

NEWS RELEASE

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ART
GALLERY
NSW

MARGARET PRESTON ART AND LIFE



A MAJOR TOURING EXHIBITION OF ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST CELEBRATED ARTISTS

FRIDAY 29 JULY – SUNDAY 23 OCTOBER 2005

ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

TOURING TO NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA, QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY
& ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

“Australia is crying out for a national culture and it is only with the close bond between the artist and the people that there can be a national art ...

I am trying to find one form that will suggest Australia ...” Margaret Preston

Margaret Preston (1875–1963) is one of Australia's most celebrated artists, and is certainly Australia's most famous woman artist. Her cosmopolitan paintings and prints of the 1920s, '30s and '40s epitomise not only one of the most distinctive eras in the history of Australian art, but also one of the country's most aesthetically innovative periods.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales is organising the first major retrospective of Margaret Preston's work. In addition to around 100 paintings and 80 prints, the exhibition includes pottery, textiles, illustrative work, photographs and documents.

The curator, Deborah Edwards, and co-curator on the project, conservator Rose Peel, have spent 5 years locating paintings for this exhibition. Works selected for the exhibition are from museum and private collections from around Australia, as well as from collections in the UK and New Zealand.

Deborah Edwards said: “Margaret Preston was the best known of her generation of Australian artists with her commanding compositions – predominantly still lifes, landscapes and scenes of Sydney. These works have continued to be, over the past 70 years, amongst the most popular of all Australian artists’ images.”

“During the 1920s and ’30s Margaret Preston, with her art, her strong opinions and her colourful life was a commanding figure in the public domain. Not only a seminal modernist, Preston was the first serious advocate of Aboriginal art. Her promotion and appropriation of Aboriginal art was developed in the context of her conviction that a modern and necessary identity for Australia could only emerge from the inspiration of the art of ‘the first Australians’, as well as the influence of Asian artistic traditions. Each was of central importance to Preston’s work and to her own positioning of Australian art in the modern era,” said Deborah Edwards.

Margaret Preston, who was born in Adelaide, was often described as a red-headed firebrand, obstinate, uncompromising, vociferous, passionate about her art and jealous of her various contemporaries, including Thea Proctor at times.

The exhibition is presented as a set of experiences which relate both to the intimate nature of Margaret Preston’s paintings and works on paper, and to a number of thematic and stylistic shifts in her art. Through a series of rooms, the range of Preston’s most significant works from the 1890s to the 1950s will be presented in a celebration of one of Australia’s most significant artists.

The first comprehensive monograph and a fully illustrated CD-rom catalogue of Margaret Preston’s paintings have been published by the Art Gallery of New South Wales to accompany this exhibition.

MARGARET PRESTON: ART AND LIFE

29 July – 23 October 2005

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery Rd The Domain Sydney 2000 Australia

telephone	61 2 9225 1744 or toll free 1800 679 278
website	www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au
hours	10am – 5pm 7 days a week (closed Christmas Day & Easter Friday)
Art After Hours	until 9pm Wednesday evenings
admission	\$12 adults / \$8 students, concessions, members \$32 family (2 adults/2 children)

Touring:

National Gallery of Victoria	12 November 2005 – 29 January 2006
Queensland Art Gallery	18 February – 7 May 2006
Art Gallery of South Australia	26 May – 13 August 2006

National touring sponsor



This exhibition is supported by Visions of Australia, an Australian Government Program supporting touring exhibitions by providing funding assistance for the development and touring of cultural material across Australia.

Details from left: Margaret Preston *Sydney Heads* 1925 *Self portrait* 1930. Both collection of Art Gallery of New South Wales. *Australian coral flowers* 1928, collection National Gallery of Australia. All works © Margaret Preston Estate, licensed by Viscopy, Australia

Exhibition program sponsor

