

Lyn Robins



As a multi-award-winning artist, working as a painter in a wide range of mediums and subjects, Lyn Robins has participated in many exhibitions and 25 solo shows throughout Australia. She is a Fellow of the Royal South Australian Society of Art and her work is in private and corporate collections in Australia and overseas.

Early Life

Lyn was born in Victoria, the eldest of four children. While her father was serving in the Royal Australian Airforce during World War II, she and her mother returned to Adelaide and lived with her maternal grandparents in Thebarton. Lyn believes she developed her love of gardens and nature as a result of growing up in her grandmother's beautiful garden and orchards. She remembers these as being magical places for a child and she formed a close bond with her grandmother. Following the birth of her sister, the family moved to a 'Returned Services' house in the (then semi-rural) suburb of Kensington Gardens.

She recalls growing up surrounded by books, gardens, chickens and bees. By the time Lyn was old enough to start school, her brother had been born and their family of six moved to Magill. Lyn talks about the freedom children had at this time, such as how she would walk to Magill Road on her own at five years of age. She also recalls catching the tram by herself to her primary school at St Morris and riding her bike through the suburbs while still very young. The Gums Reserve Tranmere was one of her playgrounds and has always remained a special place for her.

From a very early age Lyn was drawing and painting. It was obvious as she progressed through her schooling that she had artistic talent. Although encouraged by her mother, her father was not supportive when Lyn said she wished to pursue art as her career, even as an art teacher. In fact he wrote to her headmistress at Norwood Girls Technical School when Lyn was in her fourth and final year of secondary schooling stating that 'art was only useful for scientific illustration'. At this time technical secondary schools only provided education to what was then the 'Leaving Certificate'. At sixteen years of age decisions about Lyn's future had to be made. Her headmistress wrote to her parents that she believed Lyn was 'temperamentally unsuited for teaching, but that she would likely win a scholarship to art school'.

Lyn felt that her only pathway to a career in art was to become an art teacher. She was however, too young at sixteen to go to Teachers' College. Her Headmistress proposed she spend the year as a Junior Teacher. She was appointed to the nearly new Campbelltown High School which she described as an 'Island of prefab buildings in a sea of market gardens'.

Despite her youth and total lack of training, she was required to teach art to year 8 and 9 students aged 12-15!; Coping with lesson planning and marking on her own. This presented a great challenge but Lyn had enough success to know absolutely that teaching art was her true vocation.

In 1960 Lyn was accepted to Adelaide Teachers' College and commenced her Diploma of Secondary Art Teaching. At that time students in this course attended half time teacher training and half time art school.

Art Career

Lyn then went on to teach at Kidman Park Girls' Technical High School, and then Kensington Park Girls' Technical High School, by which time she had also married and started a family. She also taught art to adults at night classes at various secondary schools through the Adult Education Program discovering how much she enjoyed teaching adults. She worked part-time at TAFE colleges so she could spend time with her two daughters and have time to do her own painting. She was awarded a silver medal when Kensington Park TAFE College closed in the late 1980's for being the longest serving staff member. Lyn was then head-hunted to teach art at Gilles Plains TAFE and Tea Tree Gully TAFE. She was also a member of the College Council while associated with TAFE, and during this time also ran art workshops in many areas of South Australia in association with the Country Women's Association and Country Arts SA.

After twenty-five years with the Education Department and TAFE, Lyn resigned to teach art in her studio in Tranmere, conducting up to five classes a week in various mediums including water colours, acrylic, oils and 'pen and wash' for thirty years. Her teaching style is consistently inclusive and supportive. Adult students were encouraged to find their own style, and her new classes frequently began with Lyn conferring each student with 'their artistic license' to commence their art journey. Although now retired from teaching, Lyn continues to facilitate workshops and conduct demonstrations to art groups and community organizations including Rotary, Lions and Save the Children. She has also participated in overseas tours organized by the Australian Artists' Magazine.

In addition to teaching and painting, Lyn has illustrated a number of books including historical anecdotes and children's books, designed stage props, educational material (for TAFE), and designed the medals for the Junior Paraplegic Games held in Adelaide.

She has had twenty-six solo exhibitions and participated in many group shows since her first solo exhibition held in David Jones Gallery in 1982. Three hundred people attended and she sold almost all the paintings she exhibited. Lyn has won many awards over her career and confessed that she has lost count of the number over the years. They include many first places in competitions and her work continues to be a popular 'Peoples' Choice' winner at many exhibitions. Most recently in 2022 she won the 'Peoples' Choice' award at the Glenside Lions exhibitions for the third year in a row. Amongst the prizes she is most proud of are those awarded in 2008 by Evoke Art for the best acrylic painting and in 2012 by the Royal Agricultural Society Show for the inaugural first prize art purchase. Her work is represented in corporate and private collections in Australia and overseas, including BankSA, the Royal South Australian Society of Art (RSASA) and the University of South Australia.

Lyn has added making creative jewellery to her talents. In 1996 Lyn graduated with a Bachelor of Design (Jewellery) from the University of South Australia. She sees her jewellery making as 'her knitting', something relaxing and 'other' to her painting. Her work is innovative and unique, often using recycled silverware to create wearable art. She has sourced materials for her latest 'Deja New' range from Op shops and 'the back of Aunt Mary's sideboard', providing a new lease of life to create jewellery from pre-owned cutlery, silver cake and sweets dishes.

Lyn is Fellow of the Royal South Australian Society of Art (RSASA) and has given much back to the art community in South Australia including holding positions such as Vice President of SA Watercolour Society and served on the boards of Friends of The South Australian School of Art and the RSASA. For years she was a committee member of the Off the Slate Gallery Artists' Cooperative Willunga and a member of the Kangaroo Island Artists' Collective and the Painters of the Flinders Ranges Group.

Dorothea Mackellar's poem 'I love a sunburnt country' is a constant theme running in Lyn's landscape paintings. She has a strong passion for the Australian landscape and seeks to share that love through her paintings. She has facilitated many workshops in country areas, including Eyre Peninsula, the Coorong and the South East of South Australia, the mid-north of the state, Flinders Ranges (exhibiting annually in The Woolshed at Wilpena) and beyond to the Grampians in Victoria. In 2015 Lyn conducted an eight day residential workshop 'In Namatjira's Footsteps' in Central Australia.

Words of Wisdom

As Lyn says, 'Life is the journey we make through the people we meet.' She hopes that her work has encouraged others to explore their creative 'selves', and to see the world with new eyes. Asked if she would change anything in her life, she said 'No'. Lyn is still excited by the magic of colour and the amazement that blue and yellow makes green.

"Life is made up of the people you meet along the way"