

# HANS HEYSEN



**EDUCATION RESOURCE**

**ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA • ADELAIDE**

# INTRODUCTION

This exhibition features more than one hundred and twenty works created by Hans Heysen over his seventy year career, and is the first major retrospective of his work in three decades. Heysen is South Australia's best known artist, and one of Australia's greatest landscape painters. His work was pivotal to the development of Australian art and culture in the twentieth century. The exhibition traces the artist's development from his early student days painting in Europe, to his later years and the works of the Flinders Ranges.

## Information for teachers

This education resource has been produced by the Art Gallery of South Australia to support the national tour of the exhibition *Hans Heysen*.

The aim of this resource is to offer insights into Heysen's life, works of art, and major themes. It is intended as a starting point for generating ideas, for encouraging student research, and as a basis for discussion during exhibition visits. The resource introduces key works of art, provides background information on the development of Heysen's artistic career, and offers focus questions and suggested activities. Teachers are advised that not all works of art described here will travel to all venues.

This resource can be used in a variety of ways, both for student groups, as well as for individual study and research. The material is intended to complement the information provided in the exhibition book and on the exhibition wall texts.

Teachers are invited to adapt the resource to suit their students' needs, or select and integrate sections into existing units of study.

Key terms in **bold** are defined in the Glossary at the end of this resource.

*Hans Heysen*



Judith Fletcher, photographer,  
*Hans Heysen*, 1917

## EXHIBITION TOUR SCHEDULE

Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Mornington  
23 April–21 June 2009

Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat  
11 July–2 October 2009

Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Hobart  
27 November 2009–14 February 2010

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
30 April 2010–4 July 2010

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane  
31 July–24 October 2010

Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Newcastle  
19 November 2010–30 January 2011

## BIOGRAPHICAL TIMELINE

- 1877 Wilhelm Ernst Hans Franz Heysen was born in Hamburg, Germany, on 8 October.
- 1884 Heysen arrived in Adelaide with his mother Elize and four siblings to join his father Louis who had arrived in 1883.
- 1884–87 During these years the Heysen family regularly moved, living at Port Adelaide, Rosewater, Hackney, Stepney and North Norwood (now Trinity Gardens). Heysen attended five schools between 1886 and 1892.
- 1892 Heysen left school and was apprenticed to Cowell Brothers, a sawmilling and hardware business on The Parade, Norwood. He began to draw seriously in his spare time, buying art materials with his wages.
- 1893 Heysen began formal part-time art studies with James Ashton at the Norwood Art School. He began to sketch outdoors each Sunday in the foothills of the Adelaide Hills.
- 1894 Heysen paints *The wet road*.
- 1895 Heysen enrolls in James Ashton's newly-established Academy of Art in Grenfell Street, Adelaide. He joins the Adelaide Easel Club (1891–1900), a division of the South Australian Society of Arts.
- 1895–99 Heysen exhibits every year with the Easel Club, and from 1897–99 with the South Australian Society of Arts.
- 1898 Heysen enrolls at the South Australian School of Design in Adelaide.
- 1899 Heysen wins first prize and gold medal awarded by the Royal Drawing Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Four Adelaide businessmen support Heysen financially to undertake a study tour in Europe. In return Heysen is to send them all the work he produces during his years overseas.
- 1899–1903 Heysen began his formal training in Paris, France, at the Academie Julian and Academie Calorossi. During his second year he attends Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the national art school of Paris. He spends his summer breaks on painting excursions visiting Holland, Scotland, England, and Germany. His final year in Europe is spent in Italy. Heysen spends time painting and drawing in churches and museums, and making copies of the works of Old Masters.
- 1904 Heysen returned to Adelaide in January and opened a studio and art school. In May he held his first solo exhibition. Later that year two of his paintings were acquired by two state art collections. In December Heysen married Selma Bartels (known as Sallie) who was one of his art students.
- 1905 Heysen moved his studio and school to Hurtle Square, Adelaide.
- 1907 Heysen spent three months painting in New Zealand and held a solo exhibition in Wellington.
- 1908 Heysen held his first solo exhibition in Melbourne which was opened by Prime Minister Alfred Deakin. It was a huge success, with £750 worth of paintings being sold. The success of the exhibition brought commissions from well-known patrons such as Dame Nellie Melba.
- 1912 Heysen holds another successful solo exhibition in Melbourne with sales over £1500. This enables him to purchase The Cedars, a thirty-six acre property near Hahndorf. Here he and his wife lived for the rest of their lives, raising a large family.



above: Harold Cazneaux, photographer  
*Hans Heysen's studio*, 1935

A. Wilkinson, photographer  
*Hans Heysen at work in his studio*, 1921

- 1913 Heysen's stone studio is built a short distance from the house, positioned among trees.
- 1915 Heysen's third solo Melbourne exhibition is opened by Dame Nellie Melba. Sales exceed £1000. Seven weeks later came Gallipoli. Heysen resigns from the Australian Art Association and the South Australian Society of Arts when asked to declare his position with regard to the war.
- 1915–17 Heysen makes four visits to sketch the River Murray, travelling by paddle steamer from Murray Bridge to Nildottie.
- 1917 The trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales refuse to include works by Heysen in a loan Exhibition of Australian Art because of his German ancestry.
- 1917–20 Heysen begins turning away from pure landscape to the subject of rural workers: the men and animals toiling in the fields around the town of Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills.
- 1920–26 The 1920s are a successful time for Heysen, who exhibits in four exhibitions which bring in sales of nearly £11,000. He is featured in two dedicated issues of *Art in Australia*. Frequent press releases and articles by Lionel Lindsay contribute to making Heysen a household name. His pastoral and eucalypt landscapes remain his favourite subjects, but he now also produces a large number of still-life paintings.
- 1926 Heysen makes his first trip to the Flinders Ranges. He returned there many times over the next seven years, producing sketches, oils and watercolours. Some of these were completed on site but most were brought back to be worked on in the studio.



This photograph shows how Heysen worked outdoors.

F.A. Joyner, Australia, 1863–1945  
*Heysen in the Flinders*, 1927, Flinders Ranges, South Australia  
bromide photograph, 22.2 x 32.2 cm (image)  
Gift of Mrs Max Joyner 1981  
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

- 1929–33 Heysen had fewer art sales during the Great Depression. He continues with his sketching expeditions to the Flinders Ranges.
- 1934 Heysen takes his second trip to Europe, where he becomes reacquainted with the European art collections and the works of artists he admires.
- 1935 The first exhibition of Heysen's work in a public art museum is held in Sydney at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.
- 1938 Heysen's fourth daughter, Nora, becomes the first woman artist to win the Archibald Prize for portraiture.
- 1940 Heysen is appointed to the Board of the National Gallery of South Australia (later the Art Gallery of South Australia) and serves a record 28 years until his death in 1968.
- 1945 Heysen is appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire.
- 1949 Heysen visits the Flinders Ranges for the last time.
- 1952 A major exhibition, spanning fifty years of Heysen's work, is held at the David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney.
- 1959 In recognition of his outstanding contribution to Australian art Heysen is made a Knight Bachelor in the Queen's Birthday Honours.
- 1962 Sallie Heysen dies, aged 83.
- 1966 A large retrospective exhibition of Heysen's work is held at John Martin's Art Gallery, Adelaide, during the biennial *Adelaide Festival of Arts*.
- 1967 An exhibition of over 100 works is held at the Hahndorf Academy Gallery in honour of Heysen's ninetieth birthday.
- 1968 Sir Hans Heysen dies aged 90, on 2 July in Mount Barker Hospital, and is buried two days later in the Hahndorf cemetery.

Acknowledgement is made to Rebecca Andrews *Hans Heysen* (Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2008); Colin Thiele's *Heysen of Hahndorf* (Rigby, Adelaide 1968) and Jane Hylton & John Neylon's *Hans Heysen into the light* (Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA, 2004) for much of the information in this biographical timeline.

## AWARDS / PRIZES

### Wynne Prize

1904 for *Mystic Morn*

1909 for *Summer*

1911 for *Hauling timber*

1920 for *The Toilers*

1922 for *The quarry*

1924 for *Afternoon in Autumn*

1926 for *Farmyard, frosty morning*

1931 for *Red Gums of the Far North*

1932 for *Brachina Gorge*

1931 the **Crouch Prize** for the best contemporary painting or sculpture awarded by the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery.

1957 the **Maude Vizard-Wholohan Prize** for watercolour awarded by the Royal South Australian Society of Arts in conjunction with the Art Gallery of South Australia.



*The wet road*, 1894  
watercolour on paper,  
21.0 x 33.7 cm  
Gift of Sir James McGregor 1959  
Art Gallery of South Australia,  
Adelaide

Heysen painted *The wet road* at the age of seventeen. It was the first painting he ever sold and was purchased by his art teacher, James Ashton, for ten shillings. The painting was ‘an atmospheric landscape – all water, mud, reflections and mist’.<sup>1</sup> *The wet road* was influenced by Scottish artist, Peter Graham (1836–1921) whose work Heysen had seen when he visited the National Art Gallery of South Australia, as it was then known.

Heysen received traditional art training at the Norwood Art School in Adelaide. His teacher would encourage students to develop their techniques by making copies of other watercolours, particularly those by British landscape artists such as Copley Fielding (1787–1855). Learning through ‘copying’ is a technique that has ‘been used since the sixteenth century in Europe, and is considered a very good way to learn about composition and painting methods’.<sup>2</sup>

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

Look at how Heysen has painted the clouds. Note the different colours he has used. What weather report would you give after looking at this painting?

### Discussion:

What is the importance of visiting your local art gallery? Compare your experience of seeing a reproduction of a work of art with viewing a real work of art in an exhibition.

### Activity/research:

On the next overcast day, create your own quick studies of clouds. Following this, download the image of Heysen’s painting *The wet road* from the website <http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/learning/resource/Heysen/>

Create a ‘copy’ of the sky in this work. Look particularly at colour and shape. How are your clouds different to the clouds in *The wet road*?

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

Find similarities and differences between *The wet road* and *Autumnal showers*, 1869, by Peter Graham (see exhibition book p. 23). Look at composition, media and colour. Consider the influence Graham had on Heysen.

### Discussion:

How important is it for an artist to research and learn from the work of other artists?

### Activity/research:

Download the image of Heysen’s painting *The wet road* from the website <http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/learning/resource/Heysen/>

Create your own ‘copy’ of the work. Look at composition, colour, line, shape and use of media. Display your finished works in the classroom and compare and contrast these with the original work of art.

<sup>1</sup> Hylton, Jane & Neylon, John. *Hans Heysen into the light*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA, 2004, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, Julie. *Hans Heysen: the creative journey*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1992, p. 3.



*The Doge's Palace, Venice*, 1903  
watercolour on paper, 22.3 x 28.7 cm  
Private collection

From 1899 to 1903 Heysen undertook an extensive study tour in Europe. He spent his summer breaks on painting holidays visiting Holland, Scotland, England, and Germany. His final year in Europe was spent in Italy, painting and drawing in churches and museums, and making copies of the works of Old Masters. It was a year of self-education.

In September 1902 Heysen spent eight weeks in Venice, sketching along the canals, in squares and in churches, and on the bridges 'recording what he thought to be the true essence of the city'.<sup>1</sup>

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

What particular things do you notice or discover when you spend more time looking at this Venice cityscape? Make a list of the things you see in the painting.

### Discussion:

Where is the sun located? Describe the colours Heysen has used to create the shadows.

### Activity/research:

Locate Venice on a map.

What is it that makes Venice unique?

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

Heysen wrote in a postcard to his mother in 1902 that Venice sometimes 'looks as if the whole city hovers between water and air'. Describe how Heysen depicts this in the painting.

### Discussion:

Compare the clear, translucent watercolour created in Venice with the darker oil painting *From the apartment window, Paris*.

### Activity/research:

A key influence on Heysen's work was his appreciation of European landscape artists including Claude Lorraine (1600–1682), John Constable (1776–1837) and J.M.W. Turner (1775–1851).

Look at key works by these artists and describe the influences you see on Heysen's work.

<sup>1</sup> Andrews, Rebecca. *Hans Heysen*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2008, p. 42.



*Approaching storm with bushfire haze*, 1912, oil on canvas, 61.0 x 82.5 cm; Gift of the artist 1944, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Heysen based his paintings on the close observation of nature. He made small sketches as he watched the approach of bushfires in February 1912. These were some of the worst bushfires in memory, and the fiercest that had swept through the Adelaide Hills for many years.

The scene depicts the landscape near Heysen's home in the Adelaide Hills. The small oil painting shows farmers urgently moving sheep to safety. It is an atmospheric study of the way smoke affects light.

Drawing was important to Heysen, as it played a significant role in the early and advanced stages of the design process. Heysen would first start with an idea sketch. This would be followed by schematic composition drawings, studies of particular motifs, detailed **studies** of the compositional elements, and finally, a finished compositional drawing which was squared for transfer to canvas.

Heysen made thousands of drawings and sketches that varied from 'carefully rendered pencil drawings to loose expressive pen and ink sketches, luminous pastels, tonal charcoal drawings and refined black chalk studies on blue paper. He made drawings on scraps of paper, backs of bills, on envelopes, on invitations, whatever was at hand when there was an urgent need to record an image'.<sup>1</sup> These drawings became his stockpile of ideas and were the foundation on which he built his paintings.

Heysen sketched outdoors using a range of media. 'Carrying his drawing and watercolour materials Heysen would set out on foot from his house in search of a subject. The very act of walking would give him time to absorb and reflect upon the landscape'.<sup>2</sup>



top: *Study of Approaching storm with bushfire haze*, 1913, charcoal, white chalk & grey wash on grey paper, mounted on cardboard, 65.7 x 87.0 cm; Gift of the artist 1963, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

*Study for Approaching storm with bushfire haze*, 1912, pen & ink and ink wash on grey paper, 18.9 x 24.0 cm; Bequest of the artist 1971, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

Imagine you can step into the painting. Describe what you can see, hear and smell. What are the farmers doing?

### Discussion:

Find the painting *Bushfire, Hahndorf*, 1912. How has Heysen conveyed a sense of drama and danger in this work?

### Activity/research:

How is the fire fighting in this painting different from today's methods?

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

List the similarities and differences between these three works of art. Which landscape engages you most? Why?

### Discussion:

What is the importance for an artist of creating studies? How has *Study for Approaching storm with bushfire haze*, 1912, been used in the creation of the painting *Approaching storm with bushfire haze*, 1912?

### Activity/research:

Explore your local environment and make a series of both quick studies and detailed sketches from different viewpoints.

Back in the classroom, use black and white chalk on blue paper to construct a detailed work as the foundation for an oil or acrylic painting.

<sup>1</sup> Robinson, Julie. *Hans Heysen: the creative journey*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1992, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, Julie. p. 9.



*The Toilers*, 1920, watercolour on paper, 40.4 x 51.8 cm; Bequest of the artist 1969, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Around 1918 Heysen's main attention turned away from pure landscape to the subject of rural workers: the men and animals toiling in the fields around the town of Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills. Heysen had a great affinity with local farmers, and they often became the **subject matter** of his paintings.

These images were inspired by what Heysen saw on early morning visits to Hahndorf to collect the mail.

The two draught horses, Polly and Jack, were favourite subjects for Heysen's studies. They belonged to 'old Kramm,' the farmer who came regularly to do the ploughing and cultivating at the Heysens' home, The Cedars.

Heysen filled many sheets of paper with quickly drawn studies in both pencil and charcoal, recording various stages of action of the men and horses on the land.

Of *The Toilers*, Heysen wrote in 1920

... (It) gets nearer to 'Mother Earth' than any previous work I have painted dealing with the toilers of the fields. I think I have got more weight and mystery and at the same time retaining light.<sup>1</sup>

The images of farm labourers are reminiscent of images of rural peasant workers by artists associated with the **Barbizon School**, such as Jean Francois-Millet and Camille Corot.



*The plough*, 1918, etching, printed in black, on paper, 7.3 x 7.8 cm; Gift of Marjorie Gwynne 1944, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

Is there more than one toiler in the painting?

What is the farm labourer doing?

Find the patterns in the soil made by the horse-drawn harrow. What type of lines are they? Describe them.

### Discussion:

How have farming techniques changed since Heysen's day?

### Activity/research:

Look for other images of the plough in the exhibition.

Find Heysen's **etching** *The plough*, 1918. Can you explain how the plough works? Do you know what a harrow and a **tine** are?

Look for other representations of farm workers in the exhibition. What activities are they engaged in?

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

Select several paintings in the exhibition which you think best show Australian landscape. Which one would you award the **Wynne Prize** to?

### Discussion:

Why do you think *The Toilers* was awarded the 1920 Wynne Prize?

### Activity/research:

A key influence on the work of Heysen was his appreciation of the works of Old Masters.

Research the life and work of Dutch artist Jacob Maris, or French artist Camille Corot.

Research the life and work of another Australian artist who has won the Wynne Prize.

<sup>1</sup> Robinson, Julie. *Hans Heysen: the creative journey*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1992, p. 12.



*Sallie (the artist's wife)*, 1912  
charcoal on paper, 37.5 x 27.9 cm  
Private collection

Central to all of Heysen's art was drawing.

Drawing has been described as the most intimate of all the arts. When the subject of a drawing is someone close to the artist, it follows that the drawing can express the qualities of the subject with a particular sensitivity.<sup>1</sup>

In this intimate charcoal portrait of his wife Sallie, Heysen uses a fine network of hatching and cross-hatching to create soft tonal gradations. The portrait was created at a time when the couple was visiting Melbourne, where Heysen was having a solo exhibition of watercolours. Because they had just purchased The Cedars, the financial outcome of the exhibition was particularly important.

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

Can you find areas of hatching and cross-hatching in the portrait?

### Discussion:

Why do artists create portraits?

What might Sallie be thinking or feeling? What words would you use to describe this portrait?

### Activity/research:

Draw a portrait of one of your classmates, or your teacher, in **profile**.

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

Look at this portrait and describe Sallie's mood.

Observe how Heysen has used a combination of hatching and cross-hatching to draw the head. Consider how he has softened the hatching.

### Discussion:

Select one portrait from the exhibition that most reveals the sitter's mood or personality. Discuss how Heysen has conveyed these to you.

### Activity/research:

Using charcoal, pastels and a mid-tone paper, create a portrait in profile of a classmate and/or teacher. Use hatching and cross-hatching techniques, and create areas of tone by smudging with fingers and/or a charcoal stump.

<sup>1</sup> Andrews, Rebecca. *Hans Heysen*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2008, p. 48.



*Gums under mist*, 1917  
watercolour on paper, 46.8 x 61.5 cm  
Bequest of the artist in memory of his wife 1969  
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

This painting was a gift to Heysen's wife Sallie for her birthday, and was the first finished watercolour in a series of watercolours and drawings produced from studies of a gum tree at the front gate of The Cedars.

Heysen has built up the image of the gum tree in a series of semi-transparent layers from light to dark.

... for the last fortnight we have had glorious frosty mornings and when the evaporation of moisture begins everything becomes bathed in the most mysterious and fascinating atmosphere, it all hums in light.<sup>1</sup>

Heysen 1909 (letter to Lionel Lindsay)

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

Can you find other paintings in the exhibition of this same tree? Look for *Morning mist*, 1918; *The clearing early morning*, 1919; *Autumn morning*, 1928–30. Do the trees look the same? Can you recognise them?

### Discussion:

What time of day is depicted in these paintings? Which painting 'hums in light' the most?

### Activity/research:

Discuss different ways in which artists might record images of gum trees. Find examples of images of gum trees in photographs and paintings by different artists.

Explore your school environment for examples of different kinds of trees. Using paper and coloured pencils or pastels, create a drawing of your favourite tree.

Collect fallen bark, leaves and sticks. Make a **collage** using these found objects.

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

How has Heysen created a sense of mood and atmosphere in this painting?

### Discussion:

Discuss the method of paint application in this work of art.

### Activity/research:

Make studies of **eucalyptus** trees and develop your composition back in the classroom.

Create your own watercolour landscape in which the trees appear misty and atmospheric.

<sup>1</sup> Robinson, Julie. *Hans Heysen: the creative journey*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1992, p. 10.



**Petrel Cove**, 1925  
 watercolour on paper, 33.2 x 41.0 cm  
 The Oscar Paul Collection, Gift of Henriette von Dallwitz and of Richard Paul in honour of his father 1965  
 National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Amongst Heysen's favourite painting locations was the coast near the resort town of Victor Harbor, on the Fleurieu Peninsula, south of Adelaide.

Heysen wrote in 1925

'...You would love the grandeur of this coastline, could you but see it, with something barren and primitive in the contour of the land.'<sup>1</sup>

Sitting on the grass on The Bluff at Rosetta Head, Heysen painted the watercolour *Petrel Cove*, 1925 a study for the oil painting *The South Coast*, 1926. 'When painting outdoors Heysen was remarkably self-contained, carrying only a folding stool, a small water bottle and a box of tiny pans of colour. He often either pinned or taped his paper to a board or used a watercolour block, resting his work on his knee... smaller watercolours (and works in other media) were often scaled up once back in the studio at The Cedars.'<sup>2</sup>



F.A. Joyner, Australia, 1863–1945  
*Hans Heysen sketching in the open air, looking south-west from the Bluff (Rosetta Head) near Victor Harbor*  
 bromide photograph, 17.9 x 22.6 cm  
 Gift of Mr & Mrs T.H. Waterhouse 1978  
 Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

Look at photographs of Heysen at work in the landscape. What equipment did he use to create his landscapes?

### Discussion:

Why might some artists prefer to work outdoors (*en plein air*)?

### Activity/research:

Collect images of beach holiday scenes from old photos, magazines and / or postcards. Using these images create a drawing of your perfect seaside holiday.

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

Compare and contrast the view in the photograph *Hans Heysen sketching in the open air, looking south-west from the Bluff (Rosetta Head) near Victor Harbor*, with the composition of the painting *Petrel Cove*, 1925.

### Discussion:

Look at a range of Heysen's coastal works, painted in both oil and watercolour. Which medium do you think best depicts a coastal scene? Why?

### Activity/research:

What are the benefits of and differences to painting in a studio compared to painting outdoors (*en plein air*)?

When did *en plein air* landscape painting become popular with artists in Australia? Who were its most famous exponents?

1 Andrews, Rebecca. *Hans Heysen*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2008, p. 74.

2 Hylton, Jane & Neylon, John. *Hans Heysen into the light*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA, 2004, p. 34.



*Bronzewings and saplings*, 1921  
watercolour on paper, 56.7 x 76.4 cm  
South Australian Government Grant 1937  
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Heysen had been exploring the subject of turkeys since about 1914. His fascination with turkeys began when the postmistress at Hahndorf sent him some bronzewing turkey eggs. When they hatched many of the chicks turned out to be white, which was a rare event. Their unusual white and bronze colour inspired Heysen to paint a series of pictures. Of this particular painting he said:

...quite a lot of trouble and study went into the making of it. In fact I can easily say it is the most complicated piece of design I have tackled ... The picture is treated in the manner of a mosaic – and each mass of colour is laid down freshly with a crisp edge.<sup>1</sup>

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

On first glance these turkeys all look the same. Focus on the details. What differences do you notice the longer you look?

What are the dominant visual elements in the painting?

Look at line, shape and colour. Can you see any patterns? What colours stand out?

### Discussion:

Heysen referred to this painting as being done in the manner of a **mosaic**. What is a mosaic?

### Activity/research:

Download the image of *Bronzewings and saplings* from the website <http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/learning/resource/Heysen/>

Draw your favourite section of the work. Using cut and torn coloured papers and your drawing, create your own collage.

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

Where is the **focal point** in the painting?

Observe Heysen's use of compacted space with its high horizon line. Make a quick sketch of the painting.

### Discussion:

Heysen wrote in a letter to artist Lionel Lindsay in September 1921 that this work of art was the most complicated piece of design he had tackled. Why would Heysen have written this?

### Activity/research:

Download the image of *Bronzewings and saplings* from the website <http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/learning/resource/Heysen/>

Using watercolour paint or pencils create a new 'busy, rhythmic' composition of *Bronzewings and saplings* by rearranging the key elements.

<sup>1</sup> Andrews, Rebecca. *Hans Heysen*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2008, p. 82.



*Still life with pumpkins and onions*, 1922  
oil on canvas,  
65.5 x 92.5 cm  
The Cedars, The  
Hans Heysen Estate,  
Hahndorf, South  
Australia

This painting depicts pumpkins and onions grown in Heysen's vegetable garden. The brass pot still remains at The Cedars.

Still-life painting was a **genre** that interested Heysen from around 1914 onwards. He explored subjects such as vegetables, flowers and fruit. Heysen could turn to still life when the weather was bad and prevented him from sketching out of doors, and it also was a favourite subject for gifts.

For his still-life work, Heysen had a different and more direct approach. He casually set up the flowers or fruit indoors and painted for three or four days straight from the motif, before they spoiled or wilted and died. Hence, there was no time to make many study-drawings and contemplate the composition.

As Heysen wrote in 1921:

The trouble is that each fresh subject I tackle is a matter of "life or death" – at least they give me no rest until I feel my "paint is exhausted". It is only darkness that stops me each day – and a pile of grapes means 4 solid days...<sup>1</sup>

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

What subject matter has the artist painted? List the objects you can see in the painting.

### Discussion:

Define the term 'still life'. Investigate the beginnings of still-life painting and discuss why the genre is so popular.

### Activity/research:

Choose from flowers, fruit and vegetables, and/or household objects and set up a still-life arrangement in the classroom. Use coloured pencils to make two drawings of this arrangement from different angles. Display the results in the classroom.

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

What do you notice or discover in the painting when you spend more time looking?

### Discussion:

Describe the paint application and the way in which Heysen has created shadows and reflections.

### Activity/research:

Set up a still-life arrangement using flowers, vegetables or fruit. Also include a reflective object or mirror in your arrangement. Paint a study which emphasizes shadows and reflections. Display the finished works and compare your painting with the paintings of your classmates.

<sup>1</sup> Andrews, Rebecca. *Hans Heysen*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2008, p. 84.



*Driving into the light*, 1914–21  
oil on canvas, 121.9 x 152.4 cm  
Gift of Mr W.H. Vincent 1922  
Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth

From 1908 Heysen began to produce large paintings of monumental gum trees. He was the first artist to use the eucalyptus tree as the main subject in his art. He often painted the river red gums which were common in the area around Hahndorf.

This painting celebrates the magnificence of Australian eucalyptus trees. It is considered one of Australia's greatest **Federation** landscapes. Following Australia's Federation in 1901, many artists explored the unique character of Australian landscapes, painting the giant eucalypts, expansive oceans and rivers, rugged mountain ranges and pastoral scenes. The Federation paintings inspired the public with strong feelings regarding their vast country. The paintings helped to define what it meant to be Australian. Of all Heysen's eucalypt paintings done in oil, *Driving into the light* is considered his most successful in terms of capturing the light. Heysen emphasised how important it was for Australian artists to capture the quality of Australian light, which was so different to the light in Europe.

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

Observe Heysen's use of paint layers and thick brushstrokes. What colours stand out the most? How many different colours can you see? Now step back from the painting and consider the shapes you can see. How do the colours look different at a distance?

### Discussion:

What do you see in the painting that Heysen would have described as magnificent or majestic?

### Activity/research:

Find out more about the Federation period in Australian art by researching a Federation artist such as Federick McCubbin, Walter Withers, J.J. Hilder, or Arthur Streeton.

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

Find other paintings in the exhibition which clearly depict the effect of light on the landscape at different times of the day. Study the direction and intensity of light. Select your favourite work of art in the exhibition and think about how the light contributes to the mood and feeling of the painting.

### Discussion:

Consider Heysen's words: 'The sun – its light and its warmth – is my religion'. (1912)

Which of Heysen's works of art do you think best illustrates this comment?

### Activity/research:

What was happening in art during the Australian Federation period? Look at works of important artists of this time (McCubbin, Withers, Hilder, Streeton etc). What common themes or characteristics can you identify?

Select two Federation artists and compare and contrast the depiction of light in their landscape paintings.



*The Land of the Oratunga*, 1932  
watercolour on paper,  
47.3 x 62.6 cm  
South Australian Government  
Grant 1937  
Art Gallery of South Australia,  
Adelaide

The painting is of Patawarta Hill, one of the most remarkable and interesting mountains in the Northern Flinders Ranges. Its distinctive pyramid-like shape was a subject which Heysen recorded many times in studies, sketches, and pencil drawings. The land is harsh and rugged, and unique for the almost total absence of vegetation.

The Flinders Ranges was not a landscape many average Australians had seen in the 1920s. Heysen's works were considered important records of this little-known part of inland Australia, and were hailed as a 'deviation in Australian landscape painting'.<sup>1</sup> This watercolour was probably completed in the studio and composed from the many studies that Heysen did of this area. The view you see is taken from the ruins of Artimore Homestead, and shows the mountain peak rising above the foothills.

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

Find and describe the lone tree in the foreground of this painting.

### Discussion:

Make a list of the warm and cool colours you can see.

### Activity/research:

When you are back in the classroom, locate the Flinders Ranges on a map, and see if you can find Heysen's painting locations.

Look at the 'colour' art element in the 'Unpacking Agsa' online game on the website

[www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/learning/unpackingagsa](http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/learning/unpackingagsa)

Create a colour wheel using primary, secondary and tertiary colours. Label the warm and cool colours.

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

Describe why Heysen felt that the painting resembled 'arrested waves on the verge of breaking'. (Letter to Lionel Lindsay 1928)

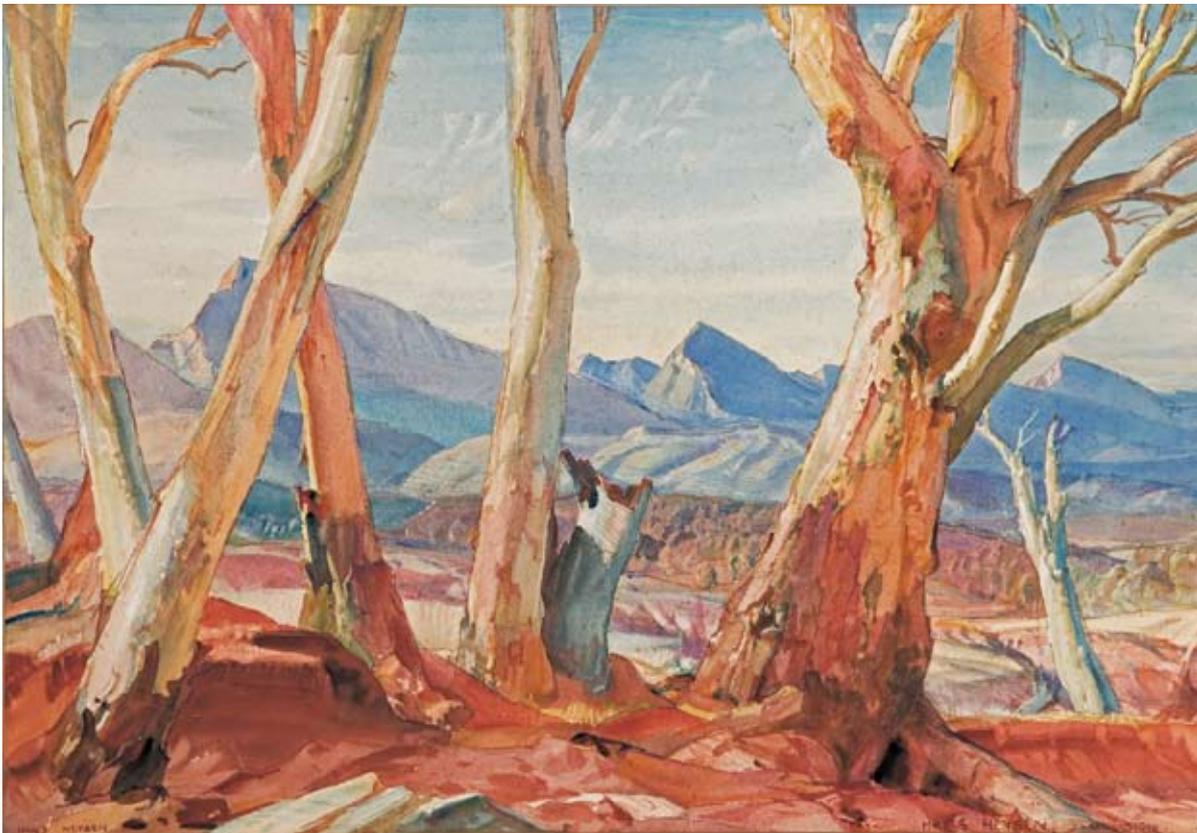
### Discussion:

Heysen achieved a sense of form through the use of colour. By placing one translucent wash over another, he created a range of colours. What colours has he combined to create areas of shadow?

### Activity/research:

Compare the watercolour painting *The Land of the Oratunga*, 1932 with the oil painting *Patawarta: Land of the Oratunga*, 1929. List the similarities and differences between these paintings. Which medium do you think best depicts the arid and austere environment of the Flinders Ranges? Why?

<sup>1</sup> Andrews, Rebecca. *Hans Heysen*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2008, p. 110.



*Aroona*, 1939  
watercolour on paper,  
42.2 x 62.0 cm  
Private collection

Between 1926 and 1933 Heysen made nine trips to the Flinders Ranges, and two more in 1947 and 1949. The landscape was totally different to that of the Adelaide Hills, and Heysen had a challenge to express this new landscape pictorially. 'The unusual atmospheric effects made it difficult to handle the strong colours . . . colour modifications to his palette were necessary'.<sup>1</sup>

In this painting Heysen created 'a foreground screen of gum trees, extending beyond the compositional frame . . . through which is viewed the three distinctive hills of the Aroona Valley'.<sup>2</sup> He focused on his characteristic motifs of gum tree and the barren landscape.

1 Andrews, Rebecca. Hans Heysen, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2008, p. 94.

2 Andrews, Rebecca, p. 102.

## PRIMARY

### Looking:

Heysen used warm and cool colours to show perspective in his paintings. Describe the colours you can see in the foreground, middle-ground and background.

### Discussion:

Where is the sun in this painting? What time of day might it be?

### Activity/research:

Draw a landscape using warm and cool colours.

## SECONDARY

### Looking:

When painting his Flinders Ranges scenes Heysen had to rethink his notions of size and distance. Can you see how he has used colour to suggest distance?

### Discussion:

In what way does Heysen's use of colour in earlier works differ from his later works?

Discuss how an artist's body of work is a journey of experiences and influences.

### Activity/research:

Use warm and cool colours to paint a landscape with a distinct foreground, middle-ground and background.

# GLOSSARY

**Barbizon school:** (c.1830–1870) A French school of artists of the middle of the 19th century, centred in the village of Barbizon near the forest of Fontainebleau. Barbizon painters were part of a movement towards realism. Its members went straight to nature in disregard of academic tradition, treating their subjects faithfully and with poetic feeling for colour, light, and atmosphere. The leaders of the Barbizon school were Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, Theodore Rousseau, Jean-Francois Millet, and Charles-Francois Daubigny. Other members included Jules Dupre and Narcisse Virgilio Diaz.

**Collage:** A word used to describe both the technique and the resulting work of art in which pieces of paper, photographs, fabric and ephemera are arranged and stuck down onto a supporting surface. Can also include painting and drawing and contain three-dimensional elements.

**En plein air:** A French term meaning out of doors, in the open air. The term refers to the practice of painting entire finished pictures out of doors, as opposed to simply making preparatory studies or sketches and completing the final work in the studio.

**Etching:** The act or process of making designs or pictures on a metal plate, glass, etc., by the corrosive action of using a strong acid to cut into the unprotected parts of the surface. An impression, as on paper, taken from an etched plate.

**Eucalyptus:** Tall trees belonging to the genus *Eucalyptus*, of the myrtle family, native to Australia and adjacent islands, having aromatic evergreen leaves that are the source of medicinal oils.

**Federation:** This term is used to refer to the process by which the six separate British self-governing colonies of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia formed a federation. When the constitution of Australia came into force on 1 January 1901, the colonies collectively became states of the Commonwealth of Australia. The word Federation is also used to describe Australian landscape artists and their works of the early twentieth century.

**Focal point:** the centre of visual attention.

**Genre:** A class, category or type of painting. The genres were codified in the seventeenth century by the French Royal Academy. In descending order of importance the types were History, Portrait, Genre, Landscape and Still life. The hierarchy of the genres was based on the notion of man as the measure of all things – landscape and still life were the lowest because they did not involve human subject matter. History was highest because it dealt with the noblest events of human history and with religion.

**Harrow:** An agricultural implement with spikelike teeth or upright disks, drawn chiefly over ploughed land to level it, break up clods, root up weeds.

**Mosaic:** A picture or decoration made of small, usually coloured pieces of inlaid stone and/or glass.

**Profile:** The outline or contour of the human face viewed from one side.

**Studies:** In terms of art, this word refers to something produced as an educational exercise, as a memorandum or record of observations or effects, or as a guide for a finished work of art.

**Subject matter:** Subject or topic that is under consideration in a work of art.

**Tine:** A sharp, projecting point or prong, as of a fork.

**Wynne Prize:** Australian landscape painting or figure-sculpture art prize. One of Australia's longest running art prizes, begun in 1897 from the bequest of Richard Wynne, the prize is awarded annually to the work the judges consider to be the best landscape painting of Australian scenery in oils or watercolours, or the best example of figure sculpture by an Australian artist, completed in the preceding year.

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