

HOWARD TAYLOR 1918-2001

1918 Born Hamilton, Victoria. Lived in South Australia up to 1932 later in Western Australia studying at Perth Modern School
1938 Graduated Flying Training School, Pt. Cook, R.A.A.F.
1939-40 Served with R.A.F. in France
1940-45 P.O.W. Germany
1946-48 Studied at Birmingham College of Art
1949 Returned to Perth, Western Australia, settled in Bickley
1968 Moved to Northcliffe

WA TEACHING

1951-65 Painting and Drawing at Perth Technical College
1965-69 Painting, Drawing and Sculpture at School of Architecture W.A.I.T. (now Curtin University of Technology)
1970 Drawing, Art and Design, W.A.I.T.
Drawing, School of Architecture, University of Western Australia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1949 *Paintings and Drawings*, Newspaper House Gallery, Perth
1951 *Paintings and Drawings*, The Lesser Hall, Northam
1956 *Paintings and Sculptures*, Library, Adult Education Building Perth
1960 *Paintings and Drawings*, Skinner Galleries, Perth
1963 *Paintings and Drawings*, Skinner Galleries, Perth
1967 *Paintings and Drawings*, Artist's Home 'Aldersyde', Bickley
1970 *Sculptures*, Skinner Galleries, Perth
1971 *Sculptures*, Festival of Perth Exhibition, University of WA
1974 *Paintings*, Skinner Galleries, Perth
1977 *Paintings and Sculptures*, Undercroft Gallery University of Western Australia
1978 *Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings*, W.A.I.T., Perth
1978 *Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings*, Coventry Gallery, Sydney
1981 *Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings*, Quentin Gallery, Perth
1982 *Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings*, Old Court House Centre, Busselton
1985 *Sculptures, Paintings, Drawings 1942-1984* Art Gallery of Western Australia
1988 *Paintings and Drawings*, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
1989 *Flowers* Pastels and Oils on Paper, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
1990 *Paintings and Pastels*, Festival of Perth Exhibition Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
1992 *Howard Taylor: In Private Hands* Erica Underwood Gallery Curtin University of Technology
1992 *Paintings and Drawings*, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
1993 *Howard Taylor Maquettes* Art Gallery of Western Australia
1993 *Paintings and Drawings*, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
1995 *Constructions - Paintings - Drawings - Maquettes* Festival of Perth Exhibition, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth (Inaugural Exhibition) New Galerie Düsseldorf Building
1996 *Howard Taylor* Art Gallery of Western Australia
1996 *Paintings and Drawings*, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
1996 *Howard Taylor, Galerie Düsseldorf, ACAF55th Australian Contemporary Art Fair*, Melbourne
1998 *Howard Taylor*, Art Gallery of Western Australia
1998 *Paintings - Sculptures - Drawings*, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
1999 *Howard Taylor - Paintings*, Annandale Galleries, Sydney in association with Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
1999 *Significant Works from the 60's* *Paintings - Sculpture - Drawings*, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
2000 *Recent Work : Wall Sculptures - Paintings - Drawings* Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
2001 *Forest Radiance*, John Curtin Gallery Curtin University of Technology, Perth
2001 *25th Anniversary I Galerie Düsseldorf* *A Dedicated Tribute I Howard Taylor 1918-2001* Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1949-81 24 Group Exhibitions
1982 *Critics Choice* Art Gallery of Western Australia
1982 *The Foulkes Taylor Years* Invitation Exhibition organized by WAIT (now Curtin University), Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
1983 *Western Australian Paperworks*, Art Gallery of Western Australia
1984 *The W.A.I.T. Collection 1968-1983*, Art Gallery of Western Australia
1985 *Australian Sculpture from the Collection*, Art Gallery of Western Australia
1987 *Among the Souvenirs Western Australian Art in the Eighties* Art Gallery of Western Australia
1987 *Third Australian Sculpture Triennial*, National Gallery of Victoria
1987 *Thirteen Artists, Galerie Düsseldorf*, Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth
1988 *First Australian Contemporary Art Fair*, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne (Represented by Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth)
1989 *Heidelberg and Heritage Two Visions of Australia* *One Hundred Years Apart*, Linden Gallery, Melbourne
1990 *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia

1991 *Second Australian Contemporary Art Fair*, Royal Exhibition Building (Represented by Galerie Düsseldorf, Perth)
1991 *A Backward Glance* Perth Institute of Contemporary Art
1993 *Joan and Peter Clemenger Triennial Exhibition of Contemporary Australian Art*, National Gallery of Victoria
1992 *The Constable Collection* Lawrence Wilson Gallery, University of Western Australia
1997 *The Stein Collection*, Lawrence Wilson Gallery University of Western Australia
1996 *The way we were : 1940s - 1950s* Lawrence Wilson Gallery University of Western Australia
1996 *Spirit and Place* Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
1997 *Galerie Düsseldorf - 21 Years On*, Galerie Düsseldorf. Perth
1997 *Large Scale Paintings from the Holmes á Court Collection* Cullity Gallery, University of Western Australia
1998 The Curtin Collection: 30th Anniversary Exhibition Curtin University of Technology, WA
2000 *Painting Now*, John Curtin Gallery, Curtin University of Technology, WA
2000 *Side by Side*, Art Gallery of Western Australia
1999 *Minimal : Selected works from The Holmes á Court Collection* Holmes á Court Gallery, Perth
2001 *Phenomena New Painting in Australia : 1* Art Gallery of New South Wales
Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne

COMMISSIONS

1960 Fremantle Passenger Terminal, 4 Mural Works
1961 T & G Building, Perth, Sculpture and Interior Design
1963 WA Pavilion, Sydney Trade Fair, Sculpture Panels
1964 St. Peter the Apostle, RC Church, Inglewood, Relief
1964 Fremantle Port Authority, Administration Building, Fremantle
Fremantle Passenger Ocean Terminal, Mosaic/Painting/Assemblage
1965 ANZ House, Perth, Sculpture and Relief
1967 ANZ Bank, Bunbury, Relief
1969 Princess Margaret Hospital, Perth, Children's Colour Design Wall
1971 W.A.I.T., Robertson Library, Painted Sculpture
1975 AMP Building, Perth, Concrete and Mosaic Sculpture
1977 W.A.I.T., Atkinson Forum, Perth, Wood Sculpture
1979 City of Bunbury, Wood Sculpture
1989 New Parliament House, Canberra, Wood Sculpture for Formal Gardens, Members Entrance. Gift from the Western Australian Parliament
1989/90 University of Western Australia, Painting

AWARDS

1975 Western Australian Arts Council Fellowship
1977 W.A.I.T. Artist-in-Residence
1978 Visual Arts Board, Australia Council Grant
1986 Australia Council Inaugural Emeritus Award
1989 Member of the Order of Australia
1991 Fellow, Curtin University of Technology, Perth WA
1993 Honorary Doctor of Letters, University of Western Australia
2001 Honorary Doctor of Technology Curtin University of Technology, Perth WA
1999 Living Treasures Award, Western Australian State Government
2000 Lifetime Achievement Award, Citizen of the Year Western Australian State Government

COLLECTIONS

Australian National Gallery
Art Gallery of Western Australia
Art Gallery of South Australia
Art Gallery of NSW
National Gallery of Victoria
University of Western Australia
Curtin University of Technology
Edith Cowan University
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
The Holmes á Court Collection
Ian and Sue Bernadt Collection
Salek Minc Collection
Bunbury Art Gallery
State Library of Western Australia
Australian War Memorial
BankWest
Chartwell Collection Hamilton New Zealand
City of Hamilton Art Gallery, Hamilton, Victoria
New Parliament House, Canberra
National Gallery of Victoria
Wesfarmers Collection
Kerry Stokes Collection
Royal Perth Hospital
King Edward Memorial Hospital

GALERIE DÜSSELDORF | 25TH ANNIVERSARY | A DEDICATED TRIBUTE | HOWARD TAYLOR 1918 - 2001



Forest River 1990/01 Oil on Canvas 122 x 92 cm

HOWARD TAYLOR 1918 - 2001

11 November - 16 December 2001

GALERIE DÜSSELDORF



Howard Taylor Northcliffe Studio - Original Photo John Austin

Howard Taylor Artist. Born Hamilton, Victoria, August 29, 1918. Died Perth, July 19, aged 82.

Howard Who to much of the eastern-states art world, but long adored in Western Australia, Howard Taylor was one of Australia's greatest artists.

His stature was fully revealed in 1985 when the Art Gallery of Western Australia presented a major retrospective by curator Gary Dufour. The Australia Council's Visual Arts Board promptly created its Emeritus Awards for inadequately-appreciated senior artists and gave the first to Howard Taylor.

Fellow artists promoted him: the British Op Art painter Bridget Riley, visiting Perth, organised his 1978 show at Coventry Gallery, Sydney. But it was an isolated appearance.

The eastern art market saw little of the work that, over 50 years, sold very well from his many exhibitions in Perth. The Art Gallery of WA owns 281 works (216 Sculpture Maquettes were gifted to the Gallery by the artist late last year), the Holmes à Court collection 33, and Kerry Stokes ten.

Moreover, the paintings were always too austere, aristocratic and subtle to be popularised through reproduction, whereas in the intimate presence of the sensuous surfaces, the exact colours and tones of the actual work, viewers always fell in love with it. Nor did his difficult, complex public sculptures come across in photographic reproduction.

And if the work was never brash and attention-seeking, neither was he. He did not schmooze, seldom attended his own exhibition openings. He lived out of town, first on sixty acres of bush in the hills; then in 1967 he became even less accessible, 400 km away near Northcliffe in giant karri-forest country, a short drive from the wild, bald granite coast of the Southern Ocean. Forest and ocean and the sun fed his art.

Double self-portrait, 1959, demonstrates an art full of doubletake reversals and surprising transformations: arms are raised to become aircraft wings, shirt stretched to become tree-trunk woodgrain; an eye framed by fingers forcibly emphasises that works of art might look back and scrutinise us. *Forest figure*, 1977, repeats the theme in a wall-hung painted sculpture: a red-veined green tree yearns to be human, and then to fly.

The painting *Sun figure*, 1989, an at-first-sight reticent white disk on yellow, changed under curator Mary Eagle's gaze: "No colour is quite itself...the white disk glared. It became a shocking pink, then mauve. The yellow arc wobbled, fattened...moved shockingly from side to side. A white ring like fire ran around the edge of the mauve.... It was the same experience...as an ancient one relating to the sun [when we] have transgressed natural law, looked into the sun...and been blinded".

Real sun-glare obliterated the horizon of a shifting sand-dune when Taylor, his wife and two very close friends were being driven along his Southern Ocean shore in high summer 1992. Their landcruiser suddenly fell off the world—into a vertical descent. The transgression cost them serious injury and a spell in Manjimup Hospital. The two friends were Magda and Douglas Sheerer, his devoted gallerists. In 1995 they opened beautiful new premises for their Galerie Düsseldorf, built specially to showcase installations of Taylor's light-and-space-hungry works of art, beginning with a huge abstract three-rectangle construction titled *Winged figure*, a cool white angel facing a hot, dark sun disk titled *Light source reverse*.

Howard Hamilton Taylor's middle name is his birthplace in the Western District of Victoria. It was his mother's home town, to which she returned from Adelaide to her own mother for the birth of the last of four children. The artist's first exhibition, and only that one, was presented under his full name. Perhaps, at his artistic coming out in 1949, he was signalling that he would always be intensely concerned with mythic and emotional particularities of place, as well as their peculiar visualities.

The Adelaide years left little, he said, but the memory of a pungent scent: pepper trees in hot schoolyards and at home. The remark suggests that besides working on our senses of sight and touch, his paintings and walk-in sculptures, deliberately structured to give optical after-images, colour-changes and dissolutions, might be allowed also to conjure up fragrance—not to mention non-sensory levels of spiritual aura.

But he resisted talk about the spiritual. Aged thirteen, he had disapproved of his father, trained in Adelaide as an architect, a practical man, going west to Perth and going spiritual, as a minister of religion. Only grudgingly, deep inside Ted Snell's 1995 book *Howard Taylor: Forest Figure*, after saying his art "is the result of practical procedures" Taylor conceded that "when not this, [it] is simply the old fumble.... The more intangible aspects are not encouraged....*suspect—known* [but] *kept quiet*".

The boy liked intricate machines, made model aircraft, enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force in 1937, graduated top of his class, and transferred to the less well-trained Royal Air Force in Britain, preparing for war. Shot down in 1940 over Alsace Lorraine he spent five years incarcerated in German camps. To fill the days he made drawings of his fellow-prisoners, and the extremely sight-conscious airman started turning into an artist.

In 1945, convalescent in London, Taylor met the gorgeous Corporal Sheila Smith and married her next year. He studied at the Birmingham College of Art, acknowledging no particular formative influences though the best English artist of the time, Paul Nash, was a semi-surreal painter of sacred-grove landscapes. Back in Perth in 1949 they settled at Bickley in the Darling Range.

He supported his family by teaching as little as possible, part-time and in the evenings, so that he could spend the days making art. From 1951 he taught painting and drawing at Perth Technical College, then, 1965–1970, added sculpture to his classes in the School of Architecture at the W.A. Institute of Technology (now Curtin University). He is remembered as an excellent teacher, and as a key reformer of the College Art School with Tony Russell. His art-making ran through 30 solo exhibitions 1949–2000, fourteen major public art commissions 1960–89, and 46 group exhibitions 1949–2001.

The last was 'Phenomena: New Painting in Australia: 1', displayed at the Art Gallery of N.S.W. (Ian Potter Art Museum, Melbourne 24 November 2001 - 20 January 2002) Taylor was positioned there as Australia's best present-day abstract painter, the touchstone for a moment when both abstract art and the medium of painting seem to be re-emerging as of interest to the avant-garde. (Some, including the present writer, believe that after the death of the very different and much more erratic Arthur Boyd, Taylor was our best artist of any kind.)

His contribution to 'Phenomena' scored a rave review from art critic Benjamin Genocchio: beyond abstraction there was also "masterful interpretation of landscape", "real emotion, mystery and intrigue", "climactic ecstasy". Similarly in 1999 a solo show at Annandale Galleries, Sydney, drew raves from art critic Bruce James: a god of some kind was present in these images of water turbulence, foliage and skies, and *Tree fork fragment* was a "totemic translation of Taylor's own torso into woody being.... An artist of the sacred".

Following a bad fall, airman-artist Howard Taylor was transported in early July to the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Perth, by flying doctor. Complications ensued, and death.

He is survived by his wife Sheila, their daughters Penny Hammond and Hilary Halse, an artist, and son Brett, a forester, and collaborator on his father's public commissions, currently re-constructing the outdoor timber piece, *Way through*, for Curtin University—and by twelve grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren. At Karrakatta cemetery Brett and the five grandsons, all very handsome, carried Howard Taylor back to the earth.

Honours included an AM in 1989, the same year that Parliament House, Perth, commissioned a major wood sculpture as a gift to New Parliament House, Canberra; Honorary Doctor of Letters, University of WA, 1993; Honorary Doctor of Technology, Curtin University, 1998. In 1999 the WA Government designated him a State Living Treasure.

Howard Taylor permitted a rare television interview shortly before his death. Broadcast on ABC Coast to Coast, 26 August 2001.

Howard Taylor can be visited at www.galeriedusseldorf.com.au.

Daniel Thomas

Originally written for The Australian, 2 August 2001 - by Daniel Thomas AM, Emeritus Director. Art Gallery of South Australia

A half hour documentary on Howard Taylor will be broadcast on ABC Coast to Coast. Sunday morning 9.30am on 2 December 2001

We dedicate our 25 years of gallery work to our dear friend and artist Howard Taylor.

Magda and Doug