

# Soul of a nation rendered in light and shade

IN CASTING around for a theme for this year's Australia Day special, we hoped to choose one that would give the artists scope to explore and celebrate what it means to be Australian. The brief was that the work should be a personal response to our country's diversity, landscape and culture. Each artist has brought a distinct vision of how they understand and picture our national character, reflecting the wide range of reactions to the idea of Australia Day.

The *Herald* is proud to have John Olsen, pictured, arguably this country's greatest living artist, featured on our front page. For more than 60 years Olsen has produced work that expresses his deep engagement with the Australian landscape and a passionate love for life. The cover



image, *Sunday Morning Frogs*, celebrates that passion.

This year we also feature another of Australia's finest painters, Elisabeth Cummings, whose *The River Runs Dry* is a semi-abstract depiction of the Georges River, exploring the dichotomy between the beauty of the natural world and the pressures we place on the environment through mining. Incidentally, this is a story the *Herald* covered throughout last year, highlighting community concerns about long-wall mining in the Sydney basin. Art is never far from politics.

Lucy Culliton's *Kangaroo Tea Cosy* is an image that takes us back to an era of simple pleasures, a time before the tea bag, when people made the effort to brew a pot, to knit a cosy and to chew the fat.

We all have our own perception of what symbolises our national identity. I hope you enjoy this year's selection of artists' works.

Leo Robba, curator

These works form an exhibition on view until  
February 6 at Tim Olsen Gallery,  
63 Jersey Road, Woollahra.

Tuesday to Friday 10am-6pm, Saturday 10am-5pm  
9327 3922