



HEIDELBERG SCHOOL ART FOUNDATION

Preserving art heritage for the community

Patron:
Professor Geoffrey Blainey, AC

Established by:
The Rotary Club of Heidelberg

Australian Impressionist Art Gallery and Education Centre Rotary Club of Heidelberg initiative Presentation to the District 9790 Conference – February 2016

BACKGROUND

Some years ago, The Rotary Club of Heidelberg adopted a vision for an Impressionist Gallery and Education Centre to be established in the City of Banyule – Heidelberg precinct. The aim is to give the Banyule community the opportunity to capitalise on, and celebrate, what is without doubt its most significant asset – the home of the Heidelberg School of Artists, like Tom Roberts, Charles Conder, Arthur Streeton, Walter Withers and others; and importantly the spiritual home of the Australian impressionist movement.

This initiative by the Club is a long term project and to achieve its aim, it formed the Heidelberg School Art Foundation (HSAF) with Professor Geoffrey Blainey AC as the Patron. The purpose of the Foundation is to progress the project and to act as a promotional and funding vehicle.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Banyule City Council, the HSAF, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water have worked together over many years towards the realisation of this project. Recognising the significance of the appropriate site for the proposed gallery, Parks Victoria agreed to allow the construction of the building on the Yarra Flats, fronting Banksia Street, Heidelberg. This would be an iconic development for the Park as well as the region.

Through successful partnership with the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Melbourne, the 2014 Design Master Class focused on the Yarra Flats site, producing outstanding results. Students were required to conceive how a Gallery could explore and show-case impressionism, connect project partners, and produce concept designs for the site, taking into account its unique geographic and development constraints and opportunities. Awards to the three winners were presented by Mayor of Banyule Craig Langdon and Professor Geoffrey Blainey.

MOVING FORWARD

Banyule City Council has committed to fund, with the HSAF, a National Architectural competition for the design of the Gallery and Education Centre and ultimately the appointment of a project architect. The competition will be conducted by the Australian Institute of Architects.

The Council is currently in the process of finalising the Architectural brief and obtaining State Government consent for the competition to be deemed an accepted procurement (tender) process for the development and architectural appointment.

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This is an exciting step. The competition will bring nationwide industry and public focus on the project and hopefully be a big boost in proving the project and gaining State and Federal government funding support. It is envisaged the competition will commence in the second half of 2016.

HERITAGE

The Australian Impressionist Gallery and Education Centre can be a project of national importance attracting national and international tourists and providing an education centre for all ages, from primary through to tertiary levels and beyond; an economic boost for the region and a place generating community pride, keeping alive for future generations the great heritage of the Golden Era of the 1880's and the contribution of the Heidelberg School Artists to Australian Art.

The Concept of the Gallery is not dissimilar to the Shearers' Hall of Fame in Hay NSW, Qantas and the Stockman's Hall of Fame in Longreach Old, and the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka. It can become a national icon located in Heidelberg.

SUPPORT

Community support for the project has been established through a consultation process and feasibility study; but it also requires continued funding to enable its progression and ultimate realisation. Governments and corporate business have an obligation to provide the community with facilities for art and education. This project needs the support of leaders with vision and drive.

"This concept is challenging and will take time but the initiative is here and with the support of the community, corporate sector, the Victorian and Australian Governments, the vision is achievable in the foreseeable future."

The HSAF Vision Statement is attached.

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FORM FOR DETAILS ON HOW YOU CAN OFFER YOUR SUPPORT

Rotarian Tom Payne OAM

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Payne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

HSAF Chairman



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Vision for an Australian Impressionist Gallery Dedicated to the Heidelberg School Artists

The Heidelberg School Art Foundation is the initiative of the Rotary Club of Heidelberg. The aim is to give the broader Banyule community the opportunity to capitalise on what is without doubt its most significant cultural asset.

The Heidelberg School was the first major artistic movement in Australia and the notoriety of its exponents extends to the international stage. Impressionist in nature, the Heidelberg School dominated Australian art for around thirty years in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It had a tremendous impact on the history of Australian art in general and landscape painting in particular. It comprised some of the most prominent painters in Australia's history: Arthur Streeton, Walter Withers, Tom Roberts, Charles Conder to name but a few.

However, the cultural significance of the Heidelberg School extends far beyond its contribution to stylistic innovation in Australian art. The work of the Heidelberg School artists represents a shift in the attitude of the early settlers towards the Australian landscape. It marks the first instance of the early settlers embracing the geography of our landscape, discovering its unique beauty and accepting it for what it was. Painted during a rich period of nationalism, the works are indicative of a paradigm shift whereby European settlers came to consider themselves as Australians for the first time. As well as portray the uniqueness of Australian geography, the Heidelberg School artists sought to evoke the fundamentals of the emerging Australian way of life.

It is this contribution, quite apart from the considerable aesthetic merits of its members' works, which gives the Heidelberg School such significance as a cultural icon. It is the artistic documentation of a temporal juncture whereby "citizens in exile" came to identify themselves as Australians.

Australian Impressionist Gallery & Museum – Purpose & Vision

The Foundation proposes to establish an Australian Impressionist Gallery & Museum within Banyule/Heidelberg, dedicated to the Heidelberg School of Art. Its aim is threefold:

1. To establish a Gallery & Museum complex dedicated to the Heidelberg School Artists, thereby creating a setting befitting of their works. The Gallery will include a permanent display of original works by Heidelberg School artists as well as their personal memorabilia. In addition, exhibitions of Australian impressionist paintings will also be conducted.

The proposed complex will also include:

- A Learning Centre to be utilised by schools, colleges, universities from the whole State as well as interested community groups
- A lecture theatre and conference room
- Café and Gallery shop

Heidelberg School Art Foundation Ltd
A.B.N. 113 528 662

www.heidelbergsschoolart.com

The Foundation is a certified DGR.
All gifts over \$2.00 are tax-deductible.

Impression for Golden Summer 1888/89, Arthur Streeton, Benalla Art Gallery; Collection, Ledger Gift 1980

2. To create a series of scholarships for artists and art students to study the Australian impressionist artists (of which the Heidelberg school painters are among the most significant)
3. To enable members of the public to donate money (for which they would be able to claim a tax deduction), works of art, memorabilia and related items

The need for a Heidelberg School Art Gallery

The Heidelberg School derives its name from the coming together of Roberts, Streeton and Conder for the two summers of 1888 & 1889 when they painted in and around the Heidelberg area. The period of the Heidelberg School is often seen as a particularly heroic or golden period in Australian art and culture, when the aspirations of nationalist Australia on the eve of federation drew inspiration from, and were imaged by, a remarkable and distinctive national school of painters. It would therefore be valid for any dedicated Gallery to be situated in the same area that inspired the creation of the Heidelberg School's works. Furthermore, there already exists considerable cultural capital in the area pertaining directly to the Heidelberg School.

Heidelberg forms part of the Valley of the Arts, a series of galleries, museums and other cultural sites stretching through Melbourne's North-East. The proposed Gallery would therefore fit ideally within an already well established arts precinct, and indeed would aspire to form one of its centrepieces.

The Heidelberg School Artists Trail, consisting of a series of high quality interpretive signs focusing on the Heidelberg School, has already been in place in the area for some time. The signs include reproductions and descriptions of some of the artists' most famous works, located in the vicinity of where they were painted. The trail recognises the importance of the Heidelberg School and provides a way of learning more about its exponents and their works. Clearly, the trail would strongly promote the proposed Gallery.

Additionally, there are private individuals within the local community who possess significant Heidelberg School collections and who would be prepared to donate their collections for display in a befitting dedicated exhibition space. Moreover, some of the descendants of the Heidelberg School artists still reside in the area and would be willing to contribute works and artefacts/memorabilia for display in the proposed Gallery. There also remain historic buildings dating from the 1800's such as the Old England Hotel, where many of the Heidelberg School artists socialised and even resided for periods.

Heidelberg has the heritage, the history and the cultural infrastructure pertaining to the Heidelberg School of Artists. Indeed, it can fairly be said that we have everything except the paintings themselves!

This concept is challenging and will take time but the initiative is here and with the support of the community, corporate sector, the Victorian and Australian Governments, the vision is achievable in the foreseeable future.

