

## John Olsen

### Bio

John Olsen was born in Newcastle, NSW in 1928

In 1935 Olsen's family moved to Bondi beach. Olsen went to Datillo Rubbo Art School in 1947 and in 1950 he went to Julian Ashton Art School. In 1957 a Sydney art critic raised funds for John Olsen to go to England and paint. Olsen returned to Sydney in 1960. He wanted to represent Australian culture in such a way that the world would see the diversity in the changing outback seasons.

In 1968 Olsen set up and ran the Bakery Art School, and in 1972-73 he painted 'Salute to Five Bells', inspired by Kenneth Slessor's poem. Olsen's work has been marked by a deep engagement with the Australian landscape, and he has lived for long periods in different parts of the country and travelled widely in it. He has served on the boards of the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the National Art Gallery.

His artworks include the Lake Eyre series and more recent works such as 'Golden Summer, and the Clarendon'. One of Olsen's most successful murals, Salute to Five Bells, is currently hung in the Sydney Opera House. Although he has been labelled as an abstract artist, Olsen rejects this accusation, stating, "I have never painted an abstract painting in my life". He describes his work as "an exploration of the totality of landscape". Olsen published his autobiography, 'Drawn From Life', in 1997.

He was awarded the Order of Australia and he won the 2005 Archibald Prize for his portrait Self portrait Janus Faced. He lives near Bowral, New South Wales.

Excerpt taken from "Wikipedia", January 2011

### Solo Exhibitions (selected)

2007

'A Salute to Sydney', Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

'John Olsen Ceiling Commissions', Newcastle Region Gallery, NSW

2005

John Olsen, Tim Olsen Gallery Annex, Sydney

2004

John Olsen, Recent Works, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

2003

Metro 5 Gallery, Melbourne

2002

Seaport of Desire, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

2001

Recent works on paper, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

2000

John Olsen: Past & Present, Tim Olsen Gallery, Sydney

1998

John Olsen: Recent Paintings 1995 - 1998, Olsen Carr Art Dealers, Sydney

'New York Nowhere', recent paintings and works on paper, Olsen Carr Art

1995

John Olsen: Recent Works, Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane

1994

John Olsen: Recent Work 1992-1994, Deutscher Fine Art, Melbourne

1993

John Olsen: Recent Works, Sherman Galleries Goodhope, Sydney  
John Olsen: Recent Etchings, Olsen Carr Art Dealers, Sydney

1992  
John Olsen Retrospective, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 8 May - 28 June,

1991-2  
John Olsen Retrospective, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne 1 Nov 1991 - 3

1991  
John Olsen, Australian Galleries, Melbourne

1990  
John Olsen, Australian Galleries, Sydney

1989  
John Olsen, Greenhill Gallery, Perth

1988  
John Olsen - Encounters with Drawing, Australian Galleries, Melbourne

1987-8  
John Olsen - Encounters with Drawing, Wollongong City Gallery

1986  
Paintings and Drawings by John Olsen from the permanent collection,  
John Olsen - In Search of the Open Country 1961-1986, Heide, Melbourne  
John Olsen: Gold, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
John Olsen, Australian Galleries, Melbourne

1985  
John Olsen, Tynte Gallery, Adelaide

1984  
John Olsen, Tynte Gallery, Adelaide Festival 1984, Adelaide

1983  
John Olsen: Selected Graphics, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth  
John Olsen - The Land Beyond Time, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth

1982  
John Olsen 81-82 and Noela Hjorth, Bortignon's Kalamunda Gallery of Man,  
John Olsen, Australian Galleries, Melbourne

1981  
John Olsen: A Sliver of Time, Barry Stern Galleries, Sydney

1980  
John Olsen: Exhibition of Recent Paintings, Australian Galleries, Melbourne  
John Olsen: Paintings and Drawings 77-80 Lister Gallery, Festival of Perth, Perth  
John Olsen: My Complete Graphics, David Reid Gallery, Sydney

1979  
John Olsen: Earth Hold etchings, Cintra House, Brisbane

1978  
John Olsen: Paintings and Drawings 77-78, Barry Stern Galleries, Sydney

1977

John Olsen: Recent Paintings, Australian Galleries, Melbourne

1976

John Olsen: Recent oil paintings, gouches, drawings and etchings, Ray  
The Child in us All, St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane

1975

John Olsen: Edge of the Void, Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney  
John Olsen 74-75: Edge of the Void and Opera House Mural Studies, Australian  
Edge of the Void: Paintings, Drawings, Etchings and Lithographs by John Olsen,  
Greenhill Galleries, Adelaide  
John Olsen: Etchings, Gallery Huntly, Canberra

1974

John Olsen, Atelier 72 Gallery, Adelaide

1973

John Olsen, Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney

1972

John Olsen, Australian Galleries, Melbourne

1971

John Olsen, Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney

1970

John Olsen, Reid Gallery, Brisbane

1969

The Dunmoochin Summer: John Olsen '69, Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney  
John Olsen '69- Exhibition of Gouches and Oil Paintings, White Studio, Adelaide

1967

Entrance to the Castle of Life: John Olsen 66-67, Clune Galleries, Sydney  
Entrance to the Castle of Life: John Olsen 66-67, South Yarra Gallery, Melbourne

1965

John Olsen, Clune Galleries, Sydney  
John Olsen, South Yarra Gallery, Melbourne

1963

An Exhibition of Recent Paintings, Gouaches & Drawings by John Olsen,  
John Olsen: Recent Paintings, Australian Galleries, Melbourne

1960

Olsen, Galerie Lambert, Paris John Olsen, Terry Clune Galleries, Sydney

1958

John Olsen, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney

1955

John Olsen, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney

Group Exhibitions (selected)

1998-1999

Escape Artists: Modernists in the Tropics, touring regional galleries in Queensland and New South Wales  
Southern Reflections: Ten Contemporary Artists, toured Northern Europe

1998

Private Collections, Orange Regional Gallery

1987

Jack Manton Art Prize, Queensland

1986

Wynne Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales

1982

John Olsen 1981-82 & Noela Hjorth; Paintings, lithographs & drawings, Festival of Perth Exhibition, Bortignon's Gallery of Man, Perth; Aspects of the Landscape, Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne.

1979

Focus '79 R.M.I.T., Melbourne

1978

Australian Etching, National Gallery of Victoria

1977

Australian Contemporary Printmakers, Stadia Graphics Gallery, Sydney

1976

The Child in Us All, John Olsen: Tapestries and oils on hardboard, Queensland Festival of Art, St. Johns Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane

1969

Wynne Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales

1967

Australian Painters 1964-66, Corcoran Gallery, Washington USA

1961

Sydney 9, Gallery A, Melbourne; Recent Australian Art, Whitechapel Gallery, London; H.C. Richards Memorial prize, Queensland Art Gallery 1963 Georges Invitation Prize, Melbourne

1956

Direction 1, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney; Pacific Loans Exhibition, Auckland and San Francisco

## Awards

2005 - Archibald Portrait Prize

2001 - Order of Australia

1993 - Australian Creative Fellowship

1985 - Wynne Prize (Art Gallery of New South Wales)

1977 - Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) for services to the Arts

1969 - Wynne Prize (Art Gallery of New South Wales)

1964 - Launceston Prize, Tasmania

1963 - Georges Art Prize, Melbourne

1962 - Royal Sydney Show Prize

1961 - H.C. Richards Memorial Prize (Queensland Art Gallery), Perth Prize

1960 - Rockdale Prize

## Collections

John Olsen is represented in all Australian State galleries including the National Gallery of Australia. His works are also included in corporate and private collections throughout Australia and overseas.