



# sheila

A FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN IN VISUAL ART

## **Impact Report 2019/2020**

# Chairman's Message

The last few months have been a time of such upheaval and change. It has highlighted how much we love and need the arts and at the same time shown how vulnerable the sector is. It also shows how important support organisations like Sheila are. Thank you for being such a strong supporter of Sheila and the arts at this really crucial time.

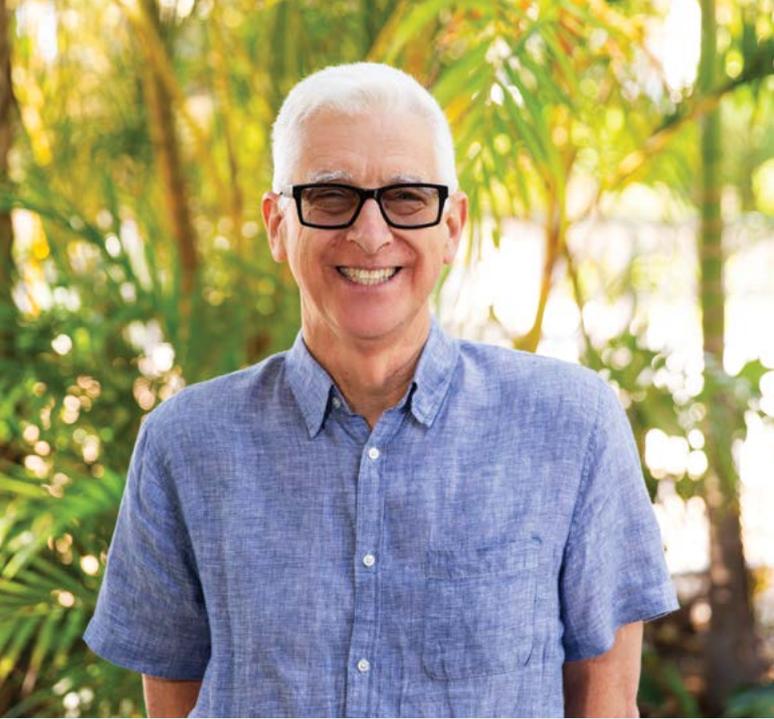
It has been a year since Sheila Foundation was officially launched by one of the leaders of the Australian art industry, Elizabeth Ann Macgregor OBE. As the speakers at launch noted, even in 2019/2020, the path for women in the art world still has many roadblocks.

Sheila's core mission is to overturn decades of gender bias to rewrite Australian women artists back into our art history and the displays that reflect it in our museums and galleries. Sheila will have succeeded when a visit to a state or national gallery shows equally the art, lives, stories and ideas of women and men. On a personal level I'm involved in the new Sheila Foundation to carry through my family's determination – started with the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art – to present a fuller and more truthful picture of Australian art and life than we see in our art museums, and to help living women artists to fulfil their talent and potential.

Our hardworking volunteer Board has spent the last 12 months building programs that address the imbalances in our art history and support and encourage women in contemporary art. It is an honour to work with such a skilled, diverse and dynamic group of people so passionate about changing the landscape for Australian women artists.

JANET DAWSON

Over the rainbow 1968 acrylic on board, 93.5 x 214 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne (cover image)



*“Never has the work  
Sheila Foundation does, in  
connecting donors like you  
with support for Australian  
women artists, been so  
important.”*

*John Cruthers*

We are proud that in our first year of full operation as a public foundation we have developed strategies and programs; held several events to support women artists and advocate for change; partnered with other organisations to promote women in art; developed a strong supporter base; and been an important part of the national shift towards recognising the importance of our women artists past and present.

You will find further details of our achievements in this publication. These achievements have been made possible through the generosity of donors like you, who have backed the foundation and our vision.

Thank you! I hope you will see through this publication how much your donation has meant to those it has impacted.

With the major changes we are all facing this year, we will not be holding face-to-face events for the foreseeable future. However, we are looking forward to staying connected with you through online opportunities, our newsletters, our blogs and news on our website.

We welcome your feedback on what we have achieved. Please contact me or any of our Board members directly if you'd like to speak to us personally.

With huge gratitude,  
John Cruthers



*"I admire the integrity of Sheila Foundation. I believe the action of passionate people with resources can make real change to the way culture works."*  
*Agatha Gothe-Snape*

*A prolific and critically acclaimed Australian artist, Agatha Gothe-Snape is a leading light for young women seeking a career in the arts. Part of the frontline, she is working to create change from inside the industry.*

"I first heard about the Cruthers Collection when one of my pieces 'Expression Curtain' was purchased for the collection. Being acquired into a family collection is something quite extraordinary – the work literally acquires new and different meanings as it enters the context of the collection and the narrative of the collecting family.

"In 2018 I was invited to make a show in response to the 1995 exhibition 'In the Company of Women' which featured the Cruthers Collection. This gave rise to my exhibition at PICA in 2019 'Trying to find comfort in an uncomfortable chair' which drew inspiration from the most compelling moments in the collection. Creating the exhibition, I was really keen to understand Lady Sheila and Sir James's collecting process: why they were drawn to particular artists, how the family dynamic worked and how female artists felt about being acquired. I relished the hours I spent in The University of Western Australia vault, discovering artworks and artists I had not previously known and being in close proximity to iconic works.

"I admire the integrity of Sheila Foundation. I believe the action of passionate people with resources can make real change to the way culture works. I have worked on many of projects produced with philanthropic means and the freedom and autonomy that comes with that has allowed me to really explore new things, to push boundaries. It is those projects that I love the most. The place we find ourselves in the world right now is an opportune moment to think about how much we rely on culture. So many great artists struggle financially – especially women. Philanthropy must find ways to support artists as the work they produce really forms a meaningful part of the scaffold of our culture."



# Sheila's Impact

*Over the past 12 months, Sheila Foundation's Board has set the course for our three main strategic focuses:*

## **Contemporary Women**

Providing opportunities and support for contemporary Australian women artists.

## **Into the Light**

Painting women back into Australia's art history.

## **Going Global**

Supporting the unique Cruthers Collection of Women's Art held by The University of Western Australia.

All three programs have been designed to create maximum impact for the areas they focus on and each has unique and important stories to uncover and tell to a wider audience.

# Contemporary Women

*The focus of the Contemporary Women program is to provide practical assistance to artists through a new annual fellowship, activities and events that support women artists, and support of The Countess Report.*

## The Michela and Adrian Fini Artist Fellowship

*"It was important to Adrian and I that we create something unique, that provided an opportunity that was much needed in the Australian arts sector. The Fellowship is designed to make a practical difference to both artists and contemporary art spaces." Michela Fini*

Sheila Foundation Board member Michela Fini and her husband Adrian have pledged a donation to Sheila to launch a unique annual Fellowship that will support women artists and arts institutions.

This is a responsive, focused program that will support the development of new work by contemporary women artists at a critical juncture of their career, whether they be emerging, mid-career or senior artists, and assist in the presentation and documentation of the work at a contemporary art space.

The first Fellowship recipient will be announced shortly and while exhibitions are on hold for now, the artist will be able to move forward with creating work ready for when galleries re-open.

## The Countess Report

For true parity and recognition for Australian women artists to occur, we need to benchmark where we are now and use this as a foundation to move forward. One of the outstanding achievements for Sheila in the past year is our support for the release of The Countess Report 2019.

The Countess Report, a collaboration between Elvis Richardson, Amy Prcevich and Miranda Samuels, has become the trusted data source for conversations on gender parity in Australian art, and a key driver of change since it was established in 2008. It provides state-by-state statistics across ten areas of the visual arts sector.

We are proud that Sheila has been a partner and funder of The Countess Report since 2014, supporting their inaugural 2016 Report and the follow up 2019 Report. This funding has allowed the report to be expanded and professionalised, and has helped provide salaries for female artists to contribute to creating the report.

It is encouraging that The Countess Report 2019 shows that many areas of the visual arts sector have made solid improvements in parity. However, it also highlights where work still needs to be done. The areas lagging behind continue to be our state and national galleries, providing an opportunity for Sheila Foundation to continue to help promote change in these spaces. For more information and a link to the report, please visit [sheila.org.au/the-countess-report](http://sheila.org.au/the-countess-report).

## Practical Support for Artists

While long-term goals and benchmarking are extremely important, so is immediate practical support. Since launch, Sheila Foundation has created different ways to support contemporary Australian women artists including:

*Champions Donor Circle:* The donors to this giving circle make it possible for acquisitions of works by contemporary women artists to be added to the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art. This keeps the Collection dynamic and importantly provides Australian women artists with financial support as well as encouragement for their practices and reputations. A grant of \$10,000 has been made in this year to The University of Western Australia to acquire works for the Collection.

*Activities and events:* Sheila promotes the work of contemporary artists through events, publications, blogs, social media and collaborations. The Foundation also acquires works to gift to appropriate public collections, including the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art. For example, we were delighted to announce the purchase of three significant colourfield works by Australian women artists at the launch of Sheila in May 2019.

## What's Next?

In 2020/2021, Sheila will continue its mix of practical support and advocacy for Australian women artists. We are particularly looking forward to announcing the first recipient of the Michela and Adrian Fini Artist Fellowship, to be awarded by Sheila Foundation in late 2020. A practical and much-needed initiative to support artists and contemporary art institutions, this will become an annual program for three years.

We will grow our Champions Donor Circle so more emerging women artists can be supported through acquisition of their works, and we will grow our range of events, blogs, social media and publications to shine a light on contemporary women and their art practices.

With increased donor support, we also hope to develop a regular exhibition focusing on mid-career and older women artists. This is an area often neglected and where we can offer additional support. Exhibitions like these will become even more important in post-COVID-19 times to help get artists back into public spaces. We are also seeking donor support to establish scholarships for young art history students to develop their careers and contribute to our understanding of the impact of women artists in Australia.

Sheila's Champions Donor Circle will also provide funds for the purchase of new works by younger and mid-career artists to be added to the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art. An artwork under consideration is Sera Waters's 'Survivalist Sampler, 2019-2020'.



*"This sampler marks the beginning of an ongoing project, individual and collaborative, to collect useful data for going forward and adapting to a different future. Samplers were problematically used to educate girls into obedience in the nineteenth century, perhaps in the twenty-first they can offer some solace."*  
Sera Waters

SERA WATERS  
Survivalist Sampler, 2019-2020  
Cotton, glow-in-the-dark thread,  
found materials on repurposed linen  
45 x 42 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Hugo Michell Gallery,  
Adelaide



*"Sheila Foundation is so distinctive as they have done something different by focusing on women artists – they have made themselves special by doing so."*

*Elvis Richardson*

*The Countess Report was founded by Elvis Richardson as a blog in 2008. In collaboration with Amy Prcevich and Miranda Samuels, Elvis has grown The Countess Report into a regular, comprehensive data-gathering project and the trusted data source on gender parity in Australian art.*

"When I first conceived collecting and publishing data on gender representation, the idea was to present the unbalanced facts which begged the question – why so many female graduates yet so few female professional artists? A few years in, John saw what I was trying to achieve and the value of Countess and took the time to ask what help was required.

"Through research funding from Sheila we were able to conceive a much larger project. The income was crucial. It allowed me to pay for assistance and have sustained time to commit to it myself. Financial support for women in the industry is something that is really needed.

"Sheila is so distinctive as they have done something different by focusing on women artists and they have made themselves special by doing so. What Sheila offers is authentic as, although the foundation is new, the concept and spirit are well established and they have runs on the board.

"For me, what I have gained from Sheila is I feel they take notice of what is needed and offer opportunities. Being heard and then helped is empowering. The times we are in have exposed once more the reliance we have as a society on artists but it also exposes the need for people to support artists. Philanthropy is important as a little goes a long way and in an artist's life it has a real ripple effect for their communities."

# Into the Light

*Into the Light: Recovering Australia's lost women artists 1870–1960 is a project aimed at painting a more complete picture of Australia's art history by researching professional women artists, many of whom have not been recognised previously.*

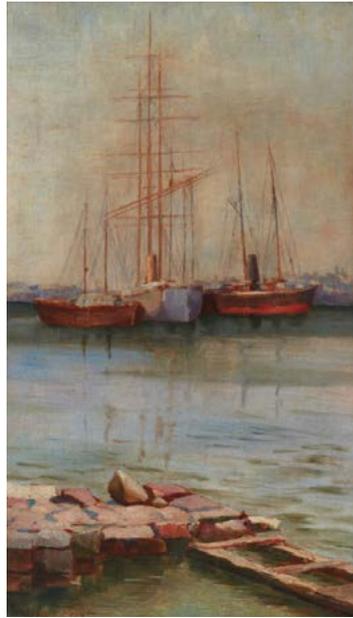
If you walk through the permanent displays of Australian art in our public art museums, chances are that up to 80% of the artworks you see will be by male artists. Sheila Foundation is helping uncover the women who should be there. There are two parts to this project:

*Research: Into the Light* is a significant national research project, led by Sheila Foundation, with the aim of making a wealth of information available on a free online database. Sheila Foundation funded a pilot project for NSW 1870–1914 and has in the last year developed a model to complete the project nationally. We have also raised seed funding to enable us to move to the next stage of development, collaborating with major institutions across Australia to make this a comprehensive and transformative project.

*Into the Light Donor Circle:* Since launch, we have had generous donors join our Into the Light Donor Circle to enable us to purchase works that are unearthed through the research. The funds from this donor circle allowed us to purchase a number of paintings in an auction of rare artworks by Australia women artists held last year.



ELAINE COGHLAN  
(1897–1989)  
Self portrait at easel c1917  
oil on canvas on cardboard  
28.4 x 23.5 cm  
Into the Light Acquisition Fund  
(image left)



ALINE CUSACK  
(1867–1949)  
Moored ships,  
Darling Harbour 1895  
oil on panel  
43 x 25.1 cm  
Into the Light Acquisition Fund  
(image right)



ERICA MCGILCHRIST  
(1925–2012)  
Specialist with hobby 1962  
oil and paper collage on  
hardboard  
92 x 129 cm  
Into the Light Acquisition Fund  
(image bottom)

## What's Next?

Sheila Foundation is excited to continue to work with partners to see the ground-breaking Into the Light research project to fruition. Given its scale, it will proceed over a number of years. With seed funding and the model in place, our focus over 2020/2021 will be securing the remaining funding to commence the project nationwide.

The support of our valued Into the Light Donor Circle members will enable us to acquire more works by under-recognised Australian women artists and highlight them to the world. We will continue to tell the stories of Australia's women artists through our blog, research and acquisitions.

# Going Global

*Increasing the visibility of Australian women artists through promotion of the unique Cruthers Collection of Women's Art held by The University of Western Australia is one of Sheila Foundation's key goals.*

Since launch, significant progress has been made towards the digitisation of the Collection, which will enable anyone, anywhere in the world to access it online. Having the Collection available to the public and, importantly, to scholars nationally and internationally, will encourage research to transform the narratives of our art history. It has also been encouraging to see the number of loan requests coming to The University of Western Australia from institutions around the nation for works from the Collection. This includes several works which will make their way to the National Gallery of Australia for the major 'Know My Name' exhibit, now postponed until next year. Sheila thanks The University of Western Australia for their co-operation and work on these projects.

## What's Next?

We are looking forward to the launch of the digitisation of the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art. The University of Western Australia is working hard to make this happen by the end of 2020. COVID-19 pending, we are also in discussions with UWA to offer a touring exhibition of highlights from the Collection, to showcase Australian women artists in as many parts of Australia as possible.



*"The Foundation aligns so much with my own thinking about the gaps there still are in the Australian art world."*

*Angela Goddard*

*Angela Goddard is the Director of Griffith University Art Museum and was previously the Curator, Australian Art at Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art. Angela is excited to be part of Sheila Foundation's inaugural public board, pushing for ongoing change and development for women in art.*

"I had known of the Cruthers Collection for many years and was an admirer of its aims and ambitions, so when I was asked to join the Board, it was a bit irresistible. The Foundation aligns so much with my own thinking about the gaps there still are in the Australian art world. One of our ambitions, as the Board of Sheila, should be that we won't need to exist at some point! However, somehow the conversation is still stalled right now and there are all sorts of reasons for that – these are structural, difficult, thorny, long term questions and unfortunately, it's going to take more than a few gestures to make real and lasting change. This is where Sheila steps in.

"We can't go back in time to rescue the career of those women who had to 'give up' because of lack of interest or in order to keep up with family expectations – however we can make sure that this doesn't happen again and create opportunities for women to develop deep and meaningful careers in art in Australia. We can also make sure that some of the incredible earlier artists are rediscovered and given their time to shine.

"In terms of being able to help on a practical scale, everyone can make conscious choices and think about the messages that are contained in the culture that we consume. I would urge people to be attentive about what's on offer. You can make an informed choice about what you want to buy a ticket for, what magazine cover is appealing to you, what book you want to read and what art you want to see."



# Celebrations

*While our cause is serious, we like to have fun with it and celebrate art, artists, successes and stories.*

Across 2019/2020, we celebrated the launch of Sheila Foundation at Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery; presented an evening with Anne-Louise Willoughby, author of 'Nora Heysen – A Portrait'; provided donors with the opportunity to meet and hear from Agatha Gothe-Snape about her exhibition in Perth; and hosted a number of tours of the exhibitions 'The Artist and Her Work' and 'Cosmopolitan.'

# Collaborations

*Despite currently being small, Sheila is effective and agile and achieves great outcomes. One of the ways we do this is through collaborations and partnerships.*

Two of our key partnerships are with The University of Western Australia and The Countess Report. We also collaborate with other Australian art organisations such as the National Institute of Visual Artists (NAVA), the Australian Centre of Contemporary Art and Museums and Galleries New South Wales. We will continue to grow these relationships, recognising that together we can make big things happen. If you have further thoughts on Sheila Foundation collaborations, we'd love to hear from you!



*"We need to spread awareness of who is working and create a model for the new generation of women."*

*Helen Carroll*

*Helen has had an expansive career in the arts, most notably as Manager, Wesfarmers Arts for 21 years. During this time, there has been very little in the West Australian arts world that Helen hasn't been across and very few arts organisation who haven't had the benefit of her support. Helen joined the board of Sheila Foundation in 2018.*

"I have admired the Cruthers Collection for many years. Sheila Cruthers was a dynamic personality in art collecting and she was really the only collector focusing solely on supporting the work of women. You can't help but be inspired not only by her dedication and passion, but also by the foresight of Sheila and the Cruthers family.

"The opportunity to be part of the Sheila Board was an offer that was too good to refuse. I was so impressed by the ambition of Sheila and I also knew I would be joining a group of terrific women and men, who are hugely committed and who see the unprecedented opportunity that Sheila presents to move the industry forward.

"Some might say that in 2020, Sheila isn't or shouldn't be needed, however the fact remains that it is. There remain systemic issues that impact the way major public institutions engage with and foster women artists and women in senior leadership roles. There has been progress – for instance Liz Ann Macgregor heading up the Museum of Contemporary Art and The Hon Dr Jane Lomax-Smith AM as the Chair of South Australian Museum – however the vast majority of senior leadership roles are still men and of course this means they have a particular view of the world which filters down. Awareness is also a huge problem. You cannot be what you cannot see. We need to spread awareness of who is working and create a model for the new generation of women and how they can have professional success. Everyone needs to see themselves reflected to participate fully."



# Meet the Board

## John Cruthers

It seems to be the fate of generations of Australian women artists to be secrets, a situation that will hopefully be remedied by Sheila's historical research project *Into the Light: Recovering Australia's lost women artists 1870–1960*. Was it an accident of history that Australia lost one of its very finest artists of either sex, Clarice Beckett, for nearly 40 years after her premature death in 1935? That Dorrit Black did not really emerge from obscurity after her death in 1951 until a handful of years ago? That Jane Sutherland, Clara Southern, Jane Price and Florence Fuller are not household names? We need to be seeing many, many more women artists in the 20th century rooms of our state and national art galleries, in our art history texts and in our school curricula, so that women's art, women's stories and women's lives are no longer secret.

## Katrina Burton

While I have a legal background and am definitely not artistic, I have a love for the arts and see my role at Sheila as a chance to contribute to the sector. The arts are so vital to our culture and identity, and Sheila's mission is something that needs doing and is achievable. Art is so special as it makes us smile, wince, examine the human condition, think outside our own experience of the world and connects us to others.

SHEILA BOARD:  
Catherine McMahon, Karen Connolly (Board secretary),  
Angela Goddard, Michela Fini, Ingrid Puzey,  
John Cruthers, Katrina Burton, (Helen Carroll absent)

## **Helen Carroll**

Sheila Foundation presents an opportunity to provide a leadership role to the industry. We need to spread awareness of who is working in Australia and create a model for the new generation of women artists and how they can have professional success. Everyone needs to see themselves reflected to participate fully. And of course, as a society we need to value the work of women artists and tangibly invest in their art.

## **Michela Fini**

When I was younger I attended art school and studied architecture and I've always been passionate about the arts, artists and creative expression. Art is such an important asset to our society. Being part of the Sheila Foundation Board made sense to me, as it gave an opportunity to support a different type of arts organisation – one that is innovative, West Australian based and promoting real change.

## **Angela Goddard**

For me art, comes down to artists. I really enjoy spending time with them, seeing their work, understanding the work through their eyes. Our artists are truth tellers, they can challenge us, they are deep thinkers and can perceive currents and patterns and interesting aspects of our culture that can make us look more deeply at the world. We need artists in order to show us what potential we might have an to imagine our futures.

## **Catherine McMahon**

One of my favourite art pieces in the CCWA is Freda Robertshaw's 'Standing Nude' (self-portrait) 1944. It is the earliest nude self-portrait by a female artist in Australia, submitted as part of her entry for the NSW Travelling Art Scholarship (she couldn't afford a model). This incredibly strong and striking image (almost defiant) reveals a lot about Freda. My further readings of her reveal that she was an apprentice to Charles Meere, and did a feminist response to his 'Australian Beach Pattern', titled 'Australian Beach Scene'. 'Australian Beach Scene' set a record sale price for an Australian woman artist at Sotheby's at the time. I think all Australians should know about this painting and artist.

## **Ingrid Puzey**

Art is so special as it has the ability to take one to another place, to see and experience something in a different way. I believe that the contribution by women to art over the ages must be recorded and reported as accurately and as timely as possible and included as appropriate and celebrated. This makes a vital impact on society. My favourite piece of art changes, sometimes on a daily basis! Today it is the Dutch masters of the golden age because I am reading about Nicolaes Maes. Our best kept art secrets have to be the women artists of the Kimberley.

# Recognition

*Sheila would like to thank our donors for their invaluable contribution to help support, promote and advocate for Australian women's art and women artists.*

## Founding Donors

The Cruthers family

## Donors – \$20,000+

Katrina and Craig Burton

Michela and Adrian Fini

The Ungar Family Foundation

## Donors – \$10,000+

Julienne Penny and Gavin Bunning

## Donors – \$5,000+

Bonhams

Caroline de Mori

## Donors – \$1000+

Corinne Barton

Helen and Rose Cook

Robin and Liz Forbes

Fiona Harris

Bobbie Salmon and Jock Clough

## Donors

Dr Sue Boyd

Warwick Hemsley

Anonymous (1)

## Into the Light Donor Circle

Marilyn Burton

John Cruthers and Elaine Baker

Marisa D'Orsogna

Jenny Fairweather

Sue McDonald

Alexandrea Thompson

## Champions Donor Circle

Kirsty and Stephen Carre

Sue Cruthers

JEM Foundation

Amanda Kailis

MEM Loton OAM

Nick and Claire Poll

Ingrid and Mark Puzey

Mary Ann Wright

Anonymous (1)

## Friends of Sheila

Allison Archer

Jane Beech

Jeanette Connolly

Jane Good

Evelyn Hall

Alex Kyriakakis

Terri-ann White

## Governance

Your donation is managed by Sheila Foundation's board and will always be utilised for the purpose you intend it and in accordance with the Foundation's legal and governance obligations. Our administration costs are kept to a minimum so that the most impact can be made on our programs.

Sheila Foundation is a registered charity (Sheila Foundation Limited ABN 90615950911 / Sheila Foundation Gift Fund).

# sheila

A FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN IN VISUAL ART

## Thank you

*Thank you for being part of the Sheila family. Without donors like you, we could not do the work we do. We look forward to your feedback and thoughts on our achievements of the past 12 months and our plans for the future.*

### Contact

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