

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00468

Olley, Margaret

(1923 - 2011)

Born 24 June, 1923, Lismore New South Wales Australia

Died 26 July, 2011, Sydney New South Wales Australia

Occupation Artist, Painter

Summary

Margaret Olley is known as one of Australia's most prized interior and still life painters. She first came to public attention as the subject of Sir William Dobell's winning Archibald portrait in 1948. These days she is regarded as an Australian national treasure. In 1997 her work was the subject of a major retrospective organized by the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Details

Margaret Olley began her career painting sets for various theatre groups, before displaying her painting in exhibitions at Royal Queensland Art Society and the Under Thirties Group in Sydney. Her painting *New England Landscape* won the inaugural Mosman Prize in 1947.

Margaret later travelled to Europe where she studied art at La Grande Chaumiere in Paris and, in 1952, she exhibited a collection of favourably-reviewed paintings. She returned to Brisbane in 1953 and was commissioned by the Queensland Art Gallery to paint a mural of Paris' Place de la Concorde for an upcoming French art exhibition. She soon received commissions to paint murals in other Brisbane landmarks such as the Grosvenor and Lennon's hotels.

Since then, Margaret has travelled the globe gaining inspiration for her bold still-life paintings and viewing exhibitions of classic artists such as Van Gogh, Matisse, Miro and Manet. Margaret is regarded as a generous benefactor, having donated many of her works to the Art Gallery of New South Wales. In 1990, she established the Margaret Hannah Olley Trust to produce other artists' works for public donation. In 1994, Olley's generosity to the gallery was celebrated in the *Great gifts, great patrons* exhibition to which she donated works of Donald Friend, Arthur Boyd, Walter Sickert, Edgar, Duncan Grant and Mathew Smith.

Margaret has earned countless art prizes and awards for her many works shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions worldwide. In 2006 Margaret was elevated to Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) for her service as one of Australia's most distinguished artists, her support and philanthropy to the visual and performing arts, and her encouragement of young and emerging artists. In 2007 she was appointed a Fellow of the National Art School.

Published resources

Resource Section

Margaret Olley, 2008,

<http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/margaretolley/>

Margaret Olley, France Christine, 2007,

<http://www.daa0.org.au/main/read/4898>

Margaret Olley AC (1923), Queensland Government, 2009,

<http://www.women.qld.gov.au/q150/1940/index.html#item-margaret-olley>

Margaret Olley, Extract Biographical Notes, Bacon, Philip, 2007,

<http://www.philipbacon.com.au/artists/MargaretOlley/notes.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Newspaper Article

Portrait of a life well lived

Author Details

Lee Butterworth

Created 22 June 2009

Last modified 21 November 2018