

Margaret Carnegie

Collector & Patron

Margaret Carnegie AO OAM (1910-2002) is an abiding presence at Wagga Wagga Art Gallery. There is a gallery space named in her honour, the Margaret Carnegie Gallery, and the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery's collection of Australian prints is also titled the Margaret Carnegie Print Collection. This exhibition acknowledges and honours the contributions made by Carnegie to the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery and to the community of the Riverina. It is one of the flagship events the Gallery is hosting to celebrate the 10th year in its new building.

Margaret Carnegie was a renaissance woman of many talents: a visionary art collector, an historian and researcher whose local histories are quietly recognised, an advocate for Aboriginal rights, a wife and mother. Melbourne born and a Holbrook resident for some forty years, Carnegie was a patron of the arts through donations of her artworks and funds to institutions across the country, and through her own collections of modern and Indigenous Australian art. She was equally generous to institutions in the Riverina region, and was honoured for her contributions to national life, including an Officer of the Order of Australia and two honorary awards from Charles Sturt University. Carnegie donated a number of prints by major Australian artists to the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery in 1980 – she worked closely with Tate Adams of Crossley Gallery, Melbourne in the formation of her print collection. She also established a Trust Fund to be managed by the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery from which prints could be purchased for the Collection on an annual basis. In all, 145 significant works were purchased by the Trust. The Margaret Carnegie Print Collection continues to grow thanks to Margaret's generosity and the Wagga Wagga City Council.

Clifton Pugh, *Portrait of Douglas Carnegie* 1960, oil on board, Collection of Sir Roderick Carnegie, Photograph by Mark Strizic
Reproduction courtesy of Art & Australia



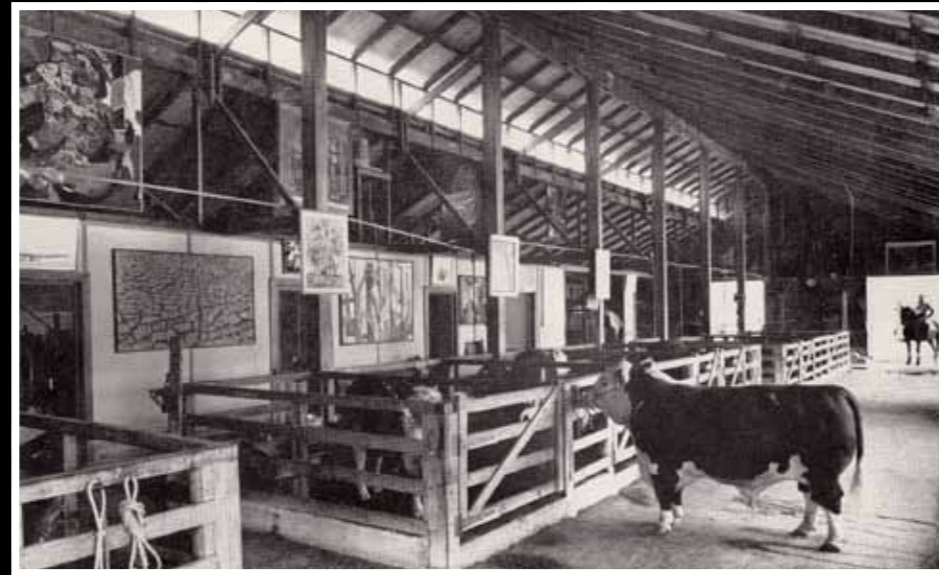
Entrance porch, *Kildrummie*, 1966
Photograph by Mark Strizic
Reproduction courtesy of Art & Australia

Today it has expanded to include some 1200 works. In 2007 the Collection was named in her honour.

Benefactors and patrons form the lifeblood of regional gallery collections. Wagga Wagga Art Gallery and the community of the Riverina continue to benefit from Margaret's particular eye and great knowledge of Australian art, and for that we thank her.

Margaret Carnegie, by all accounts was a larger than life figure – glamorous, adventurous, passionate, generous and brimming with joie de vivre. We hope that this exhibition and celebration of her life does her justice.

Dr Cath Bowdler
Manager
Wagga Wagga Art Gallery



Interior of Bull Shed, *Kildrummie*, 1966
Photograph by Mark Strizic
Reproduction courtesy of Art & Australia

I first met Mrs. Margaret Carnegie AO OAM, HonBA, HonDLitt in 1997. It was the day she received a Doctor of Letters honoris causa from the Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. She generously invited me to select an art work from her Spring Street apartment for the University Art Collection. I accepted with grateful alacrity and made plans to visit her in Melbourne.

I was excited by the offer because I knew from Art and Australia¹ of the celebrated art collection of Douglas and Margaret Carnegie, who from 1944 to 1982, lived in Kildrummie Homestead at Holbrook. At Kildrummie quality Australian paintings decorated every wall, the ceilings and the prize Poll Hereford bull shed.

"The long-slung Stud snugs beneath
Where Poll bulls are fostered,
Progeny planned and paintings hung."²

Jane Carnegie, excerpt from 'Yellow Box Tree 2'

I knew some of the institutions that had been gifted material by Mrs Carnegie included the University of South Australia, the State Library of Victoria, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, and the Charles Sturt University Art Collection. The CSU Wagga Wagga Campus Library had also gained a 'Special Collection'³ of Australiana in annual instalments from 1973-1982. This material was eventually named the Margaret Carnegie Collection, and consisted of 6000 books, 300 serial titles plus other documents and ephemera. It was a working research library used by Mrs. Carnegie when writing books such as 'Friday Mount', 1973, 'Morgan the Bold Bushranger', 1974, 'In search of Breaker Morant', 1979 and 'In step with Sturt', 1979.

Provenance lists of major works in mainly Melbourne based public and private galleries, and auction houses, commonly included the name of Carnegie, so I was



Roger Kemp, *Untitled (The Symbol)* 1976, etching



Akis, *Untitled* 1975, screenprint

excited to see what artwork she had at home. The previous donation to the University Art Collection by Mrs. Carnegie had contained two impressive and limited Vietnam anti-war posters, wonderful prints with work by Noel Counihan, and Udo Sellbach, and an impressively large work on paper by the Czechoslovakian migrant Dušan Marek.

I arrived in Melbourne on a fine day and parked across the street from the National Library of Victoria. I then entered the nondescript, grey office building at 99 Spring Street. On entering the foyer I was amazed to be confronted by a surprising collection of objects from the Sepik River area. Wooden carved items, burial poles and masks were all oppressively populating the small ante room. On exiting the lift at the Carnegies' floor I entered an apartment that contained a veritable treasure-trove of art - mainly indigenous Australian art. This was Mrs. Carnegie's second art collection started in the mid. 1960's when her friends, the artists Len French and Fred Williams 'made her' buy her first piece of Sepik river art at the Argus Gallery⁴. Her advocacy, and interest in

Aboriginal Australian art and people led to her receiving a 'skin name'⁵.

Of the numerous works I viewed on the walls, I remember impressive acrylic on canvas paintings by Uta Uta Tjangala, two small Emily Kame Ngwarreye works and a perfectly placed Ginger Riley Munduwalwala above Mrs. Carnegie's bed. Like the reporter for The National Times⁶ when visiting the apartment in 1984, I was impressed by the exceptional 1960 portrait of Douglas Carnegie by Clifton Pugh which still dominated the entry-way years later⁷. I was swiftly directed towards two wall-encompassing colourful Willie Gudabi acrylics. However, I decided on a Gloria Petyarre body paint inspired acrylic on canvas because of its connection to other works in the collection.

The last words will be those of Jane Carnegie, one of Margaret's four children.⁸ She summarised Margaret Carnegie's life in a statement attached to a collaborative artwork by Asher Bilu and Jane Carnegie, donated to the Charles Sturt University Wagga Wagga Campus Library by Jane and Sir Roderick Carnegie and family in April 2003.

"What contribution has this person made? The art collector, Margaret Carnegie, born Melbourne 1910, had an eye for emerging artists; her enthusiasm was legendary..."

Thomas A. Middlemost
Art Curator, Charles Sturt University
City of Wagga Wagga.



Eric Thake, *An Opera House in Every Home* 1972, linocut



John Brack, *Circus* 1967, lithograph

¹ Shannon, M., Art and Australia, the art Collectors 4 Margaret Carnegie June 1966, pp.33-41., and Art and Australia, the art collectors 4 Margaret Carnegie Sept. 1966, pp.145-154.

² Carnegie, J., Mother and Father: Poems, 2005 (bound anthology of unpublished poetry), see 'Yellow Box Tree 2', 5 September 2003.

³ Reid-Smith, E.R., Margaret Francis Carnegie The Writer, (an examination of materials in the Carnegie Collection at the Wagga Campus Library of the Charles Sturt University, contributions by Vera Swan and Carol Mills), Wagga Wagga, 1997.

⁴ Perkin, C., Harper's Bazaar, Australia, 'Misquote Margaret', September 1985, p.90.

⁵ Carnegie, J., Statement attached to 'Peoplescape', an artwork donated to the Charles Sturt University Wagga Wagga campus library by Jane and Sir Roderick Carnegie and family on 8 April 2003.

⁶ Molloy, S., The National Times, ARTS Section, 'Margaret Carnegie's world of history', 30 December 1983 to 5 January 1984, p.26. (The article includes an image of Mrs. Carnegie in front of the Clifton Pugh portrait)

⁷ Michael Shannon also mentions the portrait in 1966 when writing on the collection at 'Kildrummie', Shannon M., Art and Australia, June 1966, p.34. ("Also in the sitting-room is a sympathetic portrait of Douglas Carnegie", he mentions smaller works on paper by Kmit, Henri Bastin, Fullbrook, Olsen, and Brack plus a few abstracts by Elwyn Lynn, Asher Bilu, and Len French before the short line on Pugh.)

⁸ Roderick, Susannah Robson who died this July at home in France, Jane and Georgina



Margaret Carnegie on the Kildrummie Hill, 1960
Photograph by Desmond Digby



Elizabeth Rooney, *The Bull Shed! or Wireless* 1966,
etching



Eric Thake, *Oceania* 1945, linocut



Franz Kempf, *Icon I* 1969, screenprint



Noel Counihan, *A Child's Head* 1948, lithograph



Alun Leach-Jones, *Untitled* 1967, screenprint



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Wagga Wagga Art Gallery 2009

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