

## Director Rhana Devenport farewells AGSA



**Adelaide, South Australia:** Art Gallery of South Australia Director Rhana Devenport ONZM launches important new contemporary exhibition at the completion of her tenure with the Gallery on 7 July, after six years of artistic success and achievement.

On Friday 5 July she opens major survey exhibition ***Brent Harris: Surrender & Catch***, exploring the work of senior Melbourne-based, New-Zealand born artist **Brent Harris**, presented from **6 July – 20 October 2024**. The exhibition, curated by Maria Zagala, Curator of Prints, Drawings Photographs, and co-presented with TarraWarra Museum of Art, brings together over 100 paintings, drawings, and prints, traversing the artist's practice and stylistic shifts over his career.

The Honourable Andrea Michaels MP, Minister for Arts says, 'What an incredible exhibition of Brent Harris and a fitting way to celebrate Rhana's leadership at AGSA. She leaves the Gallery with an enviable reputation and a strong plan for the future. She has championed artists, led an immensely talented curatorial team and grown South Australia's incredible collection.'

Director, Rhana Devenport ONZM says, 'It's an exhibition that has been years in the making, the impetus was a significant gift to AGSA of over fifty of the artist's works from the private collection of James Mollison, AO (the National Gallery of Australia's inaugural Director), and

# AGSA

Vincent Langford. Their gift, in 2017, transformed the Gallery's holdings of Harris's works on paper, with many of these acquisitions are on display for the first time.'

'Harris is an artist renowned for his remarkable paintings and prints that explore the complexities of human emotions and experiences, I am sure it will resonate and create a lasting impression'. she said. 'In 2023 alone, we presented the work of 3148 living artists which defines AGSA as the foremost national art museum in its support of contemporary Australian artists. *Surrender and Catch* continues this focus while drawing from the Gallery's exceptional historical collection and includes new acquisitions and works by artists including Edvard Munch, Lucas Cranach and Colin McCahon who have long been an inspiration for Brent Harris.'

Four million people have visited the Gallery since Devenport was appointed Director in 2018, with AGSA programming reaching an audience of 1.8 million in 2023 alone. During the pandemic, AGSA became one of the most visited galleries in the world, making the Top 100.

Devenport said, 'AGSA is a fearless and innovative leader in South Australia, nationally and internationally. I'm incredibly proud of the ambitious growth of our world-renowned collection and our acclaimed exhibitions program. Exhibitions have included highly successful temporary exhibitions, three impressive Adelaide Biennials, the immensely influential Tarnanthi Festival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, and the generous and innovative Ramsay Art Prize.

During her tenure Devenport has made significant acquisitions of and has been dedicated to the representation of female artists, a step towards balancing the art historical canon in AGSA's collection to ensure gender diversity. Works by women artists acquired since 2018 number 1160 works of art while in 2024, she has increased the percentage of works by women artists to 75%.

Highlights of the women artists now represented in the Collection include Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Stanislava Pinchuk, Francis Upritchard, Sonia Delaunay, Aileen Agar and Barbara Longhi; with expansion of holdings by Julia Robertson, Clarice Beckett, Bessie Davidson, Dorrit Black, Vanessa Bell, and Mary Beale. Most recently AGSA became the first Gallery in Australia to acquire a work by esteemed nineteenth century Belgium Romantic painter Marie-Adélaïde (Adèle) Kindt.

South Australian artist Jess Loughlin whose work featured in the Adelaide Biennial, a site-specific glass sculpture *solari* in collaboration with the late Khai Liew has also been acquired. Jess is grateful for Devenport's commitment to championing the voices of South Australian artists and her role in promoting, nurturing and showcasing their talent. 'Rhana's programming and acquisitions reflect the rich artistic landscape of South Australia. I am personally grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the state's cultural vibrancy. She has left a lasting impact on the local arts community and has further solidified the gallery's role as a vital supporter of the arts in the state.', she said.

Adelaide Biennial Ambassador Chair Brigitte Lane says, 'I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution that Rhana Devenport has made to the Biennial Ambassadors program during her tenure at AGSA. With outstanding leadership, dedication and passion,

# AGSA

she has played an integral role in the growing success of the program. Extremely professional and gracious, she will be greatly missed by the Biennial Ambassadors committee and we wish her all the very best for the future.'

Devenport leaves AGSA with a clear roadmap for the future of the 143-year-old Gallery through the new Strategic Plan and has been deeply honoured to be part of its legacy and helping to shape its future.

Highlights of Devenport's legacy include:

- Strategic expansion of AGSA's collection with important new works of art across all media wholly acquired through philanthropic support, fundraising and a series of major bequests such as the James and Diana Ramsay Fund, the N.F. Rochlin Bequest, the Prudence Lee Bequest and the Edward Minton Newman Bequest. Major acquisitions include works by Chris Ofili, Daniel Boyd, Nalini Malani, Olafur Eliasson, Dhambit Mununggurr, Nonggirrŋa Marawili, Grayson Perry, Marc Newson, Jeffrey Smart and Giorgio de Chirico.
- *Frida & Diego: Love & Revolution* in 2023 - the Gallery's most successful ticketed exhibition in decades with \$1.5million taken at the box office and critical acclaim, cementing the Gallery's reputation as an international cultural destination.
- Staging of *Clarice Beckett: The Present Moment* - one of Australia's most acclaimed exhibitions of recent years and contributing to significant new art historical research.
- The highly popular Yayoi Kusama: *SPIRIT OF THE PUMPKINS DESCENDED INTO THE HEAVENS*, *Pure Form: Japanese Sculptural Ceramics* and the current *Misty Mountain, Shining Moon* have showcased the Gallery's extensive Asian collection.
- Significantly growing audiences to a reach of 1.8 million in 2023.
- The Tarnanthi Festival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art presented the work of 9,373 artists and attained \$8.1 million in art sales through the art fair since 2015 with 100% of proceeds going directly to artists and art centres, making Tarnanthi Australia's leading First Nations art festival and fostering opportunities for First Nations artists across the country at all stages of their careers. Tarnanthi is also now supported by AGSA's First Nations Advisory Council. AGSA was also the first state art museum to develop its Reconciliation Action Plan.
- An increased international exhibition touring program which included *Living Rocks: A fragment of the universe*, an official Collateral Event for the Venice Biennale Arte and touring the First Nations exhibition *Kulata Tjuta* to France and Germany and *Naomi Hobson: Adolescent Wonderland* now touring to Morocco. An increased national exhibition touring program that has included *Quilty*, *Kungka Kunpu: Strong Women*, *Brent Harris: Surrender and Catch*, and *Vincent Namatjira: Australia in Colour* currently showing at the National Gallery of Australia.

# AGSA

- Devenport has also personally curated three international projects: *Lee Mingwei: Sonic Blossom*, *Nalini Malani: Gamepieces* and *Robert Wilson: Moving Portraits* to critical and visitor acclaim.
- Landmark publication in 2024 of *AGSA 500* celebrating 500 works of art selected from AGSA's collection, just one percent of the entire collection.

Devenport will be moving to Sydney and embarking on a series of new international and national projects, she says, 'I wish the new leadership, and our dedicated, inspiring and passionate staff and volunteers, every success moving forwards. It has been an absolute privilege to work so closely with our donors and supporters of the Gallery. Most especially it is our collective work supporting artists of the past and the present and ensuring memorable connections with audiences that I am most proud of.'

Art Gallery Board Chair Sandy Verschoor thanked Devenport for her extensive contribution to the Gallery, successfully steering the Gallery through the challenges of the pandemic, strategically growing the collection and delivering memorable exhibitions and programs.

'Rhana's passion for the Gallery, its collection, and audiences has driven a profound enhancement of AGSA's world-renowned collection and launched a series of highly successful exhibitions both in Adelaide, across Australia, and abroad. We wish her every success for the future.'

First Fridays on 5 July will launch *Brent Harris: Surrender and Catch* as AGSA stays open late until 9pm with curated live music, talks and tours.

Coinciding with First Friday is *Grand Mix* by Inook part of City Lights at Illuminate Adelaide. AGSA's Renaissance master works are brought to life by the creative minds of France's Inook. Grand Mix takes beautiful works of art from AGSA's forthcoming exhibition *Reimagining the Renaissance*, lifts them off the canvas, and uses AI technology to bring them to life. A collective karaoke session on the forecourt, will see paintings sing and move across AGSA's historic facade, bringing fun and lightness into the dark winter night. Grand Mix runs from 5–21 July, 5.30–10.30pm.

A national and international search is underway to identify a new Gallery Director. In the interim Emma Fey, the current Assistant Director, Operations, will act as Director until the new Director is appointed.

**ENDS**

**Image Credit:** Art Gallery of South Australia Director, Rhana Devenport ONZM, with Brent Harris Photo: Saul Steed

**Image Link:**

[https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/h5zw343gka87zlk558z2b/AHboejLDh\\_a6c1edvJ7TnYc?rlkey=v6r3ph8mlp17ryg9724yc2ioc&st=gz6vq188&dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/h5zw343gka87zlk558z2b/AHboejLDh_a6c1edvJ7TnYc?rlkey=v6r3ph8mlp17ryg9724yc2ioc&st=gz6vq188&dl=0)

---

# AGSA

## MEDIA CONTACTS

Cheree McEwin | Head of Communications, Art Gallery of South Australia  
M +61 416 181 679 | E [mcewin.cheree@artgallery.sa.gov.au](mailto:mcewin.cheree@artgallery.sa.gov.au)

Elisabeth Alexander | Communications Officer, Art Gallery of South Australia  
P +61 8 7085 1618 | E [alexander.elisabeth@artgallery.sa.gov.au](mailto:alexander.elisabeth@artgallery.sa.gov.au)

---

Rhana Devenport ONZM began her tenure as Director of Art Gallery of South Australia in 2018. She was previously Director of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (2013-2018) and Govett-Brewster Art Gallery / Len Lye Centre (2006-2013), both in Aotearoa New Zealand. Rhana is a curator, writer and cultural producer whose career spans art museums, biennales and arts festivals. She has held positions with the Biennale of Sydney and Sydney Festival and was Senior Project Officer with the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art at Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art from 1994 to 2004. Rhana was a Curatorial Advisor for the *Aichi Triennale 2022: Still Alive*. She has curated solo exhibitions with international artists including Nalini Malani, Robert Wilson, Lee Mingwei, Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, Yin Xiuzhen, Song Dong, Lisa Reihana, Fiona Pardington and Nam June Paik. In 2017 Rhana was the Curator for New Zealand's Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia with *Lisa Reihana: Emissaries*. She regularly contributes to art publishing and recently edited a major monograph on Thai artist Pinaree Sanpitak. Internationally Rhana contributes actively to advisory and selection committees including the Mori Art Museum International Advisory Committee and the Taishin Arts Award, 2024. In 2018 she received The New Zealand of Merit by Her Majesty the Queen for her contribution to arts governance.