

BOROONDARA
ARTS



Our Place

20 Years of Town Hall Gallery

MAJOR EXHIBITION
TOWN HALL GALLERY

WED 1 NOV 2023 – SAT 20 JAN 2024



BOROONDARA



CELEBRATING OUR PEOPLE, PLACES AND PERSPECTIVES

ESSAY BY
Elle Hale
Town Hall Gallery Curator

Town Hall Gallery has been a significant part of Boroondara's creative community since it was launched in 2003. Now 20 years on, we celebrate this exciting milestone through our major exhibition, 'Our Place: 20 Years of Town Hall Gallery,' showcasing works from the Town Hall Gallery Collection.

The Town Hall Gallery Collection is the City of Boroondara's foremost repository of contemporary and community art. The Collection has a varied history, as diverse as the works that embody it. From humble beginnings formed by the donations and bequests of local dignitaries to the addition of former Camberwell, Kew and Hawthorn municipal collections, 'the aim of the Town Hall Gallery Collection is to nurture a sense of community and shared history in Boroondara.'¹ Today, the Collection tells the story of two Boroondaras: a municipality with a long history of valuing and fostering artistic creativity, and a multi-faceted community characterised by its diverse interest groups encompassing politics, social welfare, education and sports.²

Every collection has a particular focus. For the Town Hall Gallery Collection, that focus is local. By acquiring works of significant Australian artists who lived and created in the area, or artworks that capture the changing urban landscape, the Town Hall Gallery Collection features a unique Boroondara perspective conveyed through many diverse voices. For 'Our Place', significant artworks and artefacts from the Collection have been grouped within the themes of 'People', 'Places' and 'Perspectives', showcasing the vital role public gallery collections play in documenting the evolving narrative of our community.

An extensive repository of portraits reveals the lived experiences and relationships of artists, public servants, and community members who have lived, worked or studied in the City of Boroondara and its

former municipalities. Through painting, photography, printmaking, and drawing, the diverse examples of portraiture on display celebrate the genre's aptitude for capturing intimacy, expression and insight into the human psyche. The result is a complex and varied record of experiences, activities and impressions, as negotiated between the artist and their subject. A highlight is Selina Ou's photographic series 'Embrace', exploring the innate human need to belong, support and find solace in others. Three of Ou's photographs, recently acquired into the Collection, capture emotionally tender moments in which intertwined grieving figures simultaneously support and lean on each other. Demonstrating the breadth of the Collection, Ou's work shares a gallery space with Clifton Pugh's dynamic 'Portrait of Betty Marginson', c. 1967/1977. Marginson was a significant leader in the Boroondara community and the first female Mayor of Hawthorn. Known to have had a knack for capturing the character of his sitter, Pugh's work incorporates energetic brushstrokes around Marginson's figure, intended to represent the dynamic environment of local government.

A 'space' becomes a 'place' when individuals and communities develop emotional connections to their environment. A vivid sense of place is illustrated in this exhibition through images of natural landmarks and manmade structures unique to Boroondara. John Brack's 'The Yarra at Kew', 1946, is topographical in detail and depicts the bend in the Yarra Boulevard at Kew with sparsely dotted houses lining the streets up into the hills and beyond. Ian Armstrong felt so connected to Barkers Road in Kew that he returned to it in 1969, 1977 and 1996, documenting the road in different conditions through a series of works on paper. The diverse architectural styles found throughout Boroondara have been an inspiration to Robert Clinch. His work 'Limited Additions', 2007, captures how our neighbourhood

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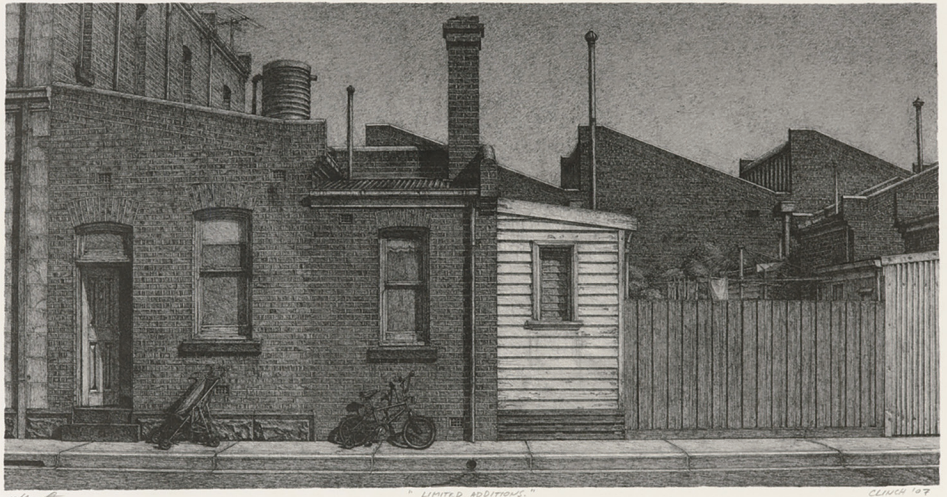
has evolved to suit our needs. All of these works, and many more, capture the diversity of our locale, how it has changed over time, and how we share an emotional attachment to a place.

Many of the contemporary artists represented in the Town Hall Gallery Collection experiment with colour, form, material, process, and scale to translate their unique perspectives. This exhibition features two works by Helen Maudsley, a longtime resident of Boroondara. Maudsley's early work, 'The wonderful diversion', 1958, sits alongside a more recent work from 2015, demonstrating her commitment to a highly personalised vocabulary of symbolic images and icons. Comprising 49 works on paper and two hand sewn embroideries, '1866: The Worlds of Lowe Kong Meng and Jong Ah Siug', 2015, by John Young Zerunge is vast in scale and rich in historical detail. This work presents the lives of two Chinese migrants who arrived in the colony of Victoria in the mid-1800s to seek their fortunes in the gold rush. One became an influential merchant, philanthropist and political activist, the other was condemned to a 33-year sentence in the Yarra Bend and Sunbury lunatic asylums, where he remained until his death.

'Our Place: 20 Years of Town Hall Gallery' tells a unique story about the role local government and public galleries can play in the evolution and recording of social and cultural life. Contemporary and historical perspectives collide through an exploration of the depth and diversity of our community and our shared history.

1 "Town Hall Gallery Collection Acquisition Policy," City of Boroondara, adopted 22 August 2016, accessed 19 September 2023, <https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/boroondara-arts/learn/town-hall-gallery-collection>

2 Carissa Goudey and Emma Russel, "Significance Assessment: Town Hall Gallery Collection," History at Work, April 2019, 2.



PUBLIC PROGRAMS



EXHIBITION OPENING

Sat 11 Nov, 2–4pm

Free, bookings essential

Join us for the official opening of 'Our Place: 20 Years of Town Hall Gallery'.

EXHIBITION TOURS

Sat 11 Nov, 1–2pm

Wed 6 Dec, 12–1pm

Free, bookings essential

Join a curator-led tour of 'Our Place: 20 Years of Town Hall Gallery'.

CINEMA SESSION

Wed 8 Nov, 6–8.30pm

Bookings essential

Join us for a screening of 'Ablaze', introduced by a guest speaker. All tickets \$10. This event has limited capacity.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Sat 2 Dec, 2–3pm

Free, bookings essential

Join collection managers for a discussion about the importance of public art collections.

READING NOOK

During Opening Hours

Peruse a curated collection of books relating to the exhibition, courtesy of the Boroondara Library Service.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

During Opening Hours

Free, all materials provided

Curious kids aged 5–12 and their families are invited to participate in a self-directed 'I-Spy' activity.

For more information and to make a booking visit:

www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/arts

IMAGE CREDITS

COVER

John Brack, 'The Yarra at Kew', 1946, oil on board,
46.5 x 57.5cm, Town Hall Gallery Collection.

INSIDE COVER

Robert Clinch, 'Limited Additions', 2007, hand drawn
lithograph on Somerset 100% cotton paper, edition 10 of
40, 24.5 x 47cm, Town Hall Gallery Collection.

John Young Zerunge, installation view of '1866:
The Worlds of Lowe Kong Meng and Jong Ah Siug', 2015,
49 works on paper (digital prints on photographic paper
and chalk on blackboard-painted archival cotton paper),
100 x 70cm each, and two single thread hand-sewn
embroideries, Town Hall Gallery Collection.

ESSAY

Selina Ou, 'Untitled #6', 2010, chromogenic photograph,
60 x 40cm, Town Hall Gallery Collection.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Helen Maudsley, 'The wonderful diversion', 1958,
mixed media on paper, 50.8 x 91cm, Town Hall Gallery
Collection.

OPENING HOURS

Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm

Sat, 12–4pm

Closed public holidays

HAWTHORN ARTS CENTRE

360 Burwood Road,

Hawthorn, Victoria

03 9278 4770

Town Hall Gallery is a member of the Public Galleries Association of
Victoria. Town Hall Gallery participates in the Cultural Gifts Program.