An apocryphal account of Kester visiting The Cedars and cavorting semi-naked in a one-man Bacchanal across the rolling Hahndorf hills, scandalising Nora's mother in the process, lends particularly rich and amusing context to this work. Visually, it is a strange and other-worldly painting, with the waxy flatness of a theatrical mask amplifying the curious persona of its sitter.

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Study of Roman bust**

c. 1935

brown chalk

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of the artist, 2003

390.2003

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Portrait of Adrian Feint

1940

oil on plywood

National Library of Australia, Canberra

R10892

This portrait commemorates one of Nora's most important artistic friendships – with Adrian Feint. Nora was introduced to Feint in 1938 by Sydney Ure Smith. They soon began to meet regularly, sharing a love of flower painting and a tendency (more pronounced in Feint's work) to inject complex emotion and sensuality into their floral subjects. Nora painted Feint's portrait two years into the friendship, for pleasure rather than as a formal commission. It is endowed with a softness, fluidity and lightness of touch in its Romantic coastal backdrop and contemplative pose, which attests to the ease of her relationship with the sitter.

**Nora Heysen**  
Australia 1911–2003

## **Dedication**

1941

oil on canvas

Hamilton Gallery, Victoria  
Gift of Mr and Mrs S. Fitzpatrick, 1963

0817



# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Motherhood

1941

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat  
The Pinkerton Bequest Fund, 1942

1942.1

The mother-and-child theme is an important thread running through Nora's work. Her two 1941 paintings, *Motherhood*, which won the Melrose Prize for Portraiture, and *Dedication*, suggest a timeless sanctity in the maternal bond, evoking devotional images of the Madonna and child. Nora had shared a flat in Sydney with her friend from Adelaide and London, Evie (Everton Stokes), who had a young baby. Thus the vision of maternity, as well as the practical care of a baby, was a familiar part of daily life. In a rare reference to her cohabitation with Evie, Nora wrote home that the larger flat in Montague Place 'catches the morning sun which is ideal for the baby'.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Sir Lionel Lindsay

1941

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of J. R. McGregor, 1943

7333

Following the success of her Archibald Prize win, Nora received several important portrait commissions. A portrait of Sir Lionel Lindsay commissioned by J. R. McGregor was presented to the National Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1942. Presented as a man of letters, Nora incorporates a library backdrop as an easily legible symbol of her sitter's identity. Lindsay was a close friend of Hans and an early advocate of both his work and Nora's. While Lindsay's support was certainly integral to the establishment of Hans's reputation, they were ultimately to become distanced, possibly as a consequence of Lindsay's outspoken and extreme right-wing politics, which Hans did not condone.

# **Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

# **Dr Robert Black**

c. 1946

pencil

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of the artist, 2003

380.2003

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Robert H. Black MD

c. 1950

oil on canvas on composition board

National Portrait Gallery, Canberra

Gift of the artist, 1999. Donated through the Australian Government's

Cultural Gifts Program

1999.51

It was while working as a war artist in New Guinea that Nora met and fell in love with Dr Robert Black, a highly regarded specialist in tropical diseases. He was amusing, handsome and married, although the marriage was by that time in a state of instability. Following Black's protracted divorce proceedings, the couple married in 1953 and purchased The Chalet in Hunters Hill, Sydney, where Nora would live until her death half a century later. This portrait was a particular favourite of Hans, who wrote to his daughter in 1951, 'it is the best thing you have done so far, in the portrait line'.

**Nora Heysen**  
Australia 1911–2003

## **Portrait of Evie Stokes**

1935

brown chalk

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of Meredith Stokes, 2008

21.2008

Everton Stokes played a major role in Nora's life, in Europe and after, as a fellow artist, travel companion and artistic subject. They travelled together in Paris and Italy, and spent a happy summer on the Dorset coast, where Nora painted and Evie carved. This work dates to that time and suggests not only the intimacy between artist and subject, but also the rich influences of Nora's developing artistic education. There are shades of Italian Renaissance art in this exquisitely simple brown chalk drawing and in Evie's pure classical features.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Self-portrait

1932

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Masterpieces for the Nation Fund, 2011

2010.923

Throughout her life, Nora's self-portraits were a coded way of defining herself. A series produced prior to going to London in 1934 emphatically announced her career as an artist – Nora poses with her painting implements: here, her palette is tilted forward and she holds brush in hand. Nora had recently been awarded the Melrose Prize for a similar portrait, enabling some important early commissions. The palette visible here was a gift from Dame Nellie Melba, a friend and patron of Hans, and an early advocate of Nora's talent. It was to remain her favourite, visible in many later self-portraits.

# Unknown, Australia

## The Melba palette

1927

oil on wood panel

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Self-portrait

c. 1932

oil on canvas on composition board

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

This engaging self-portrait is one of very few in which Nora depicts herself smiling. Self-portraiture was a life-long strength, for reasons that were partly practical, grounded in shyness more than vanity (Nora often commented upon the difficult business of talking to one's sitters), and also in financial limitation – to hire models cost money that Nora often did not have. These limitations resulted in an extraordinary body of work, which documents not only the development of her technique, but also the strength, the absence of pretension and a certain inscrutable quality which were to become cornerstones of her public persona.



# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Self-portrait

1932

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of Howard Hinton, 1932

943

Reflecting upon this arresting self-portrait in the 1970s, Nora wrote: 'I painted that self-portrait in my father's studio – on the walls were several Vermeer prints. I greatly admired Vermeer's works and wanted to paint like him – perhaps Vermeer and my father were my biggest influences in those days ...' A corner of a reproduction of Vermeer's *The art of painting*, c. 1666, is visible behind Nora's head. In addition to the clear influence upon her palette and pose, the inspiration of seventeenth-century Dutch painting is revealed in the meticulous inclusion of still-life elements, which would become a motif of Nora's portraiture.

**Nora Heysen**  
Australia 1911–2003

**Self-portrait**  
1934  
oil on canvas

National Portrait Gallery, Canberra  
Purchased, 1999

1999.50

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Self-portrait

1938

oil on canvas on composition board

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

Purchased, 2011, with funds from Philip Bacon AM, through the Queensland Art Gallery

Foundation

2011.080

When Nora returned to Australia in 1937, she lived briefly at The Cedars before moving to Sydney. Her 1938 *Self-portrait* points to a changing painting style and a new conception of self. In its loose Post-impressionist application of paint, Nora presents herself as modern and self-assured. Immersion in the anonymous cosmopolitan ethos of London, away from all that was familiar, had meant she was free to evolve, and this painting differs greatly from the tighter, more conventional versions of the early 1930s made before Nora travelled.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Self-portrait

1954

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
South Australian Government Grant, 1994

944P5

By 1953, Nora had married her partner of a decade, Dr Robert Black, and a year later they purchased The Chalet at Hunters Hill, thus ending years of a somewhat unstated parental unease at her domestic arrangements and of moving from one borrowed flat to another. Again, it is Nora's 1954 *Self-portrait*, depicting her with painting palette in hand, that defines her life in these new-found environs. She is positioned as a professional artist against bare walls waiting to be filled with her paintings.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Portrait of Merv Lilley

1977

oil on canvas

National Library of Australia, Canberra

PIC/3773

Nora continued to receive a steady schedule of portrait commissions throughout her life and her technique shifted subtly over the latter part of her career. She felt challenged in the 1950s and 1960s by the art world's shift to abstraction and while she maintained a focus on figuration, her later portraits possess a deftness, animation and areas of 'unfinishedness' that suggest greater spontaneity. Interestingly, after her marriage ended in 1972, a new set of paintings flowed, such as that of larger-than-life poet *Portrait of Merv Lilley*.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Miss Paul

1967

oil on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne

After the mid-century success of her Archibald win and wartime commission, Nora fell into relative obscurity. She continued to paint and entered the Archibald several more times, but was uninterested in self-promotion and made no attempt to maintain a public identity. This lively portrait of a former school teacher (which was short-listed for the Archibald in 1967) is typical of Nora's portraiture in the latter half of her career – entirely lacking in ostentation and filled with vibrant personality.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Margaret

1948

oil on canvas

Private collection, Sydney

This work dates to an interesting period of Nora's career when, after the war, she followed Robert Black to Liverpool. There, she completed an unusual commission for the Blue Coat School, an institution founded for the education of disadvantaged girls. Margaret was a student there and her ruffled bonnet and cherubic face lend this work a curiously Victorian quality. While in England, Nora attended numerous exhibitions with her friends, the artist Jeffrey Smart and prominent Adelaide patrons and collectors Ursula and Bill Hayward.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Tess

c. 1932

earthenware

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

The Heysen family loved the animals that lived with them and many were favoured as artistic subjects as well as companions. This rather naive and endearing little clay sculpture was modelled on one of the family's dogs. In her later life, Nora made numerous drawings and paintings of her many cats and was invariably accompanied around her Sydney home in Hunters Hill by a much-loved border collie cross, Bosie.



# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## A boy with his cat

1972

oil on canvas board

Private collection, New South Wales

Nora loved animals and cats in particular became favoured subjects. She painted friends' children and flowers from her garden – subjects full of symbolic and literal light. As Phyllis McKillup wrote in the obituary published in *Australian Feminist Studies*: 'Nora aged beautifully. Her rambling garden was of great joy and value to her. She grew the flowers she painted, and daily arranged posies for her tables. Her walls were lined with drawings, paintings and a black sculptured head of Evie. Nora floated in this world, quite ageless and serene, and yet with power from her past'.

**Nora Heysen**  
Australia 1911–2003

**Morning sun**  
1965  
oil on canvas

Private collection, New South Wales

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Sketch of a cat**

c. 1966

fibre-tipped pen

The Cedars, Hahndorf

Nora Heysen Foundation

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Study of nude

1902

red chalk on cream paper

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Gift of the artist, 1944

448D2

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Male leg muscles and rear view of naked man full length

late 19th century – early 20th century  
charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH159

Anatomical drawing was a central aspect of academic art education, and both Hans and Nora made numerous sketches of this type during their student years, in Adelaide and later in Europe. Studies were made from live models, medical specimens, diagrams and casts, and also from examples of Classical sculpture which were believed to embody ideals of proportion, anatomical accuracy and beauty.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## **Seated female nude facing right, two sketches of European type landscapes**

late 19th century – early 20th century

red chalk and pencil

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH169

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Skull (front view)

late 19th century – early 20th century  
charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH154

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## **Skull (side view facing right)**

late 19th century – early 20th century  
charcoal

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH155



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Full length nude boy

c. 1900–04

red chalk

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH168

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Portrait of Horace Trenergy

1931

pencil

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
South Australian Government Grant, 1978

787D12

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Head study side view

early 1930s

pencil

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of the artist, 1971

711HH147

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Nude

early 20th century

oil on canvas

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

Though Hans worked regularly from life models in his student years, he rarely depicted the nude in painting. This unusual small oil of an unknown subject has the soft Arcadian quality of works by turn-of-the-century British artists Henry Scott Tuke and Frederick Walker, whose paintings were popular and widely reproduced during Hans's time in England. The palette here is that of his landscapes, and the flesh tones blend gently into the sand and water beyond, amplifying the sense of harmony between the human subject and his environment.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Everton Stokes knitting

c. 1935

black pencil

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Gift of Meredith Ardlie, 1980

NGA 80.10

While there is nothing in this idyllic scene suggest it, Nora's friendship with Evie resulted in some familial disharmony, which surfaced when Evie moved into Nora's flat in early 1935. The Heysens were concerned by unspecified rumours about Evie, and about the possibility that Nora's reputation might be tarnished by association. Nora, initially delighted to see her friend, was saddened by her family's disapproval and asked Evie to find alternative accommodation. Although she did not openly chastise her parents for forcing the decision, Nora wrote wistfully after Evie's departure, 'Is it not better to be happy, and to have companionship, than to be lonely and miserable?'

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Standing female nude viewed from  
behind, leaning on a pillar**

mid 1930s

pencil

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Gift of Allan Campbell, 2006

28.2006

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Studies of a seated male nude in a loin  
cloth**

mid 1930s

pencil

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of Allan Campbell, 2006

27.2006)

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Studies of the artist's hand, eye and  
nose**

1930s–1940s

pen and brown ink and wash on buff paper

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Gift of the artist, 2003

376.2003



**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Study for Motherhood**

c. 1941

pencil

Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat  
Gift of the Estate of the Artist, 2007

2007.10

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Male nude in moonlight

late 1940s – early 1950s

charcoal and chalk on blue paper

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of the artist, 2003

381.2003

Although their marriage was ultimately to disintegrate, Nora's relationship with Robert Black was a pivotal experience in her life, the more so for the great independence and strength required to foster so unconventional a romance in a period of considerable conservatism. Her nude study of a slumbering Robert, made in the 1940s, communicates with great tenderness and sensuality the intensity of her feelings for him.

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Portrait of Hans Heysen**

1952

crayon

National Library of Australia, Canberra

R10431

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Nude

1954

pencil

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of the artist, 1990

144.1990

Life drawing was an important part of Nora's work throughout her life, though she rarely exhibited these drawings or developed them into paintings. They are, nevertheless, among her most fluid and sensuous compositions, demonstrating her mastery of perspective and proportion and her great lucidity as a draftsman. Finding willing subjects outside art school was difficult early in her career – Ronda Paech (better known as 'Ruth') reportedly never returned to The Cedars after Nora asked her to pose nude.

When war was declared in 1939, Nora wrote home of her frustration at her powerlessness in the face of such destruction. In 1943, the possibility of becoming the first female war artist emerged, and she expressed immediate enthusiasm. Predictably, she was treated differently from her male counterparts, and was assigned to document medical and research units at various locations around Australia and subsequently in New Guinea.

Nora's war portraiture bears all the marks of her great sensitivity as an artist and humanist, and arguably little in the way of explicit patriotism. She harboured no illusions about the glories of battle – three years earlier she had declared her 'bitter resentment against the futility and the horror of war'. Her drawings of invalids and hospital patients are among her most delicate and sensitive from this period, demonstrating her emotional connection to her subjects, as well as her technical facility as a draftsman.

Working in the tropical humidity presented numerous challenges, leading Nora to observe with her characteristic dry humour: 'My paintings mildew overnight, they'll be old masters before I get them back'. Her skin also suffered badly in these conditions, and in 1946 she returned to Australia to recover.

The paintings and drawings produced by Nora during her time as a war artist were acquired by The Australian War Memorial, Canberra, which has generously loaned these works to the exhibition.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Flinders Street Station no. 2

1943–1944, dated 1946

oil on canvas on cardboard

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Lou Klepac OAM, Member, 2006

2006.58

Painted in early 1944, before Nora's move to New Guinea, this view of Flinders Street Station was painted from the Victorian army barracks where Nora was posted to paint servicepeople, most of whom were in transit. She found the location, directly overlooking the station, both vibrant and distracting and she wrote home to her parents, 'One cannot talk to one's sitters, nor have the windows open, but the outlook is quite fascinating and I've started a canvas of the railway lines and trains. The best way to combat a noise, I find, is to try and paint it'.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Self-portrait in army uniform

c. 1943

pencil

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART94170

This characteristically lucid pencil drawing was made shortly after Nora was first appointed as an official war artist. The army uniform was a source of some discomfort for Nora, both physically and in terms of what it represented. She struggled with the logistics of getting dressed, and found the uniform hot and restrictive. In the case of her sitters, she lamented its drabness and the necessary restriction on her palette. Nora was also notably uninterested in rank and found her own speedy elevation something of an embarrassment, imagining it to be a source of consternation among her peers.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Bluey (Sapper Bashforth)

1944

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART23417

Nora encountered many unusual and engaging personalities during her posting, whom she enthusiastically described in her letters home. Bluey (Sapper Bashforth) was a member of the Mechanical Engineering Company, whom she described as 'a lumber man from Queensland, a hulking great fellow 6 ft 4 and ginger, with pale blue eyes with that distant horizon look, red headed, red moustache and red hairs all over his brawny chest'. Bluey was awarded the Military Cross for driving his bulldozer (whom he called 'Dearest') while under Japanese fire to clear a path for the tanks to advance on and reclaim Sattelberg.



# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Portrait of a spider

1944

crayon

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22661

Throughout the posting, Nora maintained an interest in nature subjects, occasionally to the chagrin of her superior officers. The production of *The flower ship*, 1945, was particularly controversial. Nora recounted, ‘Right up in the steaming jungle of New Guinea I’d arranged myself a beautiful native bowl full of flowers and I was sitting in the mess painting this when I had a signal to be moved on down to Lae, and I ignored the signal and said “Go away! I’m in the middle of painting flowers!”’ Nora also sketched trees and painted berries, and this life-size *Portrait of a spider*, 1944, the model for which was found in her bedside drawer.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## **A battle-scarred warrior**

1944

charcoal and pastel on green paper

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22123

This drawing of a great, ancient fig tree is one of very few landscape subjects that Nora produced during her commission. Its title evokes Hans's approach to the depiction of trees – that of making 'portraits' rather than impersonal studies. It is an attitude that demonstrates reverence for, and identification with, the natural world – undoubtedly a source of solace amid the conflict and suffering that Nora was witnessing at the time.

Left to right

## **Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

### **Despatch rider (leading aircraftsman George Mayo)**

1945

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART24367

## **Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

### **Major Josephine Mackerras**

1945

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART24395

Although Nora struggled throughout her life with a strong sense of shyness, she was often fascinated by her sitters and would describe them in animated terms in her letters home. The distinguished entomologist Major Josephine Mackerras, whose portrait she painted in 1945, was a particular favourite – ‘an odd looking little person, ugly and interesting, bright intelligent eyes behind glasses and a lined and potted yellow face and grey wispy hair’.

...continued overleaf

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Matron Annie Sage

1944

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22218

Nora described her portrait of Matron Annie Sage, head of the Australian Army Nursing Service, in a letter home: 'She has a fine head and the whole thing is like a Flemish Old Master – Van Eyck would have loved her. The white head-dress is such a lovely setting for the face, and with the simple red cape makes a good design'. It was Matron Sage who decided that Nora should travel to New Guinea as soon as possible to record nurses and women in the Australian army medical services 'in hospitals in forward areas before they are fully developed'.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Head of a surgeon (Major Thomas Wilson)

1944

oil on canvas on plywood

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22406

...continued overleaf

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Theatre Sister Margaret Sullivan

1944

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22234

Many of the strongest works from Nora's wartime commission feature her facility as a painter of still life as well as portraiture. *Theatre Sister Margaret Sullivan*, here depicted with her 'instruments of torture' is as remarkable for its perfectly modelled medical equipment as for the angelic depiction of the nurse herself. Nora wrote home about the pleasing visual effect of the white-on-white composition – 'a subtle and fascinating scheme'.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Sister Veronica Harbour

1945

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART24377

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## WAAAF cook (Corporal Joan Whipp)

1945

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART24394

On 24 June 1945, Nora wrote home to her parents: 'At the moment I'm painting a dispatch rider and a cook, both under difficulties ... The latter [poses] in the kitchen with me sitting on the table, almost on the stove. What with the heat and the dust and the flies and the sight of yards of bully beef and dehydrated mashed potato pie, well, painting is the least of the problem. This painting is causing keen concentration, as I want the bully beef pie in the scheme, which means it is on the menu and hated by all'.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## AAMWS (Private Gwynneth Patterson)

1944

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22822

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Rain

1943–1946

oil on canvas on composition board

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22399

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Dance in the Sisters' mess

1944

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART23712

During her posting, Nora wrote home of criticism she had received from her commanding officer Colonel Treloar regarding her perceived lack of focus on the serious business of war. She was chastised in particular for painting men in action and groups of men and women socialising, rather than concentrating on the studies of female medical officers, which was her brief. For Nora, these events were integral to her posting; she was interested in capturing actual day-to-day life and exploring how people maintained their spirits under such challenging and often tragic circumstances.



**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Church ruins, Satelberg Mission**

1944

watercolour on buff paper

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22096)

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**LST loading troops, Dreger Harbour**

1944

oil on canvas on composition board

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART23627

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Pathologist titrating sera (Captain Robert Black)

1944

oil on composition board

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22409

It was in the process of painting this portrait that Nora became acquainted with Dr Robert Black, the highly respected specialist in tropical diseases who would become her friend, her lover and later her husband. The two corresponded regularly following the sitting, and Nora confided many of her difficulties, including the official chastisement she had received for her choice of artistic subjects. Unlike Nora's later portraits of Black, most of which are characterised by an unmistakable intimacy, here he is depicted in profile, absorbed in his work, surrounded by an abundance of beautifully rendered scientific equipment.

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**View from Sisters' Mess, Finschhafen**

1944

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22108

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Ambulance plane carrying battle  
casualties from Morotai to Townsville**

1945

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART24375

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Study of an operation, Alexishafen

1944

oil on composition board

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22402

In Alexishafen, New Guinea, Nora surprised herself by being able to observe medical operations. She made preparatory sketches while dressed in surgical mask and gown, and while she was often disturbed by the things that she witnessed, she was also proud of her capacity to capture these moments. She proclaimed it was 'quite fantastic to find myself in that atmosphere. This war does strange and unpredictable things to us'.

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Sister Minnie Goldstein working in the  
blood bank, Alexishafen**

1944

oil on canvas

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART23921

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Separating blood (Private Kathleen Thorp)**

1944

pencil, charcoal and coloured crayons

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22675



**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Portrait of 'Dearest'**

1944

pencil on green paper

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22117

# Unknown, Australia

## Nora Heysen's travelling case

1930s

wood, brass, leather, (other materials)

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
Nora Heysen Foundation

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Strip sitter (Sister Lucy Mackenzie)

1945

sepia crayon and pencil

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART24282

The exhaustion and boredom of war were things to which Nora alluded regularly in her letters. In addition to the official portraiture that was her brief, she produced numerous studies of soldiers and medical officers going about the ordinary business of day-to-day living. This unassuming drawing of a tired nurse demonstrates Nora's considerable skill in figure drawing, as well as her intuitive capacity for simple human observation.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Infecting mosquitoes with malaria (Gunner Gilbert Seaton)

1945

black crayon over pencil

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART24269

Nora wrote home about the grim effects of medical research upon subjects: ‘...six wards full of men or “guinea pigs” as they are called used for experiments for malaria treatments. They are bitten with the mosquitos which are bred here and are given the malaria by biting a patient with the fever. One sees a good bronzed Anzac go down to it and in a week he’s lost 2 stone and looks at death’s door, then when he’s provided the pathologists with the right number of reactions, he’s brought to again fed up to health and then down again to another attack’.

# **Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

## **Lieutenant Thomas Le Merle**

1945

sepia crayon and coloured crayons on buff paper

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART24299

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Patient with malaria (Corporal Arthur  
Batchelor)**

1945

crayon and pencil

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART24289

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Lieutenant Harry Sherring**

1944

pencil

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22105

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Japanese prisoner, 106 Australian  
Casualty Clearing Station,  
Finschhafen, New Guinea**

1944

charcoal on buff paper

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART24289)



**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Fever patient (Leading aircraftsman  
A. Smith)**

1944

red crayon

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART22111

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Sketchbook**

1943–1946

unbound sketchbook: pen and ink, 21 pages

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART29202

**Nora Heysen**

Australia 1911–2003

**Blood and Serum Preparation Unit**

1944

sketchbook: pen and ink, charcoal, 26 pages, cloth and cardboard cover, stitched binding

Australian War Memorial, Canberra

ART29200

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Sketchbook, New Guinea

1950s

sketchbook: brush and red ink, crayon, 32 pages and 2 loose leaves, cardboard cover, stitched binding

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of the artist, 2000

64.2000.a-hh

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Topurina

c. 1944

coloured chalks

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
South Australian Government Grant, 1956

5610D2

In addition to her portraits and studies of Australian army personnel, Nora completed numerous drawings of members of the Papuan Infantry Battalion, such as *Topurina*, who is depicted wearing his loyal service medal. Nora worked extensively in coloured chalks at this time, in part for the speed and simplicity of the medium, in part because her painting materials were rationed. The humidity also complicated the drying process and she wrote home of canvases becoming mildewed before she had the chance to complete them.

# Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003

## Moulasi, New Guinea

1954

pastel

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1956

9191

After the war, Nora returned several times to New Guinea, where she continued to focus upon drawing the people she met there. Robert Black's specialty was infectious diseases and she accompanied him on three trips to the Pacific. These were to the Trobriand Islands in 1953 and again in 1954, with the latter trip also taking in New Guinea, and to the Solomon Islands in 1961–62, where she produced some beautiful drawings and paintings, including this portrait, *Moulasi*.

In 1926, following the trauma of the First World War and the sudden, tragic death of his daughter Lilian, Hans ventured for the first time to the Flinders Ranges. There was something he found personally therapeutic in his approach to this landscape. Over the next twenty-three years, he would return ten times, mainly to the Aroona and Arkaba areas, making numerous sketches and watercolours, some of which were later developed into oils. In this ancient place of monumental rocks and trees scarred by time and drought, Hans found, it seems, a kind of comfort in the rough continuity of nature.

It was during this time that he discovered a new palette – the gentle modulations of his Hahndorf landscapes were replaced with greater contrasts. There is a harshness to these works, but also a brilliance and intensity that suggests the stark juxtapositions of the environment itself. Hans admired Vincent van Gogh – ‘the great originator of modern art, who towers above them all’ – and his influence, as well as that of other Post-impressionists, including Paul Cézanne, is manifest in the Flinders landscapes. Particularly striking are the effects of geometric simplification; in Hans’s words, ‘the beautiful balance of the pyramid and the circle’.

# **Eicke & Provis, Adelaide** manufacturer

Australia 1920s–1930s

## **Caravan**

1920s

metal, wood, canvas, mesh, rubber, (other materials)

The Cedars, Hahndorf  
The Hans Heysen Estate

Following earlier trips to the Flinders Ranges spent camping or staying at outstations, at the end of 1931 Hans bought a small trailer-caravan with collapsible sides and roof. Hans did not drive, but his son David drove the family's Model A Ford Roadster, towing the caravan behind. The pair took the trailer on a trial run south of Adelaide and subsequently set out for the far north in March 1932. In 1933, father and son spent five weeks in the Flinders Ranges – tremendously productive artistically – in what they both believed was relative luxury.



# Frederick Allen Joyner

Australia 1863–1945

## (Hans Heysen working in landscape)

1931

gelatin silver photograph

Gift of Mrs Max Joyner, 1983

PH283-1983

In 1899, Frederick Joyner had been one of four business people who financed Hans's five years of study in Europe – in return for title to everything painted during that time. Joyner went on to become a close friend of the artist, and his legal adviser. Joyner was a solicitor, photographer and plant breeder, and, like Hans, a great lover of the Australian landscape. The friends made many trips together, Hans sketching and Joyner taking photographs, both of the landscape itself and of Hans at work within it. These provide insight into Hans's practice and into a warm and artistically generative friendship.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Foothills of the Flinders

1929

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund, 1939

0.761

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The hill of the creeping shadow

1929

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1929

4830

There is both a similarity and diversity in Hans's Flinders Ranges subjects. Images such as *The hill of the creeping shadow* suggest evening closing over the landscape. Here, Hans reduced his subject to its essentials. He had once commented that 'simplicity is an essential quality' but 'only long experience can tell the artist how much or how little to put onto paper or canvas'.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Patawarta: Land of the Oratunga

1929

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

M. J. M. Carter AO Collection, 1969. Given in memory of Sir Edward Morgan, Chairman of the Art Gallery Board, 1944–56 and 1963–69

697P34

There could not be a more striking contrast than that between the fertile landscapes of the pretty Adelaide Hills and the vast open spaces of the Flinders Ranges. From 1928, Hans made many images of Patawarta Hill (fifteen kilometres north of Blinman), notable for its distinctive pyramid-like form and its almost complete absence of vegetation. In the oil painting *Patawarta: Land of the Oratunga*, 1929, he presented the hill's bold rugged form standing out against the foothills by using strong purples and blues contrasted with red ochre and cream.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Arkaba country

1929/1934

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Ruth Robertson Bequest Fund in memory of Robert and Elizabeth Dennis, 2010 NGA 2010.556

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## In the Wonoka Country

1930

oil on canvas

Hamilton Gallery, Victoria  
Herbert and May Shaw Bequest

0738

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Study for The land of Oratunga

1930

pen and ink wash, watercolour over pencil and brown  
chalk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Felton Bequest, 1943

1252-4

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The land of the Oratunga

1932

watercolour

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
South Australian Government Grant, 1937

0.925

Patawarta Hill, five kilometres north of Blinman, is one of the most striking formations in the Northern Flinders Ranges. Its distinctive pyramid-like form was magnetic for Hans, a subject to which he returned repeatedly. This watercolour, *The land of the Oratunga*, bearing a resonantly Aboriginal name, is the most celebrated image of Patawarta Hill and perhaps the most dramatic. Here, Hans moved closer to his subject, so that Patawarta looms large and, as Hans commented, the rolling landforms resemble 'arrested waves on the verge of breaking'. This watercolour was probably finished in the studio based on various on-the-spot studies.



# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Summer lights, Flinders Ranges

1933

oil on canvas

National Library of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased, 2017

PIC/20360

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Guardian of the Brachina Gorge

1937

watercolour over charcoal on paper on cardboard

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Felton Bequest, 1937

419-4

*Guardian of Brachina Gorge* is another monumental pyramidal form that Hans depicted many times. Approximately 244 metres high, the weathered cliff face of the gorge constantly changes with light and shade, and with colours ranging from orange to pink, blue and purple. Hans's watercolour shows the scene from near the artist's camp, 'with Brachina Creek in the foreground and Heysen Hill in the background, made to appear closer than it does in actuality'. Painted in Hans's Hahndorf studio in 1937, this watercolour was based on sketches he made during camping trips to the Flinders Ranges between 1927 and 1933.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Blinman (Mt Patawerta)

1940

pencil, blue ink, watercolour and gouache on buff paper

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased, 1943

7373

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## The Wilpenas from Edina

1950

pen and ink and wash

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Bequest of Christine MacGregor, 1975

758D75

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## In the Flinders – Far North

1951

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased, 1959

NGA 59.66

*In the Flinders – Far North* sees Hans combining the two great motifs of his oeuvre in one composition: the monumental Australian gum tree and the ancient sculptural landscape of the Flinders Ranges. The gum dominates this work – a symbol of survival in this arid landscape. The work was commissioned by the Commonwealth government to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of federation and, for the unusually large canvas he used at this late date, Hans chose a landscape that combined the rugged ranges with a stand of bright gums whose spreading roots defy the adversity of their surroundings.

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Flinders Ranges landscape

1956

watercolour, charcoal and coloured pastel over pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Gift from The L. W. Thompson Collection, 2003

2003.461

# Hans Heysen

Germany 1877 – Australia 1968, arrived Australia 1884

## Arkaba country

1964

oil and pencil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased, 1964

NGA 64.15

In the pencil sketch *Arkaba country*, 1930, and the oil painting *Arkaba country*, 1964, the sharp light defining the Arkaba hills emphasise their undulating shapes: here concave, there convex. Whatever his subject, Hans simplified forms and arranged them into a reverberating pattern. In the oil painting, Hans applied paint thinly to the areas of the ranges, almost washing on the oil paint (diluted by turpentine) like watercolour, while using solid, flat paint for the cloudless sky. At first glance, this painting appears unfinished but closer observation reveals that Hans strategically used these techniques to achieve light and translucence.