



# *Rananim*

The Journal of the DH Lawrence Society of Australia

ISSN No: 1039-9658

[www.cybersydney.com.au/dhl](http://www.cybersydney.com.au/dhl)

Vol 16. No 4. September 2009

## A VISIT TO THE STUDIO OF THE MAN WHO PUT *KANGAROO* ON CANVAS



Photo: John Lacey

*Garry Shead's garden studio at Bundeena where he created his celebrated Kangaroo series of paintings*

By **SANDRA JOBSON**

Photographs by **John Lacey, John Ruffels and Sandra Jobson**

**ON SUNDAY**, August 16, the D.H. Lawrence Society of Australia was privileged to make a visit to artist Garry Shead's home at Bundeena. It was here, in his studio, where Garry created his celebrated Kangaroo series of paintings, based on Lawrence and Frieda's time at Thirroul - 30 kilometres further south - and which was where Lawrence mainly wrote his 1922 novel of Australia, portraying its secret army of Diggers and Maggies.

As is traditional with our DHLA events, the weather was balmy. A warm, pre-spring day welcomed those who arrived at Bundeena wharf by ferry from Cronulla, meeting up with the



Photo: John Lacey

*Garry Shead and Adrienne Levenson with the mosaic they are creating based on Garry's painting of Lawrence and Frieda at a picnic at Thirroul*



Photo: John Lacey

*One of Garry's Kangaroo paintings hanging on his library wall*

others who had driven there through the Royal National Park from Sydney.

Garry and his partner, Adrienne Levenson, greeted the 22 of us at his "compound" - two detached studios and an airy two-storey house set in a large bushland garden rolling down towards the southern shores of Port Hacking.

Tables under large umbrellas had been set out for the barbecue feast, which was prepared by our vice-president/chef Rob Darroch, assisted by John Ruffels (distribution) and Owen Archer (second tongs).

After lunch Garry led us to the first studio, where he and Adrienne are working on a large mosaic version of one of his Kangaroo paintings.

They explained that in order to achieve the subtle colours of the painting they had to have special clay tiles fired. The tiles were stacked in little piles of moss green, rich ochres, hazy blues, warm pinks, ready to be cut into smaller squares and placed painstakingly on to the unfinished layout of the mosaic (see photos).

The mosaic is to be unveiled soon at Lucio's restaurant in Paddington (Lucio was the subject of a portrait by Garry and Adrienne hung at the recent 2009 Archibald Prize exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW).

Then Garry led us to his main studio, where he showed us his new work-in-progress - a series of paintings based on his uncle, who was a wine-maker in the Hunter Valley.



Photo: Sandra Jobson

*Enjoying a wander in the garden before lunch. From left to right (front row): Kerie Hooke (Minutes Secretary); Jo Vink; Bev Firth. Back row: ROger Hooke, Arnold Vink*

Garry's studio is stacked with paintings and sketches and books - very much a real working studio. (He also showed us some of his large Lawrence paintings, which are on the walls of an upstairs library).

Next we went back down to the main house, where chairs had been set out, cinema-style, in front of a large television screen.

There we were treated to a "sneak" preview of a DVD produced by Adrienne's son, Lorin Askill, of Garry's Kangaroo series, set to the music of composer Peter Sculthorpe's orchestral piece, "Small Town", itself based on Lawrence's time at Thirroul.

The DVD, narrated by Sculthorpe himself, reading excerpts from *Kangaroo*, is a magical blending of Garry's artwork, Peter's music, and Lawrence's words. It was much appreciated, and roundly applauded.



Photo: John Lacey

*Adrienne Levenson shows secretary Sandra Jobson the ceramic tiles specially fired for the mosaic*

Lawrence would have loved it. It is to be shown on the ABC next year, and released as a DVD.

It had been a perfect day... "One of the very best DH Lawrence Society events ever," as our President, John Lacey, said.

We are grateful to Garry and Adrienne for their extraordinary generosity and hospitality.



Photo: John Lacey

*Garry Shead in his studio*

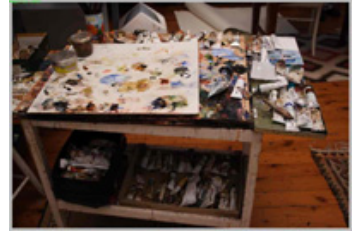


Photo: John Lacey

*Evidence of a busy artist*



Photo: John Ruffels

*Garry Shead and vice-president of the DHL Society Rob Darroch relax on the verandah before the barbecue lunch*



Photo: John Lacey

*Rob Darroch signs Garry's copy of his 1981 book D.H. Lawrence in Australia*



Photo: John Lacey

*Poet Geoffrey Lehmann and Garry Shead, who went to school together, reminisce about their schooldays - and other topics*



Photo: John Ruffels

*Lunch spread through Garry's dining room and out on to the verandah and garden*



Photo: Sandra Jobson

*"The Three Wise Monkeys" (l to r) John Lacey (president); Rob Darroch (vice-president) and Robert Whitelaw*



Photo: John Lacey

*Beverley Firth and historian Andrew Moore lunching in the shade of the veandah*