

Conservation and rehousing of a collection of Lloyd Rees drawings

Sarah Bunn

In 2009 the Rees family gifted 130 drawings by Lloyd Rees to the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) collection. The drawings represent Rees' impressions of Sydney after moving from Brisbane in 1917 and are mostly executed in pencil on paper with the occasional addition of watercolour or ink. The paper is often roughly hand torn, of different sizes, and frequently covered with sketches on both sides in different orientations. Many of the drawings are sprayed with a fixative, now discoloured. The drawings evoke a wonderful sense of immediacy and the awe in which Rees reflected his early experiences of Sydney.

After discussions with Senior Curator of Australian Prints, Drawings and Watercolours, Hendrik Kolenberg, it was decided the most appropriate and safe way to rehouse these drawings for the gallery's study collection was in custom-made, post-bound albums. The albums were designed to allow ease of viewing the collection as a whole whilst allowing easy disassembly to remove individual leaves for display and loan as required. A proposal was accepted by the AGNSW Friends of Conservation to fund the conservation of the drawings and the construction and assembly of the albums. Sarah Bunn undertook the conservation of the drawings prior to attaching them to custom-made album leaves. Andersen's bindery was contracted to construct the album covers, and complete the drilling of the leaves and construction of solander boxes for storage.

The Rees albums will be displayed to the public for the first time during the AGNSW's open weekend in May 2012, alongside albums of Dobell and Gleeson sketches, highlighting the gallery's unique and rarely displayed collections of artists' sketches.

Author biography

Sarah Bunn is a paper conservator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Sarah trained in a private conservation studio in Sydney and at Camberwell College of Art, London. She worked as a freelance conservator in England for nine years on rare book and archive collections for institutions including The National Trust and English Heritage. Since returning to Sydney in 2004, Sarah has combined freelance and contract work for the Australian Museum, Historic Houses Trust, Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain Trust, and State Records of New South Wales.

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