

Art centre exhibits Olley's legacy

Monday, 10 March 2014

This is the third in a series of feature articles about the Margaret Olley Art Centre and the celebrated artist it honours.

Celebrated Australian painter Margaret Olley had a vision to ensure her contribution to art extended well beyond her lifetime.

The icon of Australian art, who died in her Sydney home on 26 July 2011, expressed her wish to have her studio and elements of her home and collections re-created at the Tweed Regional Gallery in Murwillumbah.

The Gallery was a natural choice of location for Margaret, who loved the Gallery - recognising it as one Australia's leading regional galleries - and who spent her childhood years in the area.

Trustee Philip Bacon AM said: "Margaret Olley's interest in regional galleries, and the Tweed River Art Gallery in particular, makes this project especially attractive to the Trustees."

A formal offer of \$1 million from the Trust set in motion several measures to source the remaining funds for the Margaret Olley Art Centre (MOAC), which will cost just over \$4 million to construct as a purpose-built extension of the Gallery.

In November 2011, the Federal Government confirmed it would contribute \$1 million, funds which had previously been earmarked to construct a new regional museum at Flagstaff Hill.

While Council reaffirmed the museum remained in the pipeline and would proceed once the necessary planning processes were finalised, Council representatives celebrated the Federal Government's decision as an important step towards making MOAC a reality.

Council responded by allocating a further \$1.1 million, honoured the Gallery had been chosen by the Trust and excited by the opportunities provided by hosting "a monument to one of our nation's best known and loved artists".

The Tweed Regional Gallery Foundation Ltd, which supports the Gallery through bequeaths, donations and gifts, contributed \$620,000 to the venture, while Friends of Tweed Regional Gallery and MOAC Inc initially pledged \$80,000. Their enthusiastic fund-raising and events program has since pushed that figure above \$100,000.

Their contributions ensured the necessary funds were in place when dignitaries gathered for the ceremonial turning of the first sod at the site in April 2013.

Gallery Director Susi Muddiman said excitement about MOAC was compounded by Olley's continued association with the Tweed Regional Gallery beyond her childhood.

That association led her to officially open a new wing of the Gallery in 2006.

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

In a positive omen of things to come, Tweed Regional Gallery was the first gallery to host a 2011 tour of Australia's most prestigious portrait prize, the *Archibald*, when it travelled throughout NSW and was won by celebrated artist Ben Quilty's portrait of Margaret Olley.

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