



MIKE PARR, *Best Man, Primitive Gifts (holding melon)*, 2006, photograph, 180 x 120 cm, courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery



*Revealed! inside the private collections of South Australia*  
 22 June – 22 July 2012  
 Exhibition curator: Erica Green

Published by the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art  
 University of South Australia  
 GPO Box 2471, Adelaide SA 5001  
 T 08 8302 0870  
 E [samstagmuseum@unisa.edu.au](mailto:samstagmuseum@unisa.edu.au)  
 W [unisa.edu.au/samstagmuseum](http://unisa.edu.au/samstagmuseum)

Copyright © the artists, author  
 and University of South Australia

All rights reserved. This publication is copyright.  
 Except as permitted under the Copyright Act,  
 no part of this publication may be reproduced  
 by any process, electronic or otherwise, without  
 permission in writing from the publisher. Neither  
 may information be stored electronically in any  
 form whatsoever without such permission.

ISBN 978-0-9807175-9-4

Samstag Museum of Art Director: Erica Green  
 Curator: Special Projects: Susan Jenkins  
 Curator: Exhibitions and Collections: Gillian Brown  
 Samstag Administrator: Jane Wicks  
 Museum Assistants: Erin Davidson and Ashleigh Whatling  
 Gallery Attendants: James Edwards, Wayne McAra,  
 Patrick Rees, Beth Shimmin, Lucy Tesoriero

Graphic Design: Sandra Elms Design  
 Printing: FiveStarPrint  
 Photography: Sam Noonan (except works  
 by Mike Parr and Peter Madden)



Kirsten COELHO, installation detail, porcelain, matt white glaze, iron oxide, various dimensions,  
 private collection, collection of Tom Twopenny and collection of Mark Fuidge and Mary Hamilton

The Samstag Museum of Art would like to thank all the collectors who so generously  
 loaned their works for *Revealed! inside the private collections of South Australia*.

The curator expresses her sincere appreciation to Richard Frolich and Stephanie Grose  
 for their primary role and encouragement in the development of this very special project.  
 She also thanks Anne Sanders, Lorraine Wohling and Mike Parr for their valued support.  
 The production and planning of *Revealed!*, would not have been possible without the  
 creative involvement of Samstag Museum staff, led by Susan Jenkins and Gillian Brown.

The Samstag Museum of Art acknowledges the support of Hugo Michell Gallery and  
 Anna Schwartz Gallery, and the artists' representative galleries.

The University of South Australia's Samstag Museum of Art is one of Australia's leading  
 university art museums. We gratefully acknowledge our naming sponsors Lipman Karas,  
 and Bestec; our exhibition partners Tynte Flowers, Mosaic and Dowie Doole; as well as  
 the ongoing support of Anna Ciccarelli, Stephanie and Julian Grose, and Robert Lyons.



*Revealed! inside the private collections of South Australia* is a Samstag Museum of Art exhibition

Cover image: Jake and Dinos CHAPMAN, *One Day You Will No Longer Be Loved IV (detail)*, 2008, oil on canvas, 41.5 x 32.5 cm, collection Candy Bennett, Edwina Lehmann and Tracey Whiting, Adelaide

Revealed! inside the private collections of South Australia



'Beckett told me that one had to accept the art of one's day, as it was a living thing.'

Peggy Guggenheim

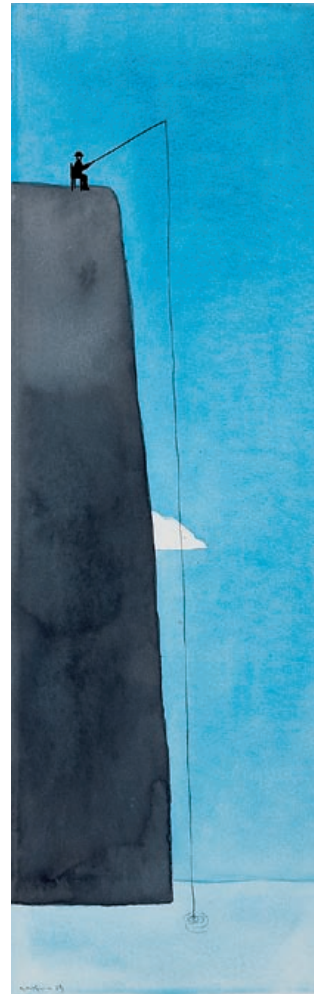
## Revealed<sup>1</sup>: inside the private collections of South Australia by Anne Sanders

*Revealed<sup>1</sup>: inside the private collections of South Australia*, the inaugural exhibition in a series of three, is a celebration of the critical role that private collectors play in not only supporting and encouraging contemporary art practice but also contributing to contemporary cultural change. With around one hundred artworks, made by thirty-seven contemporary artists and drawn from thirty collections across South Australia, *Revealed<sup>1</sup>* offers a glimpse into the dynamic diversity that exists in these treasuries of art.

Playwright, Samuel Beckett's advice to Peggy Guggenheim was prescient. Following a brief period as a representative gallery director of French surrealists in London at her Guggenheim Jeune gallery, she returned in late 1939 to Nazi occupied Paris, with a limited amount of funds and the help of Duchamp, intent on purchasing 'a picture a day' from contemporary artists such as Dalí, Braque, Picasso, Mondrian, Miró, Ernst, Brancusi and Léger. Fleeing occupied France with her lover Max Ernst, she returned to New York where in 1942 she opened her remarkable museum-gallery, Art of this Century, where she showed not only these leading European artists' works but also gave exhibitions to then unknown young American artists who would later become the vanguard abstract expressionists. It was Guggenheim's patronage of Jackson Pollock in those early struggling war and immediate post-war years, through stipends, purchases, commissions and exhibitions that established his career. She exhibited her collection, including works by Pollock, Rothko and Arshile Gorky – shown in Europe for the first time – at the 1948 Venice Biennale. The rest is history – she moved to Venice permanently, where her collection is on display to the public in her palazzo-museum, one of the most visited venues on the regular art pilgrimages to Venice and its Biennale. As a passionate collector, Guggenheim embodied the following dictum:

*The collectors who really matter to the history of art are not necessarily the very richest or even the most acquisitive. They are those who by their example set standards for others, encourage interest in the art they collect and share their treasures with the public.<sup>1</sup>*

Much has changed since those early post-war years. Since the 1990s there has been an expansion in the promotion of contemporary art worldwide driven by an exponential rise in the number of international biennales, triennials and art fairs, growth in the number of museums



Noel McKENNA (from left): *Rainy Night, Hong Kong (With Paul Smith Tram)*, 2007, 30 x 30 cm, collection of Hannah Michell and Dave Gilbert  
*Blue series (2 homes)*, 2001, enamel on canvas board, 38 x 75 cm, collection of Sally Ball and Xen Xenophou  
*On the edge of the cliff*, 2003, watercolour, 57 x 18 cm, collection of James Darling and Lesley Forwood

and galleries specifically promoting contemporary art including private foundations (think of Tate Modern and the extension of the Guggenheim brand to Bilbao, Berlin and Abu Dhabi), as well as the remarkable rise of the Chinese, Indian and South-East Asian contemporary art markets and, most recently, the emergence of a contemporary art market in the Middle East. Contentious though the issue of 'globalisation' with its implied homogenisation of culture may be, healthy debate surrounds the push and pull of regional specificity versus global consumption. Within this bewildering array of activities and venues is a large audience interested in the art of its own time and within this group is the nucleus of passionate, committed individuals whose fundamental role is their support for contemporary artists and their diverse practices. Although the international media and art journals tend to focus on mega-billionaire collectors and global brands, it is the local and specific, as exemplified in *Revealed<sup>1</sup>*, that really matters.

Collectors of contemporary art in Australia have gained significant recognition recently for sharing their treasures. There has been the burgeoning development of private museums such as the Besens' TarraWarra Museum of Art in Victoria and the Neilsons' White Rabbit Gallery in Sydney; major collection donations to state galleries such as John Kaldor's to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and most notably the opening of David Walsh's MONA in Tasmania – and his recent nomination as the most powerful person in the arts in Australia. There have also been touring exhibitions of ground-breaking, individual collections such as Ann Lewis's Gallery A and Colin and Liz Laverty's Aboriginal art collections.

What is increasingly evident is that almost all state and regional galleries and art museums are profoundly dependent upon collectors, like those in *Revealed<sup>1</sup>*, to lend and donate their works for exhibitions and collection development. It is collectors' commitment, foresight and risk-taking with regard to contemporary art that is often the underestimated aspect of the public art museums' enhanced collections.

As the then Art Gallery of South Australia Director, Ron Radford, observed in 2003:

*Nearly ninety percent of the Gallery's collection has been acquired through private benefaction ... today, benefaction is more important than ever to Australia's public art museums and particularly when it comes to contemporary art.<sup>2</sup>*

The art dealer and commentator Michael Reid put it more graphically:

*There are more than fifty private collectors in Australia who spend more each year on contemporary art than all the Australian art museums put together ... the purchasing of artworks by private collectors ... fuels the sales and acquisitions engine-room of the Australian art market.<sup>3</sup>*

This exhibition's premise: contemporary works, principally by living artists, drawn from private collections in South Australia – from long-term collectors who are well-established and well-funded to young, recent entrants on budgets – is what makes it unique. There is nothing provincial in its geographic specificity. What is on view are powerful sets of personal relationships. All of these works are expressions of aspects of their owners' private personas, shared

in their lived environments – mostly domestic, intimate spaces – and usually seen by invitation only. For many collectors, support for artists, their ideas and works, and the stimulation and enjoyment drawn from these associations often develop into long-term friendships. Relationship is a key investment.

An exemplary Adelaide example of this kind of patronage is the Haywards' Carrick Hill collection. The Haywards' support through purchases of sometimes controversial work of young to mid-career Australian artists, particularly during the difficult war years, and their openness to young Adelaide artists, such as Jeffrey Smart and Jacqueline Hick, members of the nascent Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, through making their collections of French and British works available for close study was vitally important to these artists' development.

Collecting contemporary art offers an exhilarating challenge. Because it doesn't have the certainty of disinterested art historical provenance, the onus is on collectors to be active participants in researching their interests and backing their intuitive hunches: viewing exhibitions in commercial and public galleries as well as remote indigenous arts centres, artist run spaces and graduate exhibitions in art schools; visiting national and international art fairs and biennales; joining benefaction fundraising boards and committees to support acquisitions in public institutions; and visiting and sharing with other collectors and their collections.

The majority of the artworks in this exhibition were purchased in the primary market, mainly through representative galleries or arts centres. It is here that collectors play a vital role in providing ongoing support for artists in their careers.

Time-demanding and risky, collecting contemporary art is a continuous process of immersion in the constantly, shape-shifting world of living artistic practice. A rewarding passion, yes – personally, intellectually, philosophically, aesthetically and sometimes, financially.

Their overpowering common denominator is this:

*For each of them, the collecting of art was a primary means of expression. Interesting human beings, actively engaged with life on many levels, their involvement with art collecting was passionate and urgent. None of them bought just what he needed or could use. They were all zealots in whose lives this passionate pursuit had deep meaning. They were not only possessors: they were also possessed.<sup>4</sup>*

Contemporary art collectors perform an invaluable, and often under-recognised guardianship role in sustaining and promoting a living artistic tradition for which those of us interested in Australia's cultural welfare, should be immensely grateful.



Emily Kame KNGWARREYE, *Winter Exposition*, 1991, natural earth pigments on canvas, 137 x 303 cm, © Emily Kame Kngwarreye/Licensed by Viscopy, private collection



From left: Shi Xinning, *Lei (Mao, Marilyn Monroe, Joe DiMaggio)*, 2010, oil on canvas 120 x 120 cm, collection of Mark and Jill Awerbuch  
Peter MADDEN, *Sleeps with Moths III*, 2009, found photographs, wood, plastic, fimo and Perspex, 80 x 50 x 60 cm, collection of Jane Michell  
Photo courtesy of the artist and Fehily Contemporary

Endnotes

- 1 Martin Bailey, 'The top 20', *Apollo Magazine*, July – August 2008
- 2 AGSA Press release, 'Contemporary collectors: launching a new era in art benefaction', 2003
- 3 Michael Reid, 'The importance of private collectors', *Art Market Monitor*, 21 August 2010: <http://artmarketmonitor.com/2010/08/21/the-importance-of-private-collectors/>
- 4 Aline B Saarinen, *The proud possessors: the lives, times and tastes of some adventurous American art collectors*, Random House, New York, 1958, p(xx)