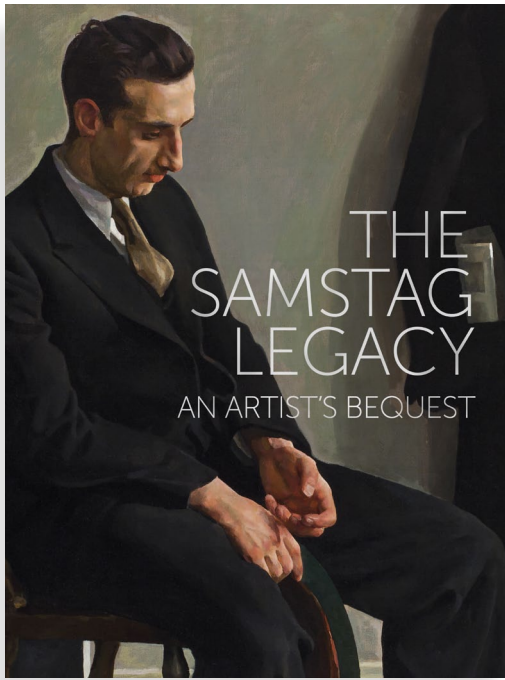


Cover image: Gordon SAMSTAG, *Young Man Desires Position* (detail), 1930 oil on canvas, 127.6 x 120.0 cm, Swope Art Museum, Terre Haute, Indiana, USA



Meet the Samstags

A new, scholarly biography, chronicles the forgotten art of a great American philanthropist

Anne and Gordon Samstag changed Australian art. When they migrated from the United States to Australia in 1961, this intensely private, complex couple left few clues as to why. In fact, although both had enjoyed early artistic success in America, their rich ancestral backgrounds and achievements remained unknown to new friends and colleagues alike.

In their painstakingly researched biography *The Samstag Legacy: An Artist's Bequest*, Lea Rosson DeLong and Ross Wolfe chart the lives and careers of these two enigmatic philanthropists, offering unique insight into their motivations, their sixteen years of living and working in Australia, their eventual return to America, and the bequest that became known to the public upon Gordon's death in 1990; Anne had predeceased him in 1987.

Written to commemorate the University of South Australia's 25th birthday this past October, *The Samstag Legacy* is designed with both American and Australian audiences in mind. A particular objective is to increase interest among American scholars in Gordon Samstag the artist, who forged a reputation in the 1930s as a 'sharp-eyed realist' painter of the American Scene, but whose achievements have largely been lost from view in his country of birth. Among many accomplishments, he painted an ensemble of significant public murals for the Roosevelt administration's New Deal program.

The book also offers new perspectives on the dynamic 1960s Australian art world during the Samstags' time there, including Gordon's years working professionally at the South Australian School of Art. In 2007, Adelaide's Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art was named in honour of the Samstags, when it opened at the University of South Australia.

The director of the Samstag Museum of Art, Erica Green, suggests that, "had Gordon and Anne not come to Australia from America in 1961, a remarkable story of American philanthropy, ancestry, and culture would have been lost to posterity." Anne's pioneering forbears, for example, arrived

in Massachusetts in 1630 with the legendary Winthrop migration, and her father Charles Henry Davis was a tycoon who controlled turn-of-the-century coalmines in Harlan County, Kentucky. Gordon, born in 1906, came from a distinguished line of high-achieving, 19th century European Jewish economic migrants.

The Samstags' multi-million dollar bequest led to establishment of the Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships, at the University of South Australia, in 1991, enabling large numbers of Australian visual artists to develop their skills and abilities studying overseas at any institution of their choosing. After 25 years, Anne and Gordon's historic in-perpetuity gift still ranks as one of the very great bequests to visual arts education in Australia.

"Let's hope this splendidly illustrated book stimulates American readers to rediscover once-celebrated paintings still lost in the United States."

– Daniel Thomas, *Art Monthly Australasia*, March 2017

Authors

Dr Lea Rosson DeLong is an art historian, curator, and editor working mainly in American art of the 1930s and contemporary art. She has curated exhibitions and authored books on Grant Wood, Georgia O'Keeffe, and other American artists. A frequent guest curator for the museums of Iowa State University, she has also worked as a curator at the Des Moines Art Center and has taught at Drake University in Des Moines and Iowa State University in Ames.

Ross Wolfe is an artist, administrator, and writer. Founding editor and publisher of a seminal visual arts journal, *Art Network* magazine, he subsequently held influential roles in Australian arts administration. He was director of the Visual Arts Board, Australia Council from 1983, where he secured formal government agreements for a permanent Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale and initiated the Council's very first Emeritus Awards program for artists. He was deputy director at the Art Gallery of South Australia from 1988, and in 1992 became inaugural director of the philanthropic Samstag Program at the University of South Australia, from which he is now retired.

The Samstag Legacy: An Artist's Bequest

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