

# John Olsen

## JOHN OLSEN AO OBE

### BIOGRAPHY

Born in Newcastle, 1928

Lived and worked in Europe, 1956–60, 1965–67

Dr John Olsen received an Order of Australia (AO) in 2001. In 1977 he was awarded the OBE for services to the Arts and in 1993 he was awarded an Australian Creative Fellowship. He was also awarded the Wynne Prize in 1969 and 1985, the Sulman Prize in 1989 and the Archibald Prize in 2005 amongst many other awards throughout his career. He has also received an honorary doctorate of letters from both the University of NSW (2003) and the University of Newcastle (2011).

### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

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|---------|--|---------|---|
| 2021    | <i>John Olsen: Goya's Dog</i> , National Art School, Darlinghurst  | 2007    | <i>John Olsen: Works on Paper</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery Annex, Sydney   |
| 2019-20 | <i>John Olsen</i> , OLSEN Gallery, Sydney  | 2006    | <i>The Coorong: Unfinished Journey</i> , Metro 5 Gallery, Melbourne   |
|         | <i>John Olsen Archive</i> , OLSEN Gallery, Sydney  |         | <i>Selected works by John Olsen</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney   |
| 2018    | <i>John Olsen – Figures in Landscape</i> , OLSEN Gallery, Sydney   |         | <i>John Olsen: His Complete Graphics</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney  |
| 2017    | <i>John Olsen – New Paintings</i> , OLSEN Gallery, Sydney  | 2006    | <i>John Olsen, Selection of Graphics</i> , Eastgate and Holst Gallery, Melbourne  |
| 2016    | <i>John Olsen</i> , OLSEN IRWIN, Sydney  | 2005    | <i>The Flight to Broome</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery Annex, Sydney   |
|         | <i>John Olsen: The City's Son</i> , Newcastle Art Gallery, NSW   |         | <i>Pulse: Paintings by John Olsen 1961–2005</i> , TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, Victoria                                 |
|         | <i>John Olsen: The You Beaut Country</i> , National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (16 September – 12 February 2017), Art Gallery of New South Wales (10 March – 12 June 2017) |         | <i>Teeming with Life, His Complete Graphics 1957–2005</i> , Book launch and exhibition of selected etchings, Cosa Gallery, London |
| 2015    | <i>Destination Sydney</i> , Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney   |         | <i>The Coorong Suite, New Releases, Print Survey</i> , Port Jackson Press Gallery, Melbourne                                      |
|         | <i>John Olsen</i> , Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane   |         | <i>A selection of recent etchings by John Olsen</i> , Impressions on Paper Gallery, Canberra                                      |
| 2014    | <i>Myself and other Animals</i> , Metro Gallery, Melbourne   | 2004    | <i>John Olsen: Recent Works</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney   |
|         | <i>John Olsen: Etchings</i> , OLSEN IRWIN, Sydney  | 2003    | <i>John Olsen</i> , Metro 5 Gallery, Melbourne  |
| 2013-14 | <i>John Olsen: Recent Work</i> , OLSEN IRWIN, Sydney   |         | <i>Sydney Harbour, Seaport of Desire</i> , a survey of prints and drawings, Port Jackson Press, Melbourne                         |
| 2013    | <i>John Olsen: An Exhibition of New Work</i> , Osborne Samuel, London in conjunction with OLSEN IRWIN, Sydney  |         | <i>Seaport of Desire</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney  |
| 2012    | <i>John Olsen – Lake Eyre: The Desert Sea</i> , Metro Gallery, Melbourne   | 2001    | <i>Recent works on paper</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney  |
| 2011    | <i>John Olsen, Lake Eyre – The Desert Sea, Ruminations on an empty landscape</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney   | 2000    | <i>John Olsen: Past &amp; Present</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney   |
|         | <i>John Olsen, Lake Eyre – The Desert Sea, Ruminations on an empty landscape</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery at the Hong Kong Art Fair   | 1999    | <i>John Olsen: A Survey Exhibition</i> , Savill Galleries, Sydney   |
| 2010    | <i>John Olsen, Culinararia – The Cuisine of the Sun</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery  |         | <i>John Olsen</i> , Savill Galleries, Sydney  |
| 2009    | <i>Olsen: Paintings &amp; Drawings</i> , Metro Gallery, Melbourne  | 1998    | <i>John Olsen: Recent Paintings 1995–1998</i> , Olsen Carr Art Dealers, Sydney  |
| 2007-08 | <i>Sky High</i> , John Olsen's ceiling and wall commissions, Newcastle Region Gallery, NSW   |         | <i>'New York Nowhere', recent paintings and works on paper</i> , Olsen Carr Art Dealers, Sydney                                   |
| 2007    | <i>John Olsen, A Salute to Sydney</i> , Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney  |         | Launch of the Lytlewode Press publication <i>New York Nowhere</i> ; poems by Geoffrey Dutton, etchings by John Olsen              |
|         |  | 1995    | <i>John Olsen: Recent Works</i> , Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane  |
|         |  | 1994    | <i>John Olsen: Recent Work 1992–1994</i> , Deutscher Fine Art, Melbourne  |
|         |  | 1993    | <i>John Olsen: Recent Works</i> , Sherman Galleries Goodhope, Sydney  |
|         |  |         | <i>John Olsen: Recent Etchings</i> , Olsen Carr Art Dealers, Sydney   |
|         |  | 1992    | <i>John Olsen Retrospective</i> , Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  |
|         |  | 1991-92 | <i>John Olsen Retrospective</i> , National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne   |
|         |  | 1991    | <i>John Olsen</i> , Australian Galleries, Melbourne   |
|         |  | 1990    | <i>John Olsen</i> , Australian Galleries, Sydney  |
|         |  | 1989    | <i>John Olsen</i> , Greenhill Gallery, Perth  |

# John Olsen

- 1988 *John Olsen – Encounters with Drawing*, Australian Galleries, Melbourne
- 1987–8 *John Olsen – Encounters with Drawing*, Wollongong City Gallery, NSW
- 1986 *Paintings and Drawings by John Olsen from the permanent collection*, Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, Darwin
- John Olsen – In Search of the Open Country 1961-1986*, Heide Park and Art Gallery, Melbourne
- John Olsen: 'Gold'*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- John Olsen*, Australian Galleries, Melbourne
- 1985 *John Olsen*, Tynte Gallery, Adelaide
- 1984 *John Olsen*, Tynte Gallery, Adelaide (Adelaide Festival)
- 1983 *John Olsen: Selected Graphics*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
- 1983 *John Olsen – The Land Beyond Time*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth (touring nationally until 1990)
- 1982 *John Olsen*, Australian Galleries, Melbourne
- John Olsen 81-82 and Noela Hjorth*, (Festival of Perth) Bortignon's Kalamunda Gallery of Man
- 1981 *John Olsen: A Sliver of Time*, Barry Stern Galleries, Sydney
- 1980 *John Olsen: Exhibition of Recent Paintings*, Australian Galleries, Melbourne
- John Olsen: Paintings and Drawings 77–80*, Lister Gallery, Festival of Perth, Western Australia
- John Olsen: My Complete Graphics*, David Reid Gallery, Sydney
- Festival of Perth, 1980
- 1979 *John Olsen: Earth Hold Etchings*, Cintra House, Brisbane
- 1978 *John Olsen: Paintings and Drawings 77–78*, Barry Stern Galleries, Sydney
- 1977 *John Olsen: Recent Paintings*, Australian Galleries, Melbourne
- 1976 *John Olsen: Recent oil paintings, gouaches, drawings and etchings*, Ray Hughes Gallery, Brisbane
- The Child in us All*, St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane
- 1975 *John Olsen: Edge of the Void*, Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney
- John Olsen 74-75: Edge of the Void and Opera House Mural Studies*, Australian Galleries, Melbourne
- Edge of the Void: Paintings, Drawings, Etchings and Lithographs by John Olsen*, Greenhill Galleries, Adelaide
- John Olsen: Etchings*, Gallery Huntly, Canberra
- 1974 *John Olsen*, Atelier 72 Gallery, Adelaide (courtesy Rudy Komon Gallery)
- 1973 *John Olsen*, Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney
- 1972 *John Olsen*, Australian Galleries, Melbourne
- 1971 *John Olsen*, Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney
- 1970 *John Olsen*, Reid Gallery, Brisbane
- 1969 *The Dunmoochin Summer: John Olsen '69*, Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney
- John Olsen '69- Exhibition of Gouaches and Oil Paintings*, White Studio, Adelaide
- 1967 *Entrance to the Castle of Life: John Olsen 66-67*, Clune Galleries, Sydney
- Entrance to the Castle of Life: John Olsen 66-67*, South Yarra Gallery, Melbourne
- 1965 *John Olsen*, Terry Clune Galleries, Sydney
- John Olsen*, South Yarra Gallery, Melbourne
- 1963 *An Exhibition of Recent Paintings, Gouaches & Drawings by John Olsen*, Terry Clune Galleries, Sydney
- John Olsen: Recent Paintings*, Australian Galleries, Melbourne
- 1960 *Olsen*, Galerie Lambert, Paris
- John Olsen*, Terry Clune Galleries, Sydney
- 1958 *John Olsen*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney: exhibition of works sent back from Spain 1957–58
- 1955 *John Olsen*, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney

## SELECT AWARDS

- 2011 Doctor of letters, honorary doctorate from the University of Newcastle, NSW
- 2010 Life Governor of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 2008 National Art School Fellowship
- 2005 Archibald Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 2003 Doctor of Letters, honorary doctorate from the University of New South Wales, Sydney
- 2001 Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for services to the arts
- Centenary Medal, NSW for service to Australian society and art
- Painters & Sculptors Association Medal (presented by Prime Minister, Mr John Howard OM AC SSI)
- 1993 Australian Council Creative Fellowship (5 years)
- 1989 Sulman Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 1987 Jack Manton Art Prize, Queensland
- 1985 Wynne Prize (Landscape), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 1977 Order of the British Empire (OBE) for Services to the arts
- 1969 Wynne Prize (Landscape), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 1964 Launceston Prize, Tasmania

# John Olsen

- 1963 Georges Invitation Prize, Melbourne
- 1961 H.C. Richards Memorial Prize, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
- Perth Prize
- Royal Easter Show Prize, Sydney
- 1960 Rockdale Prize, NSW

## SELECTED COMMISSIONS

- 1962 Summer in the You Beaut Country, painted ceiling commissioned by Frank McDonald, NSW (gifted to the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne in 1978)
- 1963 *Five Bells*, mural, commissioned by George and Eva Clarke, NSW. Now in the Art Gallery of New South Wales collection
- 1964 *Sea Sun and Five Bells*, privately commissioned ceiling, NSW (now in the Newcastle Art Gallery collection)
- Painted ceiling, commissioned by Tony and Sandra McGrath, NSW
- Life Burst*, painted ceiling, commissioned by Thelma Clune, NSW (now in the Newcastle Art Gallery collection)
- Painted ceiling, commissioned by Pat and Penny Allen, London (gifted to the Art Gallery of Ballarat, Victoria 1976)
- 1971 The Terry Whelan suite, a dinner service with settings for sixteen, commissioned by Terry Whelan and undertaken with potter, Robert Mair, mostly completed in Creswick, Victoria
- 1970–73 *Salute to Five Bells*, mural for the Sydney Opera House, commissioned by the Dobell Foundation (Olsen's largest mural to date: eight hardwood panels measuring 2.90 x 21.53 metres)
- 1977 *The Bay and the Tidal Pool*, mural commissioned for the Master Builders Association, Victoria (now in a private collection, Victoria)
- 1984 A series of eight paintings inspired by the opera commissioned by John Truscott for the State Theatre complex of the Victoria Arts Centre, Melbourne
- 1988 *Big Sun and the Sydney Summer*, large mural for the Darling Harbour Convention Centre, Sydney
- 1989 *Light playing with Evolution*, tapestry commissioned through Australian Galleries for display in the zoology building, University of Melbourne: tapestry woven at the Australian Tapestry Workshop, Melbourne
- 1997 *Rising Suns over Australia Felix*, tapestry commissioned by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra: tapestry woven at the Australian Tapestry Workshop, Melbourne
- 2008–09 *The Yellow Sun and the Yarra*, painting commissioned by the Deague Family, Toorak, Victoria
- 2014 *The King Sun*, a mural commission for Walker Corporate, Melbourne

- 2015 *Sun over the You Beaut Country*, private commission: tapestry woven at the Australian Tapestry Workshop, Melbourne
- 2016 *Life Burst*, commissioned for the new Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, unveiled in June 2106: tapestry woven at the Australian Tapestry Workshop, Melbourne
- 2017 Commissioned to paint the property, *Minderoo* and the Pilbara region, Western Australia by Andrew Forrest AO and Nicola Forrest AO

## COLLECTIONS

John Olsen's work is represented in all Australian state gallery collections, the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and regional galleries Australia wide. He is also represented in institutional, corporate and private collections in Australasia, United Kingdom, Europe and the United States of America. Collections include:

- Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (128 works, of which 87 works were donated by the artist)
- National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (103 works)
- National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (35 works)
- Art Gallery of South Australia
- Art Gallery of Western Australia (9 works)
- Arts Centre Melbourne, Victoria (10 works)
- Australian National University collection, Canberra
- Bathurst Regional Gallery, New South Wales
- Cairns Art Gallery, Queensland
- Chartwell Collection, Centre for Contemporary Art, Hamilton, New Zealand
- Deakin University Art Collection
- Heide Museum of Art, Victoria
- National Library of Australia, Canberra
- National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
- Newcastle Art Gallery, New South Wales
- Parliament House, Canberra
- Sydney Opera House Trust, Sydney
- TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, Victoria (15 works)
- University of Melbourne Art Collection, Victoria

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Deborah Hart, *John Olsen*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1991 (2nd edition, 2000)
- McGregor, Ken, John Olsen & Jeffrey Makin, *Teeming with Life: John Olsen: His Complete Graphics, 1957–2005*, Macmillan Art Publishing, Melbourne, 2005
- John Olsen, *Salute to Five Bells: John Olsen's Opera House Journal*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1973
- , *My Complete Graphics, 1957–79*, Gryphon Books, Melbourne, 1980
- , *John Olsen: Gold*, exhibition catalogue, introduction by Edmund Capon, essay by John Olsen, AGNSW, Sydney, 1986

# John Olsen

- , *Encounters with Drawing*, text by Deborah Hart, Australian Galleries, Melbourne, 1988
- , *Drawn from Life*, Duffy & Snellgrove, Sydney, 1997
- , *Pulse: Paintings by John Olsen 1961–2005*, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Box Hill, Victoria, 2005
- , *My Salute to Five Bells*, NLA Publishing, Canberra, 2015
- , *John Olsen: A Recipe* (in conjunction with the ‘*You Beaut Country*’ exhibitions). Edited by Leanne Santoro with Deborah Edwards, Art Gallery of NSW with Thames & Hudson, Australia, 2016
- , *John Olsen’s Minderoo*, The Forrest Family, Perth, 2021
- Olsen, John, et al., *The Land Beyond Time: A Modern Exploration of Australia’s North-West Frontiers*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1984
- Sandra McGrath and John Olsen, *The Artist and the Desert*, Bay Books, Sydney and London, 1981
- Virginia Spate, *John Olsen*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1973
- SELECTED DONATIONS**
- 2020 Gift of the painting, *Tipping Landscape: Helicopter above the Pilbara*, 2019 to Orange Regional Gallery, NSW
- 2019 Gift of the drawing *Sleeping Dog (Outback)*, 1994 to the National Art School, Darlinghurst
- 2017 Gift of 5 drawings (*Newcastle Harbour I–IV* and *Octopus*), a sculpture, *Frog*, and his *Newcastle Sketchbook* to Newcastle Art Gallery, NSW
- Gift of the painting, *Dingo Country*, 2016 to the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- Gift of the painting, *Animal Landscape*, 2016, to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- Gift of the painting, *You Beaut Country: Landscape Crawling*, 2106 to the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- 2015 Donated 20 boxes, two large folio boxes and map folios to the National Library of Australia consisting of personal papers, journals, original manuscripts, sketchbooks and notebooks from 1957–2015.
- Gift of the painting, *The Rolling Sea (and that Streeton Painting)* to Mosman Art Gallery, NSW
- Gift of the painting, *Brindabellas*, 2015 to Canberra Museum and Gallery, ACT
- 2014 Gift of the painting, *The Shearer’s Mattress*, 2014 to the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
- Gift of 4 drawings, *Farewell to Five Bells Sketches*, 1973 to the National Library of Australia, Canberra
- 2012 Gift of the watercolour, *The Flood – Towards Lake Eyre*, 2008–2012 to the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- Gift of the watercolour, *Desert Seedling*, 2008–2010 to the Gold Coast City Gallery, Queensland
- 2009 Gift of the painting *Loopy River’s, Cape York*, 2007 to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 2003 Gift of the painting, *Country Life Rydal*, 1998 to TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, Victoria
- Gift of a hand-decorated plate, 2003, to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 1998 Gift of 8 works on paper and 12 etchings to Cairns Art Gallery, Queensland
- 1996 Gift of 63 drawings and works on paper to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 1996 Gift of the drawing *Untitled (female nude)* to the Kedumba Collection of Australian Contemporary Drawings, NSW
- 1995 Gift of the original manuscript of *My complete graphics, 1957–1979*, the original manuscripts of *Salute to Five bells: John Olsen’s opera house journal, 1971–1973*, manuscript extracts from journals, photographs and 24 original drawings to the National Library of Australia, Canberra
- 1994 Gift of 28 works on paper and etchings to the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- 1992 Gift of 7 drawings to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- Gift of *Bold Frog*, 1993, to Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW
- 1991 Gift of 12 works to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 1982 Gift of the painting *Elegy for Fred Williams*, 1982 and drawing, *Sketch of Russell Drysdale*, 1981, to the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- Gift of the painting, *Wildflowers Passing a Lake*, 1982, to Heide Museum of Modern Art, Victoria
- 1979 Gift of *Pelicans procuring food*, 1979 to Queensland Art Gallery
- 1970 Gift of the watercolour, *Summer at the Chasing Bird Landscape*, 1970 to Darnell Collection, The University of Queensland, Brisbane
- 1960 Gift of the work on paper, *Australian Flux*, 1960, to the Art Gallery of New South Wales (with Terry Clune)