

Governor-General opens "most famous rooms in Australian art"

Saturday, 15 March 2014

"The most famous rooms in Australian art" are now open to the public, after Her Excellency the Honourable Quentin Bryce AC CVO, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia officially opened the Margaret Olley Art Centre (MOAC) today.

Approximately 800 VIPs and guests attended the Tweed Regional Gallery in Murwillumbah for the ceremony to open MOAC, celebrating the life, legacy and works of one of Australia's most loved artists.

The Governor-General, in her last official engagement outside Canberra before her tenure in the role comes to an end, told the ceremony MOAC was a unique project which entrenched Tweed Regional Gallery as the home of "the most famous rooms in Australian art".

MOAC has been constructed as an extension of Tweed Regional Gallery and includes re-creations of three of the rooms in Margaret's famous Sydney home, including the Hat Factory and the Yellow Room where she spent many hours painting.

The Governor-General said regional galleries played an important role in Australia and Tweed Regional Gallery was one of the best.

The Mayor of Tweed, Councillor Barry Longland, said the \$4 million project had been highly anticipated by Northern Rivers residents and the Australian art world since work on the Gallery began in June 2013.

In 2011, the Margaret Olley Art Trust announced the late Australian artist had bequeathed \$1 million to establish a re-creation of her studio and elements of her home and wanted it built in the Tweed, where she spent time as a child.

"The generous bequest from the Margaret Olley Trust was a wonderful recognition of the artist's wish for the creation of this facility," Cr Longland said.

"Together with contributions of \$1 million from the Federal Government, \$620,000 from the Tweed Gallery Foundation, \$200,000 from the NSW Government and \$100,000 from Friends of the Tweed Regional Art Gallery, Tweed Shire Council contributed \$1.2 million to see the project through to today's opening."

He said it was an investment to create a national and international attraction which would provide social and economic benefit for Tweed residents for many years.

Approximately 21,000 items were relocated from Margaret Olley's Paddington home to create a precise reproduction at MOAC, which will also house a significant number of her paintings.

The Attorney-General and Federal Minister for the Arts, George Brandis, said the curators had done such a wonderful job with the re-creation, it felt as though Margaret Olley might appear at any time.

The Australian Government provided a \$1 million grant through its Community Infrastructure Development Grants Programme.

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The Gallery and Café is open from Wednesday to Sunday 10am – 5pm.

The Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Warren Truss, said Margaret Olley was a "special painter who deserves this unique memorial for her huge contribution to Australian culture".

Margaret Olley Art Trust representative Philip Bacon told the opening ceremony MOAC was a unique addition to "what is already one of Australia's finest regional galleries".

"The only sad note is that the star of the show, that artistic rock star Margaret Olley, isn't here to see it herself," Mr Bacon said.

"Yet she is, really. Her presence is everywhere, as you will see when you go inside."

The Trustee used the ceremony to propose locating the yet-to-be-built Olley Memorial Garden at MOAC, next to an artist-in-residence studio named in honor of one of Margaret Olley's great friends, Lady Nancy Fairfax.

Official guests at the opening also included the Federal Member for Richmond, Justine Elliot and the NSW Member for Lismore, Thomas George.

Tweed Regional Gallery & Margaret Olley Art Centre will be open to the public for the first time on Sunday 16 March and, to celebrate the new centre, will also be open on Monday 17 March from 10am to 5pm. The Gallery will be closed to the public on Tuesday 18 March and re-open on Wednesday 19 March, before resuming its opening hours each Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm.

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