

MEDIA RELEASE
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National Gallery of Australia announces major new acquisition: Hans Heysen's *Morning light* (1913) made possible by the Ruth Graham Robertson Bequest

The painting depicts two monumental gum trees before a sweeping pastoral vista. The grand old tree in the foreground is said to have been a favourite of Heysen's. He was particularly enamoured of morning light and was always up before dawn in order to catch the changing landscape in early sunlight, such as the effect of a cool morning depicted in *Morning light*.

"We are indebted to Ms Robertson for the wonderful legacy of almost \$3million that she has left the National Gallery of Australia. Her bequest has already enabled us to make significant acquisitions such as Heysen's *Morning light* and will continue to do so in the future," said Ron Radford AM, Director of the National Gallery of Australia.

"It is extraordinary that the National Gallery of Australia held no major iconic gum tree oil painting by Heysen from the Federation period prior to the acquisition of this work. Moreover, it is hard to believe given the popularity and familiarity of Heysen's work, that Heysen in fact painted only a handful of major oils (seven in all) on the subject of the gum during the Federation period (1900-1914)", he said.

Ms Robertson's bequest has been made to assist the development of the national art collection, specifically Australian art, through acquisitions of works by important late 19th and early 20th Century Australian artists like Hans Heysen, Arthur Streeton, Sydney Long and James W.R Linton.

The other acquisitions from the bequest to date include Hans Heysen's *Arkaba country* (1929 -34), one of his ground-breaking arid Australian landscapes; as well as an exquisite oil painting by West Australian artist James W.R Linton, *A winter's day on the Swan* (c. 1910).

Ruth Graham Robertson, born at Lithgow NSW in 1923, demonstrated a love of the arts in their many forms, from a very early age. This love was fostered by her maternal grandfather Robert Dennis, who was among the last of the Lithographic artists and illuminators trained at the Technical College in Ultimo.

Her nephew Rob Meller says of Ms Robertson, "She never lost her appreciation of the works of Australian landscape artists, such as Hans Heysen, and would often remark on the beauty of a tree and how it would look painted. She particularly wanted to honour the memory and legacy of her parents and her maternal grandparents in her will and for this reason chose to leave a bequest to the Gallery that would enable important Australian paintings such as these works to be acquired by the Gallery."

Ms Robertson's bequest will be honoured through recognition in perpetuity for this generous contribution by the National Gallery of Australia and the National Gallery of Australia Foundation.

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