

## **Rhana Devenport announces end of tenure at AGSA after six years of artistic success**



Adelaide, South Australia: Art Gallery of South Australia Director Rhana Devenport ONZM has today announced she will leave the Gallery on 7 July after six years. She will be returning to Sydney and looks forward to embarking on a series of new international and national projects.

‘It has been an honour and privilege to have led AGSA for the past six years through many successes and some significant challenges, managing a much-loved and deeply respected cultural and tourism destination,’ Ms Devenport said.

Four million people have visited the Gallery since Devenport was appointed Director in 2018, with AGSA programming reaching an audience of 1.8 million just in 2023 alone. During the pandemic, AGSA became one of the most visited galleries in the world, making the Top 100.

# AGSA

'AGSA is a fearless and innovative leader in South Australia, nationally and internationally. I'm incredibly proud of the ambitious growth of our world-renowned collection and our acclaimed exhibitions program. Exhibitions have included highly successful temporary exhibitions, three impressive Adelaide Biennials, the immensely influential Tarnanthi Festival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, and the wonderful Ramsay Art Prize.

'In 2023 alone, we presented the work of 3148 living artists which defines AGSA as the foremost national art museum in its support of Australian art.'

Highlights of Devenport's legacy include:

- Strategic expansion of AGSA's collection with important new works of art across all media wholly acquired through philanthropic support, fundraising and a series of major bequests such as the James and Diana Ramsay Fund. Major acquisitions include works by Chris Ofili, Daniel Boyd, Nalini Malani, Olafur Eliasson, Sonia Delaunay, Jeffrey Smart and Giorgio de Chirico.
- *Frida & Diego: Love & Revolution* in 2023 - the Gallery's most successful ticketed exhibition in decades with \$1.5million taken at the box office, cementing the Gallery's reputation as an international cultural destination.
- Staging of *Clarice Beckett: The Present Moment* - one of Australia's most acclaimed exhibitions of recent years.
- Significantly growing audiences to 1.8 million in 2023 for the Tarnanthi Festival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art and reaching \$8.1 million in art sales through the art fair, making Tarnanthi Australia's leading First Nations art festival and fostering opportunities for First Nations artists across the country at all stages of their careers. Tarnanthi is also now supported by AGSA's First Nations Advisory Council.
- An increased international exhibition touring program which included *Living Rocks: A fragment of the universe*, an official Venice Biennale Arte and touring the First Nations exhibition *Kulata Tjuta* to France and Germany. An increased national exhibition touring program that has included *Quilty*, *Kungka Kunpu: Strong Women*, *Brent Harris: Surrender and Catch*, and *Vincent Namatjira: Australia in Colour* currently showing at the National Gallery of Australia.
- Devenport has also personally curated three international projects: *Lee Mingwei: Sonic Blossom*, *Nalini Malani: Gamepieces* and *Robert Wilson: Moving Portraits* to critical and visitor acclaim.
- Landmark publication in 2024 of *AGSA 500* celebrating 500 works of art selected from AGSA's collection, just one percent of the entire collection.

# AGSA

'I will leave AGSA with a clear roadmap for the future of the 143-year-old Gallery through the new Strategic Plan and am deeply honoured to be part of its legacy and helping to shape its future. I wish the new leadership, and our dedicated, inspiring and passionate staff and volunteers, every success moving forwards. It has been an absolute privilege to work so closely with our inspiring donors and supporters of the Gallery.

'Personally, I am very much looking forward to the future and to an exciting next phase of my career, which will clearly benefit from my time at AGSA. I have loved living in Adelaide with all it offers and working closely with so many impressive creatives in a highly collaborative environment here in South Australia.'

Minister for the Arts Andrea Michael MP said, 'I sincerely thank Rhana for her exceptional leadership. She leaves the Gallery with an enviable reputation and a strong plan for the future. She has championed artists, led an immensely talented curatorial team and grown South Australia's incredible collection. She has been crucial to building an inviting space for audiences across all generations to enjoy challenging ideas.

I would like to congratulate her on AGSA's most recent and resounding success, the Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art on display now which continues to play a key role nationally in connecting Australian audiences with the contemporary artists of our time.'

Art Gallery Board Chair Sandy Verschoor thanked Devenport for her extensive contribution to the Gallery, successfully steering the Gallery through the challenges of the pandemic, strategically growing the collection and delivering memorable exhibitions and programs.

'Rhana's passion for the Gallery, its collection, and audiences has driven a profound enhancement of AGSA's world-renowned collection and launched a series of highly successful exhibitions both in Adelaide, across Australia, and abroad. We wish her every success for the future.'

A national and international recruitment search will shortly commence to identify a new Gallery Director.

**ENDS**

**Image Credit:** Art Gallery of South Australia Director, Rhana Devenport ONZM, with Motorbike Paddy's work Amaroo Station, Photo: Saul Steed

**Image Link:** <http://agsa.sa.gov.au/media/RhanaDevenportONZM>

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# AGSA

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Rhana Devenport ONZM began her tenure as Director of Art Gallery of South Australia in 2018. She was previously Director of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (2013-2018) and Govett-Brewster Art Gallery / Len Lye Centre (2006-2013), both in Aotearoa New Zealand. Rhana is a curator, writer and cultural producer whose career spans art museums, biennales and arts festivals. She has held positions with the Biennale of Sydney and Sydney Festival and was Senior Project Officer with the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art at Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art from 1994 to 2004. Rhana was a Curatorial Advisor for the *Aichi Triennale 2022: Still Alive*. She has curated solo exhibitions with international artists including Nalini Malani, Robert Wilson, Lee Mingwei, Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, Yin Xiuzhen, Song Dong, Lisa Reihana, Fiona Pardington and Nam June Paik. In 2017 Rhana was the Curator for New Zealand's Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia with *Lisa Reihana: Emissaries*. She regularly contributes to art publishing and recently edited a major monograph on Thai artist Pinaree Sanpitak. Internationally Rhana contributes actively to advisory and selection committees including the Mori Art Museum International Advisory Committee and the Taishin Arts Award, 2024. In 2018 she received The New Zealand of Merit by Her Majesty the Queen for her contribution to arts governance.

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