GEOFF WILSON: INTERROGATED LANDSCAPE
17 JULY – 18 SEPTEMBER 2015

This survey exhibition traces the career of one of South Australia's most respected artists and teachers, with a selection of his watercolours, paintings and prints from 1948 to 2013.

Born in 1927 in Bridgetown, Western Australia, Geoff Wilson moved around with his family, from Western Australia to New South Wales and Victoria, until finally, when he was at high school age, settling in Adelaide in 1941.

He had glimpsed an artist's life in Sydney through his Glaswegian grandfather, who encouraged him to draw and took him to see the 1939 *Herald* Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art, as well as paintings hanging in the Art Gallery of New South Wales. His talent soon became evident as a school student.

On leaving school in Adelaide, Wilson took up an art teaching course at the South Australian School of Art and Adelaide Teachers College, following which he entered the secondary system. After three years in London from 1954, during which he travelled throughout Europe, he eventually took up a post in 1962 at the School, where for the next twenty years he became one of its most travelled, well-informed, and influential lecturers.

This exhibition however focuses principally on Wilson's journey from his beginnings as an artist, one with an interrogating lyrical intelligence related to the South Australian landscape which has absorbed him almost exclusively for nearly seven decades.

. . . . .

It is not surprising, from the architectonic nature of many of the images in this survey, that Geoff Wilson could have forged a successful career as an architect. He briefly explored that option, encouraged by his art master Tom Bone, at the end of his schooling at Adelaide High School in 1944. However financial subsistence available as a trainee teacher whilst attending the South Australian School of Art became a choice of preference.

Having received basic instruction in watercolour by Bone before he started his course in 1946, over the next decade or so Wilson's draftsman-like style began to be swayed by freer looking work he saw in displays at the Art Gallery of South Australia and exhibitions at the Royal South Australian Society of Arts. For example, Australians Hans Heysen, Len Annois, Frank McNamara and Max Ragless, and Englishmen Frank Brangwyn, Muirhead Bone and Blair Hughes-Stanton, amongst others.

Later, the contemporary British school, with artists such as Paul Nash, John Piper and Victor Pasmore whose works were readily accessible in the Art Gallery of South Australia, guided him in his growing curiosity towards modernism. The French legacy through Cézanne was never part of his education.

He had also as a student received instruction in oil painting from Jeffrey Smart, who was aware of the evolution of Cubism and so on. But it turned out disastrously, leaving him feeling more secure, focused on a modern British watercolour style until the early 1960s. Once he began lecturing at the art school in 1962 however, he gave stronger attention to painting skills: both oils and new water-based acrylics for the benefit of himself as well as his students.

Wilson's work began to tighten up formally in parallel with the 1960s movement of colour-field and hard-edge painting. His brief experiments in symbolic geometry, partly connected to his teaching of design, climaxed at the end of the decade with a series of witty screen print abstractions. But soon departing from those, he continued his dedication to *plein-air* painting, evolving the distinctive language we know today, as a much loved and celebrated *chanteur* of the South Australian landscape.

BARRY PEARCE
Exhibition curator

CATALOGUE OF EXHIBITED WORKS

Somewhere in city of Adelaide 1948
watercolour on paper
32.5 x 23.5 cm
Collection of the artist

Coasters Port Adelaide 1949
watercolour on paper
48.0 x 56.5 cm
Collection of the Mount family, SA

Mile End railway sheds 1949
watercolour on paper
34.0 x 39.0 cm
Collection of Neil Lowrie, Millswood, SA

Beach and ruins, Wallaroo 1950
watercolour on paper
34.1 x 45.3 cm
Elder Bequest Fund 1950
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Ballarat railway stn 1951
pen and ink and watercolour on paper
46.5 x 55.0 cm
Collection of the artist

From a window, west end 1951
pen and ink and watercolour on paper
43.0 x 57.0 cm
Private collection

Onkaparinga River Pt Noarlunga 1951
watercolour on paper
35.0 x 40.5 cm
Collection of Wilma Hardy, Glenside, SA

Port Adelaide buildings 1951
pen and ink and watercolour on paper
43.0 x 47.0 cm
Private collection, SA

Hindley Street looking east 1952
watercolour on paper
48.0 x 52.5 cm
Collection of Tony Parkinson,
Penny's Hill Winery, McLaren Vale, SA

Spanish village near Toledo 1954
ink and watercolour on paper
42.0 x 47.5 cm
Collection of Maxine Mount, Echunga, SA

City demolition 1957
watercolour on paper
44.5 x 55.0 cm
Collection of Peggy Liminton and the
late Roger Liminton, Hazelwood Park, SA

Wallpaper wall derelict building c.1957
watercolour on paper
53.0 x 68.0 cm
Private collection, VIC

Botanic Gardens, Adelaide 1959
watercolour on paper
40.0 x 50.0 cm
Collection of Kate Llewellyn, Hove, SA

Country town with windmill 1961
watercolour on paper
54.0 x 69.5 cm
Collection of Alb Smith, SA

Coorong winter 1963
watercolour on paper
38.0 x 50.0 cm
Collection of Mike and Rosie Johnston,
North Adelaide, SA

Sun over Yorke Peninsula 1963
watercolour on paper
51.0 x 65.4 cm
Collection of Jonathan Woore

Sylvan Solitude 1963
watercolour on paper
48.5 x 68.0 cm
Collection of Lesley Redgate,
Willunga, SA

Entrance to a winter garden 1964
watercolour on paper
49.5 x 71.0 cm
Collection of David A. Beaumont OAM,
Aldgate, SA

**Untitled [ochre, white and
black form]** 1964
gouache on hardboard
51.0 x 72.5 cm
Private collection, NSW

Landscape at Bow Hill, Mannum c.1964
oil on hardboard
48.0 x 60.5 cm
Collection of Dee Jones,
Port Willunga, SA

Hay baler 1965
synthetic polymer paint on hardboard
34.0 x 64.5 cm
Collection of John Freebairn

Machine bones on a hill 1966
oil on canvas
121.5 x 122.0 cm
Collection of David A. Beaumont OAM,
Aldgate, SA

El Dorado series:
All screen print on paper
Collection of Andrea Adams, SA

Battered by mountain country 1969
screen print on paper
44.0 x 63.0 cm

**Earth & sky's memorial to all men's
El Dorado** 1969
screen print on paper
66.0 x 46.5 cm

First dream of El Dorado 1969
screen print on paper
66.0 x 49.5 cm

I bet ya 10 dollars it's a mirage 1969
screen print on paper
65.5 x 46.5 cm

**Their first look at the fabulous
mountain** 1969
screen print on paper
65.5 x 44.0 cm

**A desert buzzard's eye view of four
separated travellers** 1972
screen print on paper
44.2 x 68.5 cm

A frustrated feel for the dough 1972
screen print on paper
45.5 x 69.5 cm

A most elaborate fenced stake out 1972
screen print on paper
45.5 x 69.5 cm

**Boxed by all those trig points
& road signs** 1972
screen print on paper
43.5 x 66.5 cm

**Digging practice at home & abroad
brings a kind of booty** 1972
screen print on paper
69.0 x 43.5 cm

Gold fever 1972
screen print on paper
45.0 x 68.5 cm

**Morning stand to at the home altar
of El Dorado** 1972
screen print on paper
43.5 x 68.5 cm

**Three days desert march then
boot hill** 1972
screen print on paper
66.5 x 46.5 cm

Noarlunga landscape 1972
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
61.0 x 76.2 cm
Collection of Catherine and Emily Trott, SA

Pt Willunga farm 1972
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
61.0 x 76.5 cm
Private collection, SA

CATALOGUE OF EXHIBITED WORKS cont'd

Two Willunga roads 1974
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
57.0 x 86.0 cm
Private collection, SA

Road to Sellicks 1975
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
59.0 x 71.0 cm
Collection of Magdalen Clements
and Scott Gardiner

July landscape, McLaren Vale 1977
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
60.5 x 88.5 cm
Collection of Lesley Redgate, Willunga, SA

Farmhouse Warners Road 1977
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
60.0 x 75.0 cm
Collection of Joan Coates, SA

Oblique rails and road 1978
synthetic polymer paint on cotton duck
75.0 x 88.0 cm
South Australian Government Grant 1978
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Pines, dead gums, Delamere 1978
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
75.0 x 88.0 cm
University of South Australia Art
Collection, Adelaide, SA

Road to Willunga 1978
synthetic polymer paint on hardboard
44.0 x 59.0 cm
Private collection, SA

Barn skeleton 1980
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
56.0 x 91.0 cm
Collection of Adjunct Professor
Mike Thorpe

Late summer landscape Dutton 1980
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
66.0 x 92.0 cm
Collection of Geoff and Di Robson,
Uraidla, SA

They call it the house of dreams 1980
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
61.0 x 76.5 cm
Collection of Ron Corso,
Royston Park, SA

Late winter group 1983
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
64.8 x 100.6 cm
Courtesy of the Parliament House Art
Collection, Department of Parliamentary
Services, Canberra, ACT

Tank support 3:1 1984
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
66.0 x 101.5 cm
Collection of Geoff and Di Robson,
Uraidla, SA

The well 1984
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
76.0 x 91.0 cm
Private collection, SA

Cranes and bulk handling shed 1986
oil on canvas
61.0 x 91.5 cm
Collection of Peggy Liminton and the
late Roger Liminton, Hazelwood Park, SA

**Puff puff puff goes the ship's
freight train** 1986
oil on canvas
40.5 x 111.0 cm
Collection of Hugo Shaw, St Peters, SA

Towards the Murray Flats, Dutton 1987
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
45.5. x 101.5 cm
Collection of Dr Adam Pedler,
Gilberton, SA

Farm gate Dutton 1988
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
51.0 x 137.0 cm
Collection of Dr Adam Pedler,
Gilberton, SA

Farm sheds Mundoo Island 1988
oil on canvas
45.0 x 121.0 cm
Collection of Ron Danvers

**Green chair and extractor tower
Brompton** 1988
oil on canvas
106.5 x 61.0 cm
Collection of the artist

The milking shed 1991
oil on canvas
61.0 x 102.0 cm
Collection of Lesley Redgate, Willunga, SA

The stone barn 1992
oil on canvas
45.5 x 60.5 cm
Collection of Leigh and Julie Taylor

**Rhythmic approach to the
Willunga Hills** 1996
oil on canvas
61.0 x 76.5 cm
Collection of Lesley Redgate, Willunga, SA

Steel framed by the sea 1998
oil on canvas on hardboard
60.0 x 76.0 cm
Private collection, SA

Blue bitumen to Paschendale 2000
oil on canvas
92.0 x 137.0 cm
Private collection, SA

**Monument to the South East
Freeway** 2000
oil on canvas
91.0 x 121.5 cm
Collection of Chester Osborn,
McLaren Vale, SA

**Two circles and an ellipse Kelly's
farm Quorn** 2001
oil on canvas
51.0 x 76.5 cm
Collection of Peter Wallfried, Glandore, SA

**McLaren Vale landscape
looking south** 2002
oil on canvas
106.8 x 137.0 cm
Private collection, SA

The aero wing paddock 2008
oil on canvas
61.0 x 91.0 cm
Collection of the artist

The big dump, west coast 2008
oil on canvas
61.0 x 167.5 cm
Collection of Margaret
and Chris Burrell, SA

The big rusty tank, Spalding SA 2010
oil on canvas
51.0 x 76.5 cm
Private collection

Landscape of a German barn 2011
oil on canvas
36.0 x 137.0 cm
Collection of Adjunct Professor
Mike Thorpe

The chair near Port Lincoln 2012
oil on canvas
60.0 x 92.0 cm
Private collection, SA

Back lit barns 2013
oil on canvas
51.0 x 92.0 cm
Private collection, SA

Five triangles of the Barossa Valley 2013
oil on canvas
61.0 x 107.0 cm
Private collection, SA

" Concentration on a subject on a pleasant day outdoors can build up a rhythm, create a good essence and allow you to fly with the landscape so everything goes right. Part of the joy is being surrounded by it all. "

GEOFF WILSON, 1998

University of South Australia | SAMSTAG MUSEUM

Geoff Wilson: Interrogated Landscape

17 July – 18 September 2015

Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art
University of South Australia, Adelaide

Exhibition Curator: Barry Pearce

GORDON DARLING FOUNDATION

Government of South Australia
Arts SA

UAMA
UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA