



S.T Gill and the Colonial World conference

Friday 17 – Saturday 18 July 2015

Elisabeth Murdoch Theatre (G06 – Theatre A) | University of Melbourne

The Australian Institute of Art History, School of Culture and Communications, University of Melbourne

Presented in partnership with State Library Victoria, Baillieu Library and with the support of the Gordon Darling Foundation



In association with the exhibition:

Australian Sketchbook: Colonial life and the art of S.T. Gill

17 July - 25 October 2015

Keith Murdoch Gallery | State Library of Victoria

Presented by State Library Victoria in partnership with National Library of Australia

Curated by Professor Sasha Grishin

Conference organising committee:

Professor Jaynie Anderson FAHA CIHA (Chair AIAH), University of Melbourne

Assoc. Professor Alison Inglis, University of Melbourne

Philip G Kent, University Librarian & Executive Director, Collections, University of Melbourne

Robert Heather, Manage Collection Interpretation, State Library Victoria

Emeritus Professor Sasha Grishin AM, SLV Honorary Fellow

Friday 17 July – Keynote address

Location: Melbourne School of Design, B121
Malaysian Theatre
University of Melbourne,
Parkville, Victoria 3010

6.30pm

Introduction: **Philip Kent**, University Librarian & Executive Director, Collections, University of Melbourne

6.35-7.25pm

Sheila O’Connell, Curator of British prints before 1880, British Museum

7.25-7.30pm

Emeritus Professor Sasha Grishin AM, to thank Sheila O’Connell

George Cruikshank (1792-1878): Georgian caricaturist and Victorian illustrator – A prelude to S.T. Gill who was known as the ‘Colonial Cruikshank’

George Cruikshank lived a series of artistic lives. His first successes as a printmaker were satires on the war with Napoleon, he blossomed as the illustrator/collaborator of the early novels of Charles Dickens, and he spent his last years as a temperance campaigner using new technology to produce prints that could be published cheaply across the world, from London to New York to Sydney. This lecture will outline Cruikshank’s development in the context of changes in British society and in the art world in particular. It will concentrate on the early part of his career when, barely out of his teens, Cruikshank became the most successful graphic satirist of the generation following James Gillray. This was the great age of British visual satire and the best of Cruikshank’s prints can still raise a laugh even when their subject matter is obscure to most modern audiences. But he always worked under commercial pressure and these early caricatures sometimes attack one side of the political divide and sometimes the other – thus incidentally allowing us access to a range of attitudes to the events of the turbulent wartime and post-war years. Cruikshank’s long career spanned a period of enormous change. His prints demonstrate how the nineteenth century saw the British print market change its focus from the elite to the mass market as technology made production cheaper, education and increasing literacy widened the interests of the population as a whole, and the effects of industrialisation and expanding urbanisation called for social reform.

Saturday 18 July – *S.T. Gill and the Colonial World* conference

Location: Elisabeth Murdoch Theatre (G06 – Theatre A),
University of Melbourne,
Parkville, Victoria 3010

10.00-10.10am

Introduction and welcome: **Professor Jaynie Anderson**,
Foundation Director of the Australian Institute of Art History

10.10-10.30am

Emeritus Professor Sasha Grishin AM, Guest Curator and
Collection Interpretation, State Library of Victoria

The lives of ST Gill

The Anglo-Australian colonial artist, ST Gill (1818-1880), arrived in Adelaide shortly before Christmas in 1839 and spent his first twelve years in South Australia before travelling to Victoria early in 1852 attracted by the gold rushes. In the four years which he initially spent in Victoria he attained an immense popularity with his lively and incisive images of the diggers and diggings realised in watercolours and in lithographs. From 1856 to early 1864 he spent in Sydney, where his fortunes dipped and he failed to make a major splash in the Sydney art world. On returning to Melbourne, he found a very changed city to the one he left eight years earlier and for the remaining sixteen years of his life had difficulty in locating an audience for his art. He died in relative obscurity, without obituaries, and was buried in a pauper's grave.

The emergence of an interest in Gill as an artist, in the early 20th century, corresponded to a time when mythmaking in artist's biographies was a popular preoccupation. In early studies devoted to the artist, a portrait was presented of an outstanding talent, which had been undermined by the 'demon drink' and other character flaws. A closer examination of archival and other biographical sources on Gill, as well as a detailed examination of his oeuvre, suggests quite a different construct to Gill's biography from that which has been popularly accepted to date.

This paper considers alternative readings for Gill's biography and its implications for the interpretation of his work.

10.30-10.50am Daniel Thomas AM

Parochialism and Presentism: Australian art museums collecting the colonial

Except for the National Gallery of Victoria which was founded in Melbourne in 1861, Australia's major art museums were founded either around the 1880s shift from British colonial to Australian nationalist mindsets, or else after the 1901 constitutional change from six self-governed colonies to a federated Commonwealth. Some of the art collections shared governance and buildings with other institutions such as public libraries or non-art museums, and state history collections became muddled with the art collections. All at first collected nothing but contemporary art. All were parochial in their collecting of Australian material. Without any histories of Australian art, all were ignorant of earlier Australian art. All at first were governed by boards on which contemporary artists were present and hence favoured their own period styles. Not till the later twentieth century were published histories available, and curators appointed to supplement the knowledge of artist-directors or artist-trustees. The Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide was the first to collect high-quality Australian inter-colonial or interstate art and still has probably the best-balanced collection. The Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney was unusually backward, chiefly a consequence of its artist-dominated governance. In Canberra, the National Gallery of Australia from its foundation in the 1970s has been the most ambitious collector of Australian colonial art, notably expanding its policies beyond paintings and sculptures to develop extremely comprehensive research collections of colonial prints, drawings, photographs and decorative arts.

10.50-11.10am Dr Isobel Crombie – Assistant Director, Curatorial and Collection Management, National Gallery of Victoria

Competing Views: The rise of colonial Victorian landscape photography

Gill's career coincided with the growing popularity of Australian colonial photography. In 1845, he was one of the first artists to import a daguerreotype camera

and, although his use of it was brief, Gill was prescient in realising its financial and

creative possibilities. As the camera became more portable, photographers increasingly competed in the same visual territory as other artists and threatened their dominance in the topographical and landscape views market. This paper will focus on the rise of colonial Victorian landscape photography and the challenges it posed to artists working in other mediums

11.10-11.40am Break

11.40-12.00pm **Alisa Bunbury** – Curator Prints and Drawings,
National Gallery of Victoria

S. T. Gill and the Horrocks expedition

In 1846 S. T. Gill volunteered to join an expedition being organised by his friend John Ainsworth Horrocks to explore the country now known as the Flinders Ranges, and beyond, in search of arable land. At his farewell dinner in Adelaide, Gill declared that he hoped, 'to give a full, true and accurate report of his adventures with ... faithful scenic representations'. The party comprised six men, horses, goats for sustenance and a camel named Harry, one of the first such animals imported into Australia. The group travelled through the southern Flinders Ranges, and to the arid land beyond, reaching a salt lake Horrocks named Lake Gill (now Lake Dutton). Here the expedition ended abruptly in tragedy.

Gill sketched throughout the trip, and upon his return completed and exhibited thirty-three watercolours 'depicting the most remarkable scenes met with by the expedition'. Displayed in the *Exhibition of Pictures, The Works of Colonial Artists* in February 1847, the watercolours provided the public with their first glimpse of the expansive land north of Spencer's Gulf. These 1840s watercolours are both important historical documents, recording the people involved and the events that occurred, and are also among Gill's most beautiful works showing, with great sensitivity and detail, the varied geology and vegetation, and the climatic effects upon the landscape.

12.00-12.20pm **Dr David Hansen, Associate Professor** – Centre for Art History and Art Theory, ANU School of Art

Moonlight and memory: S.T Gill's corroboree pictures

This paper will examine Gill's numerous drawings and prints of Aboriginal corroboree. It will investigate the possible reasons for the artist's substantial interest in the subject, both in the context of previous and contemporary settler representations of Aboriginal ceremony and of Gill's own personal and professional history.

12.20-1.50pm Break for lunch

1.50-2.00pm **Philip Gregory Kent** to introduce speakers

2.00-2.20pm

Professor David Goodman – Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne

Gold rush histories

Until we situate them in the ideas, understandings, debates and choices of their time, every gold rush looks the same – colourful characters, first discoveries, social inversions, amusing incidents – and they remain hence events of local and antiquarian rather than historical interest. Much gold rush history is still written within a common sense paradigm that sees little to explain about why so many rushed to seek individual wealth, or why governments in most places let them. Some contemporaries it is true used metaphors that said the gold did it – gold was a magnet, men suffered gold fever. But there were also many who critically examined gold seeking as a human activity, as something involving conscious decisions and ethical judgments. There was more often than we usually remember a fundamental debate about gold seeking, about what it meant and who should benefit from it. It was far from inevitable in Australia for example that individual diggers were allowed to take the profits of their gold finding, once a licence fee had been paid. Yet so much gold rush history is written as though individualist wealth seeking was the only possible or natural outcome. We ought to be able, this late in the era of cultural history, to do better than a history in which gold fever meets land hunger – we need gold rush histories that help us remember the choices that were made at the time.

2.20-2.40pm

Angus Trumble – Director, National Portrait Gallery of Australia

S.T. Gill and Thomas Woolner

S. T. Gill and Thomas Woolner each ventured separately onto the Mt. Alexander and other Victorian diggings in 1852, Gill traveling overland with South Australian companions and Woolner from Melbourne with Bernhard Smith. There is no evidence that the paths of the two parties ever crossed, but both men intended to make their fortune in gold, but at length, not for want of trying, both were disappointed. Each returned to the profession of artist. Gill's series of lithographs *Victorian Gold Diggers As They Are* and *The Diggers and Diggings of Victoria As They Are* and Woolner's unpublished goldfields journal are almost contemporaneous, and reveal a number of shared attitudes about life on the diggings that also have in common an ostensibly objective point of view—that of close but detached observers—while naturally depending for their immediacy and authenticity upon the experience of having been 'embedded.' The resulting impressions have tended to reinforce some myths about the goldfields, while their blind spots have remained occluded.

2.40-3.00pm

Shane Carmody – Senior Development Manager for the University of Melbourne Library, University of Melbourne

S. T. Gill and the Melbourne public library: A Romance in three parts

The 1869 commission by the Melbourne Public Library for S. T. Gill to create *The Victorian Goldfields* reflects a self-conscious recording of the history of European settlement of this part of Australia. A persistent myth is that the State Library of Victoria and its antecedents had no interest in Victorian History until the establishment of the La Trobe Library in 1951, a piece of propaganda that reveals much about the internal tensions of the institution. In fact Redmond Barry was very interested in building a historical collection and went to considerable lengths to secure prized items. In this

context commissioning S. T. Gill was consistent with the historicising role that Barry envisaged for the Library. At the time of its commission *The Victorian Goldfields* was

already a work of nostalgia, a reminder of how quickly the colony of Victoria and its metropolis had grown to assume a prominent place among the cities of the Empire. This paper will place Gill in the context of the building of the historical collections of the Library as well as explore the romantic notions of history that Gill and the rest of the collection has inspired.

3.00-3.20pm Break

3.20-3.40pm **Dr Gerard Vaughan AM** – Director, National Gallery of Australia

Private art collecting in Colonial Victoria: Shifts in taste and motivation

In tandem with the Gold Rush, Melbourne developed rapidly in the 1850s, 60s and 70s, with major shifts in the colonial economy, creating new social structures, which in turn supported colonial cultural life. The creation in 1861 of a new Museum of Art (soon after renamed “The National Gallery of Victoria”) within the Public Library brought a focus on visual culture, but Victoria’s early public collecting activities were limited, on account of modest budgets, to contemporary British and Australian practice. In order to compensate for this, the NGV instituted a series of “Loan Exhibitions” drawn from private collections. These exhibitions offer important insights into which artworks the first colonists brought with them. The paper will look at patterns of private collecting from the 1850’s on, the “Loan Exhibitions”, and the fundamental developments in taste which characterised private collecting in the boom years of “Marvellous Melbourne” in the 1880s, and the establishment of a more sophisticated local art market.

3.40-4.00pm **Assoc. Professor Alison Inglis** – School of Culture and Communications, University of Melbourne

S. T. Gill and the twentieth-century discovery of colonial art

This paper will examine the critical reception of S. T. Gill's work during the twentieth century, especially during the decades after 1960, when there was a steady growth of interest in colonial art. Gill was an significant figure in nineteenth-century Australia, whose work as a draughtsman and watercolourist was published throughout his forty-year career, providing an important visual record of the colonies - a commentary on "life as it was". From a survey of the collections of four public libraries and art museums, this paper will investigate the degree to which the perceived documentary value of Gill's images, which was recognised during his lifetime and increased after his death, overshadowed their appreciation as works of art. The paper will also seek to ascertain Gill's popular reputation as a colonial artist from a survey of the illustrated annual calendars produced by the National Australia Bank during the period 1957 to 2000.

4.00pm **Professor Jaynie Anderson** to thank speakers and close conference

Participants' biographies (in order of appearance)

Sheila O'Connell – Curator of British prints before 1880, British Museum

Sheila O'Connell has been curator of British prints before 1880 at the British Museum since 1990. She worked in the Department of Prints and Drawings as a Research Assistant from 1979 to 1985 and then spent a year as Paul Mellon Fellow at the Yale Center for British Art before returning to the U.K. where she was a curator at the Bar Convent Museum, York, and Kenwood House, London. Her exhibitions for the British Museum include: *Britain meets the World 1714-1830* (a loan exhibition to the Palace Museum, Beijing, 2007); *London 1753* (British Museum, 2003); *The Popular Print in England* (British Museum, 1999). In 2015 the exhibition *Bonaparte and the British: prints and propaganda in the age of Napoleon* that she organised with Tim Clayton will be on show at the British Museum from 5 February to 16 August. She has published articles in *Print Quarterly*, *The Burlington Magazine*, *The Age of Johnson*, *Publishing History* and elsewhere. She is a member of the Council of the London Topographical Society and in 2016 will take over as editor of the Society's annual publications. She is also curatorial adviser to Dr Johnson's House, a trustee of the William Hogarth Trust and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

Emeritus Professor Sasha Grishin AM – Australian National University; Guest Curator and Collection Interpretation, State Library of Victoria

Sasha Grishin AM, FAHA is an Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University and a Guest Curator at the State Library of Victoria. He studied at the universities of Melbourne, Moscow, London and Oxford and has served several terms as visiting scholar at Harvard University. In 1977 he established the academic discipline of Art History at the ANU and was the Sir William Dobell Professor of Art History and Head of Art History and Curatorship at the ANU until December 2013. He works internationally as an art historian, art critic and curator. In 2004 he was elected Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, in 2005 he was awarded the Order of Australia (AM) for services to Australian art and art history and in 2008 was awarded a Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning. He has published over twenty-five books and over two thousand articles and catalogue essays dealing with various aspects of art. In 2015 he curated the exhibition *Australian Sketchbook: Colonial Life and the Art of ST Gill* for the State Library of Victoria, which will travel to the National Library of Australia, and published the monograph *ST Gill and his audiences* (NLA/SLV).

Daniel Thomas AM

Daniel Thomas AM, in 1958, a graduate in Modern History with some training in the Italian Renaissance and Baroque, was the first curator to be appointed at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney; there he eventually became chief curator and also head of Australian art. In 1978 he became founding head of Australian art at the National Gallery of Australia, which opened in 1982 in Canberra. In 1984 he became Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide. He developed the Australian colonial, Modernist and Contemporary collections in Sydney and Canberra; he curated many survey and monographic exhibitions of Australian art for both Australian and overseas audiences; and wrote extensively on Australian art. Retired in 1990 as Emeritus Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, he now lives in Tasmania and still writes occasionally.



Dr Isobel Crombie – Assistant Director, Curatorial and Collection Management, National Gallery of Victoria

Dr Isobel Crombie began her career at the National Gallery of Australia in 1979 and, from 1988 to 2012 she was Senior Curator, Photography at the National Gallery of Victoria. Isobel regularly curated exhibitions on the history of Australian and International photography and published widely. Recent publications include, 'Re-view: 170 years of photography' (2009) 'Fred Kruger: Intimate landscapes' and 'Jeff Wall Photographs' (both in 2012). In 2013 she was appointed Assistant Director, Curatorial and Collection Management at the NGV.

Alisa Bunbury – Curator Prints and Drawings, National Gallery of Victoria

Alisa Bunbury is Curator of Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery of Victoria, and has a particular interest in early colonial art. In a former position at the Art Gallery of South Australia, she curated an exhibition *Arid Arcadia: Art of the Flinders Ranges* (2002), when she first came across Gill's watercolours of the Horrocks expedition.

Dr David Hansen, Associate Professor – Centre for Art History and Art Theory, ANU School of Art

David Hansen has worked as a regional gallery director, a State museum curator and an art auction house researcher and specialist; he was recently appointed Associate Professor at the Centre for Art History and Art Theory at the Australian National University. Dr Hansen has a special interest in settler representations of Aboriginal Australians, and is currently researching an exhibition on the subject of corroboree.

Angus Trumble – Director, National Portrait Gallery of Australia

Angus Trumble is director of the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra. He was previously curator of European art at the Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide, and senior curator of paintings and sculpture at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut.

Professor David Goodman – Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne

David Goodman teaches (mainly) US History at the University of Melbourne. He has a long-standing interest in the cultural history of the 19th-century gold rushes. He is the author of *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, and Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994) and 'The Gold Rushes of the 1850s', in Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). While his recent work has been in other areas (history of broadcasting in particular) he continues to do some work in gold-rush history – most recently a paper on the Georgia gold rush of 1829 to the 2015 Oxford University conference on 'Gold Mining and Global History'.



Shane Carmody – Senior Development Manager for the University of Melbourne Library, University of Melbourne

Shane Carmody is a historian with a great love of Libraries and Archives. He is widely published on the history of Libraries and collections. Shane has managed major international exhibitions including *The Medieval Imagination: Illuminated Manuscripts* from Cambridge, Australia and New Zealand (State Library of Victoria 2008) and *Love and Devotion: From Persia and beyond* (State Library of Victoria 2012). In October 2015 he will lead a tour of the Great Libraries of England with Australians Studying Abroad.

Dr Gerard Vaughan AM – Director, National Gallery of Australia

Dr Gerard Vaughan became Director of the National Gallery of Australia in November 2014. A graduate of the universities of Melbourne and Oxford, his career has been divided between academia and the world of museums and galleries in both Australia and the United Kingdom. As an art historian his interests are broad, concentrating on the social history of art and specialising in the study of taste and art collecting, both private and institutional.

In 1994 he became inaugural Director of the British Museum Development Trust in London, where he was closely involved in planning, and funding, the rebuild of the British Museum with Norman Foster's Great Court at its centre.

He returned to Melbourne in 1999 to become Director of the National Gallery of Victoria with a brief to oversee the gallery's complete redevelopment, also undertaking new programs for major exhibitions and collection development.

After stepping down from the NGV in 2012 he returned to academia for two years at the Australian Institute of Art History at Melbourne University.

Assoc. Professor Alison Inglis – School of Culture and Communications, University of Melbourne

Alison Inglis is an Associate Professor in the Art History program at the University of Melbourne. She researches, teaches and publishes in the areas of nineteenth-century British and Australian art, and in art curatorial studies. She has co-ordinated the Master of Art Curatorship course for many years, and her engagement with the Australian museum world includes membership of several trustee boards, including Heide Museum of Modern Art and the Duldig Studio. Alison is also an Emeritus Trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria.

Current research projects include two Australian Research Council Linkage grants: *Humankind: Transforming Identity in Australian and British 1700-1900 in the National Gallery of Victoria* (2013-2016); *A Generation of Cultural Transformation: Australian art exhibitions 1968-2014* (2012-2015). Recent publications include the major art exhibition catalogue (with Patricia Macdonald), *For Auld Lang Syne: Images of Scottish Australia from First Fleet to Federation*, Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2014; also book chapters in *The Victorian World*, Routledge, 2012; and *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Art*, Cambridge University Press, 2011.