

Shoalhaven Arts Board

Meeting Date: Thursday, 22 April, 2021

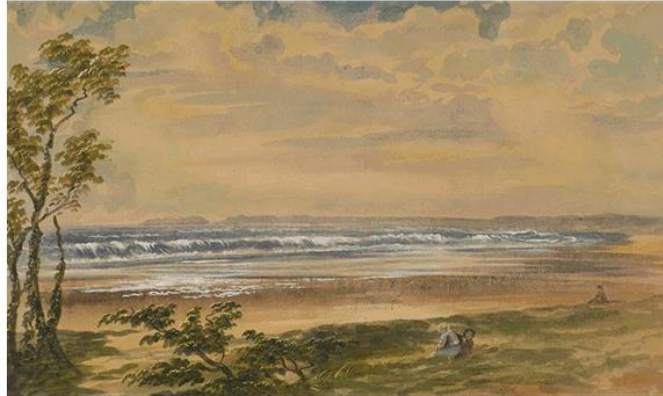
Location: Council Chambers, City Administrative Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra

Attachments (Under Separate Cover)

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**SHOALHAVEN REGIONAL GALLERY COLLECTION
SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT**



Roslyn Russell Museum Services
24 March 2021

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Cover illustrations:

Samuel Elyard, *Entrance to the Shoalhaven River*, watercolour on paper

Euan Macleod, *Jamberoo Mountain Track*, 2018, oil on polyester

Executive Summary

The Shoalhaven Regional Gallery Collection is of national and regional significance.

The collection has *historical significance* for its broad depiction of life in the Shoalhaven region of New South Wales from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, particularly in the large collection of works by significant nineteenth-century artist and photographer, Samuel Elyard, whose work is also held in state and national institutions (see *Part II* of this report). Many other works depict life in the region, including works by Indigenous artists and others who have documented its landscapes, built environment, activities and people in paint, prints and photography.

The collection has a high level of *artistic and aesthetic significance* and contains paintings, works on paper and photographs by nationally significant artists and photographers including Dennis Adams, Charles Blackman, Judy Cassab, Elisabeth Cummings, Max Dupain, John Edward, Samuel Elyard, Donald Friend, Jasper Knight, Euan Macleod, Luke Sciberras, Garry Shead, Vicki Varvaressos, Guy Warren and John Witzig. Nationally significant pioneers of Australian ceramic art, Ivan Englund, Alan Peascod and Victor Greenway, are represented in the collection.

The collection has *research significance* as it can be examined to determine the nature of locations in previous eras, and the activities in which Shoalhaven community members have been engaged from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day.

The *provenance* of the works in the collection is well attested. The collection can be compared with similar regional gallery collections for its representation of nationally and regionally significant artists.

The collection has formed the basis for a number of exhibitions on a range of themes, and will continue to do so into the future, giving it a high degree of *interpretive capacity*.

Key recommendations

➤ Preservation Needs Assessment:

Some Elyard collection items and other works show signs of foxing. Some works may require reframing. A Preservation Needs Assessment will identify preservation issues with other works in the collection.

➤ Storage

While the main Art Store has exemplary storage facilities, there is a need for proper storage equipment for an overflow store in the area upstairs.

➤ Collecting

Targeted collecting of works by significant regional artists, including contemporary photographic artists, should be continued, and the Gallery should consider building on the solid foundation of the mid-twentieth century ceramics collection, with the

addition of contemporary works by ceramic artists of national and regional significance.

➤ Deaccessioning

Works of little artistic/aesthetic merit have found their way into the collection in the past, and a deaccessioning process for these should be instituted to refine the collection to works of merit by nationally and regionally significant artists. Deeds of Gift for recently acquired collections have specifically authorised the deaccessioning of works considered superfluous to the collection.

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PART I

Introduction

The Shoalhaven City Art Collection, housed in the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery in Nowra, New South Wales, is a rich and diverse collection of close to a thousand items¹ that range from a large number of works by a colonial artist in the Shoalhaven to works of contemporary art by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, across a range of media. It is particularly strong in its thematic representation of the Australian landscape, particularly in the Shoalhaven region, and maritime activities in peace and war.

The collection has been assembled by acquisition from an annual art prize to targeted acquisitions of works by nationally and regionally significant artists, and by a number of generous donations.

Some works have been acquired from the temporary exhibitions that are displayed in the Gallery, including an exhibition of Indigenous contemporary art, *The TERRA Within: Invasion, Resilience, Survival*, curated by Warwick Keen and on display from October-December 2020.

Other recent exhibitions, such as *Gifted: Works from the Birkett Weatherhead Collection*, celebrate works given to the Shoalhaven City Art Collection by artist and art educator Jim Birkett and his partner and co-owner of a private gallery, Roy Weatherhead, before Jim's death. Their donation includes paintings, sculpture and textile works of contemporary Australian art and works from south east Asia.²

One of Shoalhaven Regional Gallery's temporary exhibitions has attracted national attention: its recent survey exhibition of 200 years of artistic responses to the impact of fire, flood and drought on the built and natural environments of Australia, *Wonder and Dread: Art in the Land of Weather Extremes*, was reviewed in the *Weekend Australian* by the newspaper's art critic in January 2021.³

1.0 Methodology

1.1 Visit to the collection

The consultant visited the collection at Shoalhaven Regional Art Gallery on 18 and 19 December 2020, and reviewed the collection in its storage areas.

1.2 Consultation

The consultant discussed the collection, its acquisition and deaccessioning processes, and conservation issues with Shoalhaven Regional Art Gallery Director Bronwyn Coulston. She was also assisted during her stay by Bridget MacLeod, and would like to thank her and Bronwyn Coulston for their help in accessing and understanding the collection and its history.

A copy of the 'Shoalhaven City Council Art Collection – Acquisition and Collection Management' document, which was adopted in May 2009 and amended and

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reviewed subsequently up to 2018, was made available to the consultant. She was also supplied with the digitised collection catalogue, an example of the Gallery's Deed of Gift, and print copies of catalogues of recent Gallery exhibitions.

The consultant also discussed the Aboriginal bark painting in the collection with Indigenous art expert Wally Caruana, and thanks him for supplying information on likely provenance and dating of the bark painting.

This significance assessment has been compiled in accordance with the methodology outlined in *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections*, 2009.⁴

2.0 History and significance of the organisation and the collection

2.1 History of the collection

The Shoalhaven City Art Collection was formalised in 1998 with the establishment of the Shoalhaven Arts Board, which created guidelines and an acquisition policy. This was, however, not the beginning of the accumulation of an art collection in the Shoalhaven, as the Shoalhaven Art Society for many years had held an Annual Art Prize that led to the acquisition of winning works, and Shoalhaven Shire Council had an Art Advisory Committee that worked with the Art Society. The Chairman of Council's Art Advisory Committee said in 1973 that 'Council was particularly interested in obtaining works of art, recording the appearance of various parts of the Shire, before these places were changed or destroyed through the inevitable processes of development'. These included both buildings and landscapes. He noted that 'there was a need for such works providing a standard of art was maintained'.⁵

The acquisition of artworks by Council had begun in 1964 with the purchase of sixteen works by Samuel Elyard from his niece, who also donated two more Elyard works. This triggered further donations from landscape artist Leonard Long and local arts and cultural benefactor Warren Halloran, who donated more works by Samuel Elyard.⁶ Since that time other donations, including the works of war artist Clarrie Payne by his family in 1988, the M G Dingle and G B Hughes Collection in 2008 and, more recently, the Jim Birkett and Roy Weatherhead Collection in 2020, among other donations and acquisitions, including some from the Commonwealth Government Cultural Gifts Program, have created a diverse collection including paintings, works on paper, ceramics and small-scale sculptures by artists of national and regional significance, including Indigenous artists living and working in the Shoalhaven region.

A purpose-built gallery to house and exhibit the permanent collection, and temporary and touring exhibitions, opened in 2004 in Nowra. At the time of opening, the collection policy was amended to recognise significant loans and donations that had been added to the collection. It was further adjusted in 2008 when the collection was divided into two separate collections: a primary collection of significant works, 'The Shoalhaven Regional Gallery Collection'; and a secondary collection, 'The City

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Collection'. This included gifts to the City that were identified as of lesser historic, artistic or monetary value. An audit of the collection by external art consultants in 2012 and 2013 prompted a re-merging of the two collections and established six primary collecting areas: Australian Landscape; War and Peacekeeping; Australian Contemporary; Indigenous; Secular and Religious; and Ceramics.⁷

A large component of the collection – constituting around 33 percent of the total – is the Samuel Elyard Collection of watercolours, drawings and photographs by an Australian colonial artist who lived and worked in the Shoalhaven. This is examined in *Part II* of this report.



Shoalhaven Regional Gallery features an interior courtyard with a series of ceramic-tile sculptures, 'Shoalhaven Stories', by award winning Australian artist Anna Glynn, commissioned as a year 2000 project by the Shoalhaven Arts Board and developed through an intensive series of collage workshops in which local community members participated. They explored their personal stories, histories and memories and shared them with Anna Glynn, who based the final artwork on these remembered stories, events and myths.⁸

2.2 Description of the collection

This description surveys the collection through the lens of artistic media: oil, watercolour and acrylic paintings; works on paper, including photography; and ceramics. As mentioned above, the large collection of works by Samuel Elyard is considered in more detail in *Part II* of this report.

2.2.1 Indigenous works

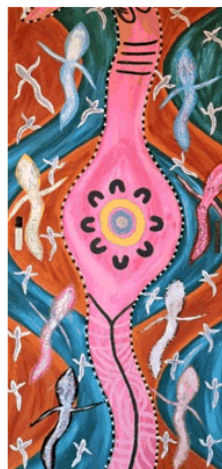
The collection of Indigenous art in the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery includes both items of traditional culture and modern expressions of identity by members of First Nations communities. The South Coast of New South Wales is home to vibrant First

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Nations communities such as the Wreck Bay community and others, and this is reflected in the temporary display by the 'Corroborations' group in the courtyard area, and in a series of linocut prints by Julie Freeman, Clive Freeman, Kristine Stewart, Shirley Stewart and Max Williams. Recent exhibitions have foregrounded significant First Nations artists and also provided regional artists with the opportunity to create commissioned works for exhibition and subsequent inclusion in the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery's collection.



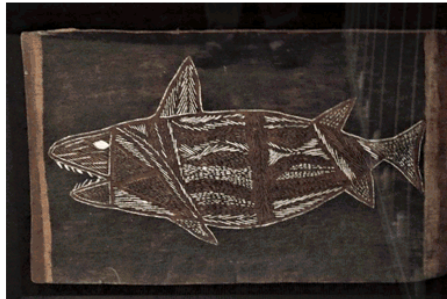
Shirley Stewart, *Shoalhaven Fish*, linocut on rice paper



One of the panels in 'Corroboration', a display by the Aboriginal Cultural Arts Program 2018 of TAFE NSW Nowra. Contributing artists are Arthur (Sonny) Timbery, Caleb Wellington, Robyn Little, Fiona Williams, Margaret Walker, Sue-Anne Brown, Jack Collins, Tim Curley, Members of the Aboriginal Medical Service Women's Group, Ray and Chloe Collins and Matt Dowley.

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There is also representation of wider Indigenous culture in a traditional bark painting of a shark from Groote Eylandt. The growth of Indigenous political consciousness is expressed in an image of the Aboriginal flag.



Bark painting in the style of Groote Eylandt, Northern Territory, probably from the 1960s.



Unidentified Aboriginal artist, Aboriginal Flag with Four Handprints, acrylic on canvas

From 10 October to 5 December 2020 Shoalhaven Regional Gallery exhibited *The TERRA within: Invasion, Resilience, Survival*, curated by Indigenous artist Warwick Keen, who said in his catalogue essay that

South-eastern Aboriginal people copped the brunt of early colonisation and our localised culture has been impacted upon to the greatest degree when compared to other areas and nations of Aboriginal people, from one end of this country to the other.

Politics has become the weapon of contemporary urbanised 'black' artists of the south-east as they struggle to gain acknowledgement of their own Indigeness from both sides of the racial divide. Aboriginal art is forever changing and remains dynamic and responsive to the environment in which it exists and the policies and events that shape this world.⁹

Along with works on display in *The TERRA within* by nationally significant First Nations artists such as Fiona Foley, Vernon Ah Kee, Blak Douglas, Mervyn Bishop, Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Johnny Bulun Bulun, Yvonne Koolmatrie, Christian Thompson, Esme Timbery, Harry J Wedge, Sally Morgan, Wenten Rubuntja, Gordon Hookey, Kevin Gilbert and Michael Cook were works commissioned from regional

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First Nations artists for the exhibition with thanks to the Gibbon Foundation, and that have now become part of the Gallery's collection. These include Yuin man Peter Hewitt's work, *Guranguba – the Pelican*; and Dharawal woman Jaz Cor's work, *The Terra Within: A true Australian Flag*; and traditional custodian of the Jerringa Wandj-Wandj people Noel Wellington's *Shield* crafted from Bangalay timber.¹⁰



Peter Hewitt, *Guranguba – the Pelican*, 2020, mixed media on board

2.2.2 Paintings

Paintings by artists of national and regional significance form a strong component of the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery's collection. The large body of works in both oils and watercolour by colonial artist Samuel Elyard has already been mentioned as a core collection and is considered in *Part II* of this report.

Paintings by nationally significant artists such as Dennis Adams, Judy Cassab, Elisabeth Cummings, Jasper Knight, Euan Macleod, Luke Sciberras and Guy Warren are included in the collection, as are works by artists well known in specific genres such as landscape painting (Winifred Beamish, John Downton, Samuel Elyard, Warwick Fuller, Leonard Long and many others), and the art of war and peacekeeping and marine art (Dennis Adams and Clarrie Payne). Other Australian artists are also well represented in the collection, working in genres ranging from still life to portraiture and other figurative works to abstract expressionism.

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2.2.2.1 Landscape paintings

Landscapes, rendered both in oil, acrylic and watercolour paint, form a major genre within the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery collection. They range from the traditional landscapes rendered by Samuel Elyard in the nineteenth century, to impressionist and expressionist works from the mid-twentieth and twenty-first centuries, by artists of national and regional significance, some of whose works are illustrated below.



Elisabeth Cummings, *Wedderburn Bush*, oil on canvas

Elisabeth Cummings was one of the first to move into the Wedderburn artists' community near Campbelltown in the late 1970s, and has been working there ever since. A bold use of colour and exaggerated mark-making characterises her approach to the depiction of the Australian landscape. A nationally significant artist, her work is held in the National Gallery of Australia and in state and regional galleries.



Euan Macleod, *Jamberoo Mountain Track*, 2018, oil on polyester

Euan Macleod, whose work is represented in the National Gallery of Australia, Te Papa Tongarewa/National Museum of New Zealand, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, has been described by art critic and historian Sasha Grishin as a prominent member of a group of 'figurative expressionists' who 'may employ the figurative element as some sort of trigger or catalyst for a meditative experience'.¹¹ Among other art prizes, Euan Macleod was the winner of the Archibald Prize in 1991 and the Sulman Prize in 2001.

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Luke Sciberras, *Trunks and Tree Fern*, 2018, oil on linen.

Luke Sciberras is widely considered one of Australia's top landscape artists. He has had many solo exhibitions in Australia since 1999, and his work is held in numerous private, public and corporate collections worldwide. According to Australian critic John McDonald, 'Luke is one of the significant emerging landscape artists of his generation'.¹²



Warwick Fuller, *Autumn Morning, Nepean River*, oil on board. Warwick Fuller is a well-known Australian landscape artist whose inaugural public art gallery solo exhibition from June-November 2020, *Chasing the Light*, was part of Penrith Regional Gallery, Home of the Lewers Bequest's 40th anniversary program, *Dream Realised: our community victory*. The exhibition surveyed over forty years of work, with 86 paintings drawn from collections Australia wide.

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Leonard Long, *Stormy Interlude*, c1950, oil on particle board

Leonard Long (2011-2013) was an Australian landscape painter who was profoundly influenced by the earlier work of the Heidelberg School. Long worked as a watchmaker during his early adulthood while painting during his spare time, but sold his watchmaking business in 1955 to devote himself fully to painting. Long lived in Nowra and painted many landscapes in the Shoalhaven. Long's works are in the collections of the Vatican, the National Gallery of Malaysia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, and other collections.¹³



John Downton, *Shoalhaven Overview*, three paintings, oil on board

John Downton studied at the Royal Art Society of NSW and also embarked on *en plein air* painting with landscape artist Leonard Long. Winning recognition by success in art prizes in the 1970s and 1980s, in 1988 he became the first contemporary artist to exhibit at the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, to celebrate the 1988 Bicentenary. He achieved international recognition with a Japanese Cultural Award and Citation in 1989, and in 1991 held a solo show in Dublin, Ireland, as part of the city's 'Cultural City of Europe' celebrations. The current exhibition (March-April 2021) at Shoalhaven Regional Gallery, *Sensational Shoalhaven*, is of John Downton's paintings of the region.

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Guy Warren, *Big River Series 1*, watercolour

Guy Warren is a figurative painter and a 'strong expressive draughtsman' who won the Archibald Prize in 1985.¹⁴ His work is held in the National Gallery of Australia and in state and regional galleries, including Goulburn Regional Art Gallery. The work above is the first of a series of nine watercolours held by Shoalhaven Regional Gallery.



James Birkett, *Red Buttress*, 2007, mixed media on canvas

This abstracted contemporary landscape with Jim Birkett's signature Xanthorrhoea trees on the skyline, bounded by blocks of solid red and textured brown and black, is part of a much larger collection of this regional artist's work which, since his death, came to the Gallery as the Jim Birkett and Roy Weatherhead Collection in 2020.

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2.2.2.2 Maritime and military paintings

Dennis Adams (1914-2000) is a marine artist represented by 79 works in the collection, the majority of which are works on paper (see 2.2.3 *Works on Paper*). There are however eight paintings by him in the collection – seven oils and one watercolour, with six of the oil paintings rendered on sail canvas, giving them an authentically nautical provenance.



Dennis Adams, *In the Trade Winds*, oil and sail canvas on board



Clarrie Payne, *Mesihol, Milne Bay, Misoma, 1943*, watercolour and pencil

Clarrie Payne was a trained commercial artist who worked on newspapers in the 1930s. He enlisted in the RAAF in 1941 and was trained as an air gunner. He also illustrated armament training manuals, and executed 14 watercolour and pencil sketches of camp life during his service in New Guinea in 1943-44 at Milne Bay and Port Moresby, and one local landscape, *Beach at Shoalhaven Heads*. Clarrie Payne donated these works to Shoalhaven City Council in 1987.¹⁵

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2.2.2.3 Depicting the South Coast

The artist in the collection whose life work was mostly focused around depicting the landscapes and structures of the South Coast in oils, watercolours, pencil sketches and photography was Samuel Elyard (see *Part II*). There are many other works in the collection that depict Shoalhaven landscapes of sea, river and land; and life in the Shoalhaven region, including works by Leonard Long and Suzanne Chick that capture another aspect of South Coast life, dairy farming.

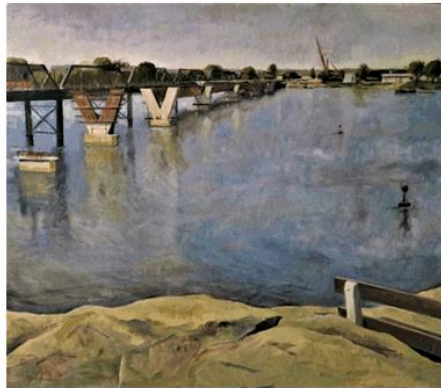


Samuel Elyard, *Entrance to the Shoalhaven River*, watercolour on paper

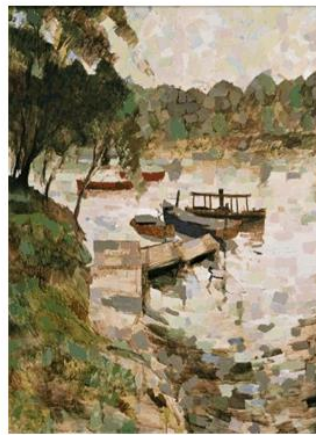


Leonard Long, *By the pool, Meroo, 8 am*, oil on canvas board

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Greg Hansell, *Bridge Construction*, oil on canvas



Ted Hall, *Riverbank with boats*, acrylic on Masonite

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Suzanne Chick, *Rowboat at Jervis Bay*, acrylic, tempera on paper



Suzanne Chick (left), *Bliss*, acrylic on canvas; (right) *Glory*, acrylic on canvas

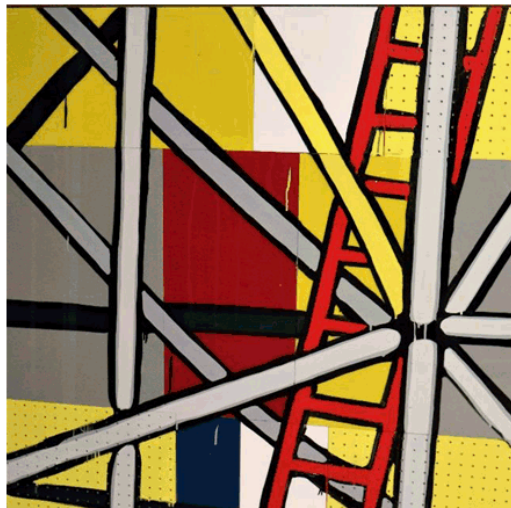
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2.2.2.4 Australian painting in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

Judy Cassab, Donald Friend and Jasper Knight are nationally significant artists with paintings in the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery collection. The collection also holds works by many regional artists across a range of genres, including still life, collage and group portraiture.

Judy Cassab (1920-2015) has four paintings in the collection (in addition to many works on paper). Twice winner of the Archibald Prize and only the second woman prizewinner after Nora Heysen, the Hungarian-born Cassab was, according to the Art Gallery of NSW, 'a portraitist of immense insight and imagination, seemingly able to capture not only a sitter's likeness but the spirit of their times'. Cassab was also 'a prolific draughtswoman and an acclaimed landscape artist'. A visit to the central desert inspired Cassab to move towards abstraction, but she also continued to draw and paint portraits, including of fellow artists such as Guy Warren. This work is in the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery's collection.¹⁶ Works by Judy Cassab are held in the National Gallery of Australia, and state and regional galleries around Australia.

The Gallery has recently acquired one work, *The Patriarch Jacob*, a watercolour painted in 1952 by nationally significant artist Donald Friend.



Jasper Knight, *Pick up sticks II*, mixed media on plywood. Practising since 1999, Jasper Knight is a leading contemporary Australian artist and a frequent Archibald and Wynne Prizes finalist. Knight's distinct use of robust lines, vivid colours and unconventional painting surfaces has rendered an immediately recognisable style.¹⁷

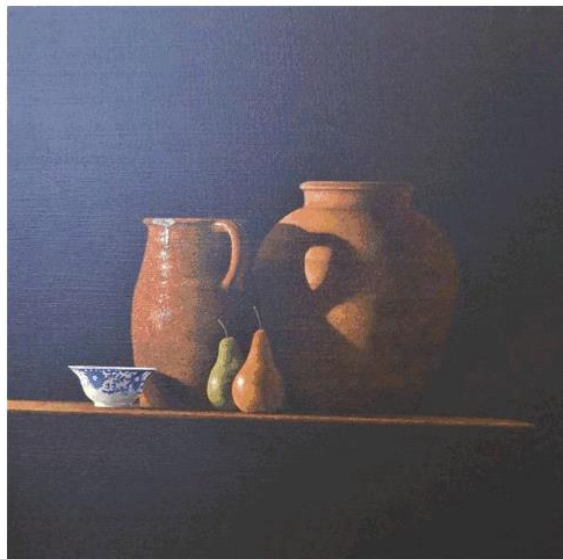
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Michelle Cawthorn, *Caroline's Birds (6)*, 2018, watercolour and collage on Hahnemuhle paper.

An exhibition of Michelle Cawthorn's work is scheduled for 2021 at Shoalhaven Regional Gallery.

The collection features a number of paintings that exhibit different artistic approaches to the still life genre, from a hyper-realistic still life by Steve Harris that employs *chiaroscuro* to striking effect, to an expressionist version by John Saunders, and an unusual aerial perspective on this subject by Margaret Woodward.



Steve Harris, *Still Life with Urns*, acrylic on canvas

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John Saunders, *Still Life with Purple Flask*, oil on canvas



Margaret Woodward, *Requiem for the Captain and Rosie*, 1997, oil on canvas



John Hatton AO, *Temptation Rose*, acrylic on canvas, one of several works in the collection by the former independent member of the Legislative Assembly of the New South Wales parliament for the seat of South Coast from 1973 to 1995.

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Gorgi Dimceovski, *Barbara Blackman at home*, oil on canvas

This triptych depicts Barbara Blackman, Australian arts matriarch and writer (and in earlier times a frequent model for husband Charles Blackman), at home with musicians and other artists.

2.2.3 Works on paper

The principal contributors to the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery's extensive collection of works on paper are Dennis Adams, Judy Cassab, John Edward, Samuel Elyard (see *Part II*), Garry Shead and Vicki Varvaressos. There is also an etching and aquatint, *Alice in the Garden*, by nationally significant artist Charles Blackman in the collection.



Dennis Adams, *Seas Over*, etching on paper

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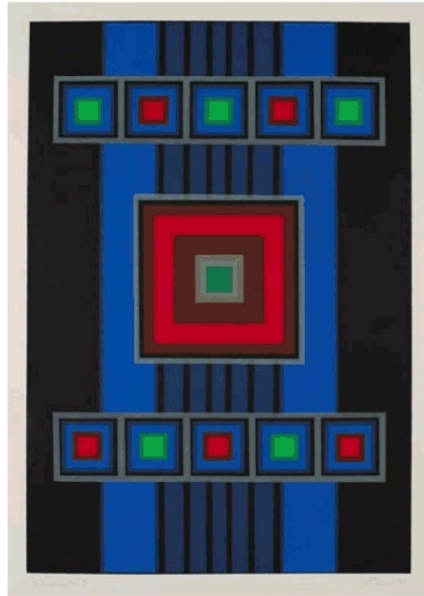
Portraits by Dennis Adams: (left) self-portrait; (right) *Lance Hellstrom*, pencil on paper

Dennis Adams (1914-2001), one of 42 official war artists in WWII, listed by Sasha Grishin as one of the 'conservative academic artists' recruited in that capacity,¹⁸ created 197 works held in the collection of the Australian War Memorial. Dennis Adams was a Fellow of the Australian Society of Marine Artists. Apart from several oil paintings, the vast majority his works in the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery collection consist of 71 works on paper depicting life at sea, from stormy seas and pitching decks to portraits of fellow seafarers.



Judy Cassab, *Artist and model*, 1996, lithograph, one of 20 works on paper by this significant Australian artist in the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery collection.

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John Edward, *Computer I*, screenprint on heavy paper



John Edward, *Wollongong Harbour*, monotype on paper

John Edward (born 1929) is probably the artist with the most diverse oeuvre in the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery collection of works on paper, in terms of the stylistic range of his works, principally screenprints that range from expressionist works to geometric abstraction, to political art. He is also represented by a number of skilled and evocative photographs of 1950s Sydney (see 2.2.3.1 *Photography*).

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Garry Shead, *The Darkening Ecliptic: Ern Malley*, 2003, 9 etchings on paper in a ceramic case by Kim Deacon, Paloma Pottery, Hill End. The title refers to a line in a poem by the late fictional poet 'Ern Malley', the mythical protagonist of Australia's first great literary scandal when in 1944 two poets, James McAuley and Harold Stewart, assembled a pastiche of 'modern' verse and sent it to the Max Harris, the editor of *Angry Penguins*, a modernist poetry journal. Harris eagerly promoted the writings of a man whom he believed had been an obscure car mechanic, until to his embarrassment the poems were revealed as a hoax. Garry Shead's series of paintings on the Ern Malley theme 'cemented his place in contemporary Australian art practice as a leading figurative lyrical expressionist painter', according to art historian Sasha Grishin. These etchings, the Ern Malley series from 2003, mark a new direction in Shead's work and predate his monumental work, *The apotheosis of Ern Malley* (2004-05).¹⁹



Garry Shead, *Tango V (Tango series)*, single plate etching on paper; *Springwood III (Artist and Model series)*, etching on paper. Works from other series by Garry Shead in the collection include the Love on Mount Pleasant series and Divine Comedy series. Sasha Grishin has noted that 'Despite his exceptionally high profile as an artist and being awarded the Archibald Prize for portraiture in 1993 and the Dobell Prize for drawing in 2004, his popularity lies with the art public and his peers, and not with the art establishment'.²⁰

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Vicki Varvaressos, *Shoes*, linocut on paper; *Woman /arm on head*, linocut on paper.

Vicki Varvaressos, whose works are held in the National Gallery of Australia, and state and regional galleries, 'uses a synthesis of figurative symbolism and broad Expressionist techniques to satirize the stereotyped images, often of women, produced by commercial culture'.²¹

2.2.3.1 Photography

The Shoalhaven Regional Gallery collection holds photographic works created from the nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, by Samuel Elyard, Max Dupain, John Edward and John Witzig. Samuel Elyard's photographs of the Shoalhaven are considered in *Part II*.



Max Dupain, *Jamberoo with cattle on road*, 1947

Celebrated Australian photographer Max Dupain is represented in the collection by a copy of his iconic work, 'The Sunbather', and also by several photographs taken at locations around the South Coast of NSW.

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John Edward, Bridge from Circular Quay, 1957



John Edward, Thirst, n.d.

John Edward, also represented in the collection by works on paper, was also a talented photographer, and 25 of his photographs of people and places in 1950s Sydney are included in the collection.

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John Witzig, A House at Torquay c1970



John Witzig, Nat in Hawaii, 1967

John Witzig was an early photographer of the emerging surfer culture in Australia in the 1960s, and was editor of *Surf International* (1967-69) and co-founder of *Tracks* magazine, acknowledged as 'maybe the hippest youth culture magazine being published anywhere in the world at the time'. Several of John Witzig's photographs are in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, and a definitive retrospective volume of his works was published by the US art house press, Rizzoli, in 2013.²²

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2.2.4 Ceramics

The core of the small but significant collection of ceramics in the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery collection derives from the annual Art and Pottery exhibition that was conducted by the Shoalhaven Art Society (the precursor to the Arts Board) throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

An exhibition, *Out of Earth and Flame: Ceramics in the Shoalhaven*, on display from 17 September to 5 November 2016, highlighted and showcased works that had been unexhibited for many years. Curator, and co-donor of the works, Max Dingle, described the organising concept for this exhibition:

The concept for this ceramics exhibition started with the realisation that the ceramics works in the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery Collection had not been on public display since the City Arts Centre opened over ten years ago, and that neither had the works in the M G Dingle & G B Hughes Collection. Under a bequest agreement, the latter collection will join the former, thus providing the basis for a survey exhibition. Combined the collected works, with a few exceptions, covered a twenty-year period from the mid 1960s to the 1980s. To expand the concept a number of current artists associated with the South Coast and whose work could be considered as Contemporary art rather than traditional, were invited to exhibit, creating multiple dialogues between the past and the present, traditional and contemporary, methods and mediums and sculptural, decorative and applied arts, and providing within this, possible indications on whether the Collections should remain a snapshot of a twenty-year period during the 20th century and if not, where the focus could be if acquisitions were resumed in the 21st century.²³

Ceramic artists represented in the exhibition and in the collection include nationally significant artists Ivan England, Alan Peascod, and Victor Greenway. Other ceramic artists include Hiroe Campbell, Margaret Dredge, Gillian Grigg, James Hall, William Hick, Jack Martin, Terrence Murphy, Anne Neilsen, Gwen Turner and Inez Wray.



Ivan England (left), Jar c1970s, stoneware, onglaze cobalt and iron brushwork; (right) Jar c1970s, tenmoku with oatmeal brushwork.

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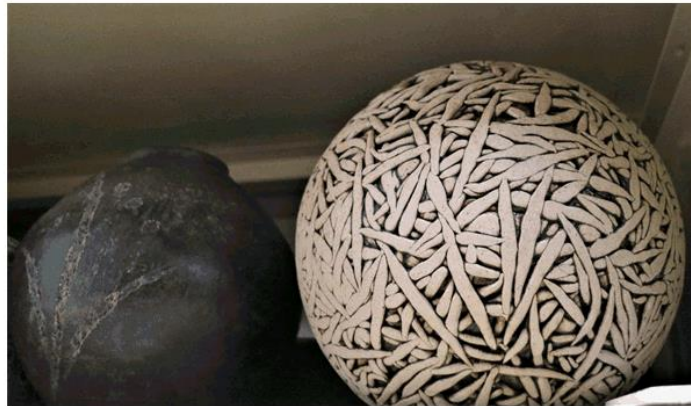


Alan Peascod, Demi-john, stoneware, unglazed, incised pattern



Gillian Grigg, Platter 1970, stoneware, olive glaze and iron oxide brushwork

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Hiroe Campbell, *Black pot* 1977, sawdust fired earthenware (left); Gwen Turner, *Blue Sphere* 1977, stoneware, hand built (right).



James Hall, *Stronghold II*, 1974, ceramic tile panel

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2.3. Condition of the collection

2.3.1 The Shoalhaven Regional Gallery collection is housed on site. The principal art storage area is fitted out with hanging racks and cabinets for the storage of small items such as ceramics and small sculptural works; and drawers housing the works on paper collection. Overflow works are housed in temporary storage on site.



Works on hanging racks in the art store.



Ceramic and small sculpture cabinets and drawers for storage of works on paper.

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2.3.2 Conservation issues

Some of the earlier works in the collection, notably those by Samuel Elyard, show signs of foxing and embrittlement, which has impacted the stability of the work. Other works, notably one by Leonard Long, display deterioration of framing materials.



Watercolour by Samuel Elyard shows deterioration due to embrittlement of the paper.



Leonard Long, *By the pool, Meroo, 8 am*, shows deteriorating backing materials.

2.4 Comparative collections

2.4.1 Fleet Air Arm Museum, Nowra

The Fleet Air Arm Museum at Nowra holds a considerable collection of artworks by noted Australian artists such as Leonard Long, John Downton and Dennis Adams (who with John Littler designed and executed the Albatross sculpture that is a prominent feature outside the Museum building). John Downton is recognised as the Fleet Air Arm's official artist and in March 2015 his name was given to one of the two gallery spaces at the Fleet Air Arm Museum, which became the John Downton Art Gallery used to display temporary and travelling exhibitions. John Downton was the Navy's official war artist in East Timor (Timor-Leste) in 1999 and 2000, covering the

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closing stages of Australia's peacekeeping role in the troubled island as the leading force in the International Force East Timor (INTERFET), with the aim of putting the Navy in the picture. The Fleet Air Arm Museum holds the works he painted during the assignment with INTERFET, and other works. John Downton was honoured in 2016 with the Order of Australia medal for his contribution to the arts.²⁴

2.4.2 Goulburn Regional Art Gallery



The Goulburn Bustle exhibition of early 2019 showcased the diversity of the Goulburn Regional Art Gallery collection.

The Goulburn Regional Art Gallery collection is a fine representative collection of artworks across a range of media – oil and watercolour painting, works on paper, photography, textile art, sculpture (including an extensive collection of public art), ceramics and glass art, and video installations – dating from the 17th century Dutch, German and British genre paintings from the Moffitt Bequest, to innovative works of contemporary art.

The Goulburn Regional Art Gallery collection is of high artistic and aesthetic significance. It contains a broad representation of works by leading Australian artists, including paintings by Roy de Maistre, J. J. Hilder, Roland Wakelin, Robin Wallace-Crabbe, Judy Cassab, Keith Looby, Adam Cullen and Ben Quilty; works on paper by Arthur Boyd, John Brack, Sydney Long, John Olsen, Treahna Hamm, Jorg Schmeisser, Guy Warren, G W Bot and Max Miller; photographs by Henri Mallard, Kathy Cavaliere, Christian Thompson, and Jon Lewis; and sculptures by G W Bot, Steven Holland, Danie Mellor and Amanda Stuart.²⁵

In a comparable manner to Shoalhaven Regional Gallery, Goulburn Regional Art Gallery has a long-term involvement with landscape painting through a former acquisitive annual art prize (the Lilac City Art Prize). The collection contains both traditional and modernist works in this genre, including works by artists such as Warwick Fuller and Winifred Beamish, whose works are also held in the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery collection. Works by Australian contemporary artists such as Jasper Knight and Guy Warren are held in both collections.

One of the strong elements in Goulburn Regional Art Gallery's collection is photography and video art from both historical and contemporary timeframes. A

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number of recent exhibitions at the Gallery have foregrounded video artworks as major exhibition features, including the current exhibition at the Gallery, which includes a single-channel video work by Tamara Dean, *Passing Time*, 2020, a reflection on the experience of self-isolating in the pandemic year; a solo exhibition of photos by David Ryrie, *Otherwise Arbitrary Moments*; and five works from the collection by Katthy Cavaliere, Henri Mallard, Jackie Ranken, Cathy Laudenbach and Jon Lewis guest curated in the Gallery's small exhibiting feature, 'The Window', by fellow photographer Stephen Hartup.²⁶

2.5 Statement of significance

The Shoalhaven Regional Gallery Collection is of *historical significance* for its broad depiction of life in the Shoalhaven region from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. This is particularly exemplified in the large collection of works by a nineteenth-century artist and photographer, Samuel Elyard, and also by many other works that depict life in the region, including contemporary works by Indigenous artists and others who have documented its landscapes, built environment, activities and people in paint, prints and photography.

The collection has a high level of *artistic and aesthetic significance* and contains paintings by a number of nationally significant artists including Dennis Adams, Judy Cassab, Elisabeth Cummings, Samuel Elyard, Donald Friend, Jasper Knight, Euan Macleod, Luke Sciberras and Guy Warren and works by landscape artists such as Winifred Beamish, John Downton, Samuel Elyard, Warwick Fuller, Leonard Long and many others.

The collection of works on paper, including photography, features work by Dennis Adams, Charles Blackman, Judy Cassab, Max Dupain, John Edward, Samuel Elyard, Garry Shead, Vicki Varvaressos and John Witzig. Significant pioneers of Australian ceramic art in the collection include Ivan Englund, Alan Peascod and Victor Greenway, and others whose work derives from the formative period of Australian ceramics from the 1960s to the 1980s.

The collection has *research significance* as it can be examined to determine the nature of locations in previous eras, and the activities in which Shoalhaven community members have been engaged from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day.

The *provenance* of the works in the collection is well attested: many come from formed collections that have strong internal *integrity*. The collection is in *good condition* overall, and invites *comparison* with similar regional gallery collections in terms of its thematic basis and its level of representation of nationally and regionally significant artists.

The collection has formed the basis for a number of exhibitions on a range of themes, and will continue to do so into the future, giving it a high degree of *interpretive capacity*.

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3.0 Key recommendations

3.1 Preservation Needs Assessment

Some items in the Elyard collection are showing signs of foxing, and other works may also be similarly impacted. Some works may need to be reframed, as backing material on some paintings has become embrittled and is degrading. A Preservation Needs Assessment will identify preservation issues with other works in the collection.

3.2 Storage

While the main Art Store has exemplary storage facilities, there is a need for proper storage equipment for an overflow store in the area upstairs.

3.3 Collecting

Targeted collecting of works by significant regional artists, including contemporary photographic artists, should be continued, and the Gallery should consider building on the solid foundation of the mid-twentieth century ceramics collection, with the addition of contemporary works by ceramic artists of national and regional significance.

3.4 Deaccessioning

Works of little artistic/aesthetic merit have found their way into the collection in the past, and a deaccessioning process for these should be instituted to refine the collection to works of merit by nationally and regionally significant artists. Deeds of Gift for recently acquired collections have specifically authorised the deaccessioning of works considered superfluous to the collection.

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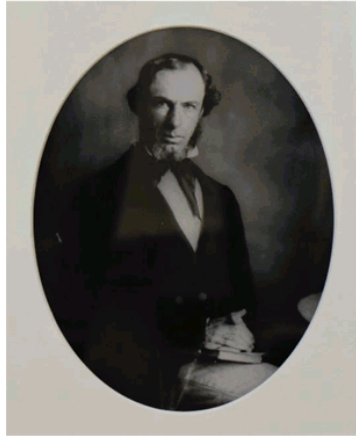
- ¹ The catalogue cites a total of 816 works in April 2020. This does not take into account the large number of works gifted by Jim Birkett and Roy Weatherhead in July 2020 and other donations currently in progress through the Cultural Gifts Program.
- ² Shoalhaven Regional Gallery Nowra, Exhibitions & Events 2020 – Jun-Dec, shoalhavenregionalgallery.com.au; Shoalhaven City Council, 'Shoalhaven City Art Collection Receives Major Gift', 7 July 2020, <https://www.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Council/News/Shoalhaven-City-art-Collection-Receives-Major-Gift>
- ³ Christopher Allen, 'At the mercy of the elements', *Weekend Australian*, 16-17 January 2021.
- ⁴ Roslyn Russell and Kylie Winkworth, *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections*, Collections Council of Australia, Adelaide, 2009.
- ⁵ Minutes of Art Advisory Committee, Shoalhaven Shire Council, 1973.
- ⁶ Warren Halloran has also donated works by Samuel Elyard to Nowra Museum, and artwork by Ian Hansen and others to Jervis Bay Maritime Museum, where the *Science and the Sea Gallery* showcases scientific instruments associated with navigation and surveying amassed by real estate developer Henry Halloran, and later by his son Warren Halloran – <http://www.jervisbaymaritimemuseum.asn.au/science-and-the-sea.html>
- ⁷ Shoalhaven City Council, 'Shoalhaven City Council Art Collection – Acquisition and Collection Management', adopted 12 May 2009, last reviewed 1 December 2020, pp. 1-2.
- ⁸ Anna Glynn, 'Shoalhaven Stories', 2004, text panel in the Gallery courtyard.
- ⁹ Warwick Keen, 'The TERRA within' catalogue essay, *The TERRA within: Invasion, Resilience, Survival*, Shoalhaven Regional Gallery, Nowra, NSW, 2020, p. 7.
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- ¹⁵ 'C H Payne (Clarrie)', label accompanying Clarrie Payne's works in storage.
- ¹⁶ Judy Cassab: The Collection: Art Gallery NSW, <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/artists/cassab-judy/>
- ¹⁷ From wall text for Jasper Knight's survey show 2003-2012, Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, February-March 2012.
- ¹⁸ Grishin, *Australian Art: A History*, op.cit., p. 285.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 485.
- ²⁰ Ibid., pp. 484-5
- ²¹ 'Varvaressos, Vicki', Gwenda Robb and Elaine Smith, ed. Robert Smith, *Concise Dictionary of Australian Artists*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic, 1993, p. 267.
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- ²³ Max Dingle, *Out of Earth and Flame: Ceramics in the Shoalhaven*, Shoalhaven Regional Gallery, Nowra, 2016.
- ²⁴ Roslyn Russell, Significance Assessment of the Fleet Air Arm Museum Collection, 2019, pp. 29-31.
- ²⁵ Roslyn Russell, Significance Assessment of the Goulburn Regional Art Gallery Collection, 25 October 2020, p. 25.
- ²⁶ Ron Cerabona, 'Enigmatic images invite thought', *Panorama*, *Canberra Times*, 6 March 2021.

PART II: Individual assessment of a significant collection

Samuel Elyard Collection



Samuel Elyard in the nineteenth century, black and white photograph

1. History and provenance

Samuel Elyard (1817-1910) was born on 9 May 1817 on the Isle of Wight, the fourth son of William Elyard, a half-pay naval surgeon, and his wife Sarah. William Elyard arrived in New South Wales with his family on 18 December 1821, as surgeon superintendent on the convict ship *John Bull*.

Samuel Elyard was the first significant artist and photographer to work in the Shoalhaven, and his paintings and photographs show some of the district's most historic events. They depict the great flood of 1870, the construction of the bridge over the Shoalhaven River, and historic Nowra buildings such as Graham Lodge and St Andrew's Presbyterian Church well over a century ago.

Samuel Elyard was educated at Mr Gilchrist's school and the Australian College where he showed talent at portrait painting. He then studied under landscape artist Conrad Martens, whose style he admired and, to a certain degree, emulated, and taught drawing. Elyard also received tuition from John Skinner Prout after the latter arrived from England in the 1840s. Needing secure employment, Elyard became a clerk in the Colonial Secretary's Office in 1837, and retired with a pension in 1868 after 31 years of service. He painted and drew in his spare time during his years of employment, and exhibited his work in Sydney in 1847 and 1857 and in Paris in 1867.

After his retirement Elyard moved to the Nowra district where his family had land at Brundee, renting a small farm in the area and moving around the district painting mainly landscapes. He was a strong supporter of the Nowra Show, winning prizes there from 1870 onwards, and was presented with the Shoalhaven Agricultural

Society's medal in 1890 in recognition of his support. He also became involved with the Church of England at Nowra, serving as a lay preacher.

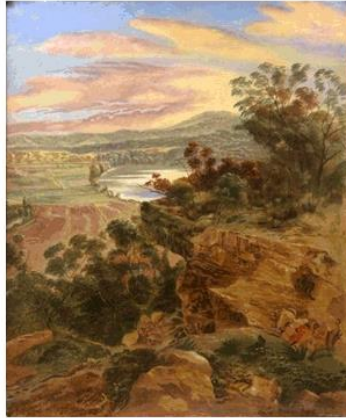
Samuel Elyard specialised in landscape painting in watercolours and oils, and also made sketches in pencil and ink, some of which were published in the *Illustrated Australian News*. Although he made the occasional trip to the city, Elyard was largely isolated from the arts community once he moved away from Sydney, and this may have contributed to his painting style changing little over his years in the Shoalhaven.

At the age of 75 Elyard became interested in photography and became well-known around Nowra during the 1890s as 'the old man in the frock coat, pulling a trolley full of photographic equipment'.¹ He photographed some of his paintings, enabling the preservation of the image of his painting of an Aboriginal corroboree of which the original has been lost. Elyard published photographs of his paintings in *Scenery of Shoalhaven: facsimiles in photography of eighteen original drawings*, 1892. He advertised his services in the local press; and the notices varied from 'landscape painter and picture dealer' in 1886 to 'landscape painter and photographer' some six years later. Elyard died at his Nowra home 'Merindah' in Osborne Street on 23 October 1910 at the age of 93. On his death the *Sydney Telegraph* stated that he was 'an artist of considerable ability'.²

Shoalhaven City Council holds a major collection of his paintings, and they have been seen in major exhibitions at Nowra in 1982, 1988 and 2017. Elyard's work is also held in major Sydney galleries, and there is a collection in Nowra Museum held by the Shoalhaven Historical Society. The Dixson Gallery of the State Library of NSW includes some of his earlier works from the 1880s and 1860s that illustrate the Sydney metropolitan area, and the Australian National Maritime Museum also holds one of his works (see below, 2. *Comparative collections*).



Samuel Elyard, c1890, black and white photograph



Samuel Elyard, *Spains Farm Shoalhaven River*, oil on canvas



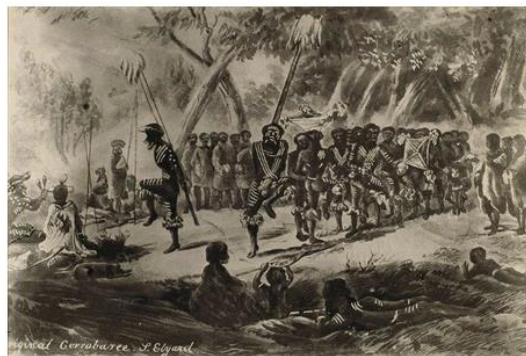
Samuel Elyard, *Cabbage Tree Creek*, watercolour on paper



Samuel Elyard, *Lighthouse at Cape St George*, gouache and watercolour on paper



Samuel Elyard, *Gunyah* c1877, gouache and watercolour on paper



Samuel Elyard, *Aboriginal Corroboree*, black and white photograph of a painting that has been destroyed.



Samuel Elyard, *Wildflower study in basket*, May 1910, watercolour on paper, an image painted a few months before Elyard's death in October 1910.



Samuel Elyard, *Mine workings at Yalwal*, black and white photograph



Goldminers with nugget found at Yalwal (right), black and white photograph



Samuel Elyard, *Plunkett Street Nowra Infants School with eight children seated on log*, sepia photograph on card

2. Comparative collections

2.1 Shoalhaven Historical Society, Nowra Museum – Samuel Elyard works

The Nowra Museum houses and displays the collections of the Shoalhaven Historical Society (SHS) in the former Nowra Police Station. The Nowra Museum cares for an extensive collection of objects and documents and mounts permanent and temporary exhibitions relating to the history of the Shoalhaven region.

The SHS was given ten watercolours and four oil paintings by Samuel Elyard by a well-known Shoalhaven region arts and cultural benefactor, Warren Halloran, and other Elyard works have been donated, including one discovered in a garage sale. A significant donation of Elyard works was made by the Smith-Hall family, of two watercolours and a large number of unframed oil paintings. The provenance note from the donors, Jennifer Smith (née Hall) and Adrian Hall states that they

inherited the Elyard paintings, oils and a lot of watercolours, from our parents, Harold and Coralie Hall, who in turn inherited them from Harold's parents, Frederick and Mabel Hall. Frederick Hall and his brother Jim were the proprietors of Hall Bros boatshed at Careening Cove in North Sydney. During the early part of the twentieth century a debt, possibly quite substantial, was generated between the Elyard family in the Shoalhaven and the Hall Bros business, possibly to do with the supply of boat engines to an Elyard relative who had a boat business in Nowra. This debt was 'paid off' with a large number of Samuel Elyard paintings. Many of the paintings were dispersed among family members. When Mabel and Frederick Hall died, Harold Hall bought the family home and he and Coralie lived there for the rest of their lives. Many Elyard paintings were found in a storage area under the house after their deaths. Most of these were of the Shoalhaven area.

Jennifer Smith had retained most of the paintings but storage had become an issue, and she and her brother Adrian decided to 'gift them to the museum in Nowra in the hope that they can obtain funds for cleaning and restoration of the works and exhibitions for visitors'.³

Nowra Museum exhibited a large collection of Samuel Elyard's work from May 2017, including works from the then-recent donation by the Smith-Hall family.⁴

2.2 Australian National Maritime Museum



Samuel Elyard, *Burning of the Barque India*, c1841, watercolour on paper, ANMM Collection

One of the Australian National Maritime Museum's most-requested paintings for public viewing, also available on line as a virtual reality experience, is a dramatic watercolour by landscape artist Samuel Elyard (1817–1910), the *Burning of the Barque India* (c 1841) in the South Atlantic Ocean on 19 July 1841. The ship was on its way from Greenock, Scotland, to Port Phillip Bay, Victoria when it caught fire.

Elyard's painting, which is based on a sketch by survivor Robert Allan, captures the chaos as the terrified passengers cling to the ship's bowsprit, amid towering flames and thick smoke clouding the sky. In the foreground, three boatloads of passengers row away from danger, while at the lower left, a solitary figure floats on a piece of debris. Seventeen people died in the fire. The survivors were rescued by the French whaling barque *Roland* and were transported to Rio de Janeiro and later resumed their journey to Port Phillip on the *Grindlay of Liverpool*.⁵

3. Statement of significance

Shoalhaven Regional Gallery holds the largest collection of the paintings, drawings and photographs by Samuel Elyard (1817-1910) in a public collection in Australia. This collection is of historical significance for the Shoalhaven area and for Australia, as it depicts the landscapes, built environment and activities that were carried on there over a period of over forty years spanning the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

A prolific artist in oil, watercolour, pencil, pen and ink and later with a camera, Elyard's work was significantly influenced by his early mentors Conrad Martens and John Skinner Prout, and his renderings of the Shoalhaven landscape in particular recall their romantic evocations of the grandeur and beauty of the area, with its mixture of mountains, coastal and riverine vistas. Elyard's works are thus of high artistic and aesthetic significance.

As accurate depictions of landscape features and the built environment and people of the Shoalhaven, Elyard's works, particularly his photographs, are of research significance for their capacity to answer questions about the landforms, land use, structures and people that are the subjects of his work.

The collection held in Shoalhaven Regional Gallery has a firm provenance. It is mostly in good condition, although some works may require conservation treatment, and it is of high interpretive capacity, as shown by the inclusion of works by Samuel Elyard in exhibitions and online in a discrete feature on the Shoalhaven Regional Gallery website.

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