

MEDIA RELEASE

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Exhibition with bite to honour Hanrahan's legacy

30 years after the untimely extinguishing of one of South Australia's brightest creative lights, an ambitious exhibition curated by the Flinders University Museum of Art will pay homage to the extraordinary life and work of uncompromising artist Barbara Hanrahan.

Bee-stung lips: Barbara Hanrahan works on paper 1960-1991 opens Monday 26 July and comprises more than 180 works that showcase her prolific output as a printmaker and the significant contribution Hanrahan made to Australian and world art.

Abundant, profound and unbound, Hanrahan's exploration of gender, social structures and spirituality is reflected in a legacy of more than 400 works and 15 books which were seminal in challenging the conservative norms of her day.

The exhibition includes woodcuts, linocuts, screenprints, lithographs, etchings, and dry points, as well as rarely-seen drawings, paintings, and collage and considers several overarching themes which Hanrahan focused on throughout her career, such as sex, beauty and the stage; domestic comforts and anxieties; becoming plant, becoming animal; and celestial bodies and the afterlife. The exhibition is further illuminated by an extensively illustrated catalogue featuring many artworks which are published for the first time as well as scholarly essays that examine Hanrahan's personal concerns as they intersect with broader cultural and social issues.

FUMA Director Fiona Salmon says that the anniversary of Hanrahan's death presents a timely opportunity to showcase such an ambitious and significant project.

“Hanrahan’s works are enduring in their appeal, they are held in state and national galleries and are widely represented by smaller institutions, yet her extraordinary practice as a printmaker has not been the subject of a survey of this scale. For FUMA which itself holds 23 prints dating from the early 70s to late 80s, the idea of curating such an exhibition had been long held”.

“The impetus came in 2019, when a visit to the Hanrahan Studio in Hyde Park revealed the tantalising possibility for a nationally significant project. Two years later, we are delighted to see the exhibition and publication – supported by the Gordon Darling Foundation – come to fruition, to honour Barbara Hanrahan, and her distinct and important voice in the Australian cultural landscape,” Ms Salmon says.

Exhibition curator Nic Brown says the works are testament to the artist’s mastery of technique and her bold, decorative, and uncompromising visual language.

“Hanrahan’s oeuvre embraces humanness and its messy world of social constructs and expectations in relationship with nature and the cosmos, which are always the centre point of her personal yet universally accessible stage.”

“Mystical and earthly realms, and temporal paradigms collide and collude in Hanrahan’s inspired and inventive visual practice. She connects sexuality and desire with dreaming and spirituality, and bridges the farthest star billions of light years away to the humblest home garden bee responsible for a flower’s cycle of life, to make works that speak of mortality and the fragility of existence” Ms Brown says.

The exhibition, drawn from private collections, the Art Gallery of South Australia and FUMA holdings, was enabled by the generous assistance of Hanrahan’s closest circle.

“The project would not have been possible without the unstinting support of Barbara Hanrahan’s partner Jo Steele and longstanding gallerist Susan Sideris who provided unfettered access to the artist’s work, shared important insights and provided many loans,” Ms Brown adds.

Background

Barbara Janice Hanrahan (1939 – 1991) lived between Adelaide, London, and Melbourne, developing a prolific career as an artist and writer, producing more than 400 works on paper, and publishing 15 books before her career was tragically cut short by cancer at the age of 52.

Bee-stung lips: Barbara Hanrahan works on paper 1960-1991 and accompanying Wakefield Press publication of the same name will be launched by esteemed art historian Catherine Speck (FAHA) on Thursday 12 August.

The exhibition will be on display at FUMA at Bedford Park from Monday 26 July to Friday 1 October 2021, and will tour South Australian regional centres with Country Arts SA through 2022-2023 before travelling interstate.

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Media images and captions

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ut9fzampnp24c4v/AAD6BZRcp1fq1vri0yIR_Y05a?dl=0



Image: Barbara Hanrahan, *Dog of darkness* (detail), 1978, hand-coloured etching with plate-tone, colour inks on paper, 35.5 x 25.3 cm, Private collection, Adelaide, © the Estate of the artist, courtesy Susan Sideris 2020