



## LIST OF WORKS

*Clearing Skies* 1990  
Oil on masonite 90 x 60 cm

*Homedale Lawson Creek* 1990  
Oil on masonite 60 x 30 cm

*Farm Sheds, Lewis Ponds* 1997  
Acrylic on masonite, 80 x 40 cm

*Sundown, Camooweal Old.* 2004  
Acrylic on masonite 60 x 25 cm

'*Seagoe*' *Shed* 2008  
Acrylic on masonite 20 x 15 cm

*Stockyard Creek* 2007  
Acrylic on masonite 20 x 15 cm

*Oaky Creek* 2007  
Acrylic on masonite 20 x 15 cm

*Sundown, Camooweal Old.* 2003  
Acrylic on masonite 60 x 25 cm

*Armatree Hotel* 2008  
Acrylic on masonite 20 x 15 cm

*Dundallimal Ruins* 2008  
Acrylic on masonite 20 x 15 cm

*Farmyard* 2005  
Acrylic on masonite 30 x 25 cm

*Dundallimal* 2008  
Acrylic on masonite 40 x 30 cm

*Arthur Street Wellington* 1990  
Oil on canvas 18 x 20 cm

*Federal Hotel Wellington* 1990  
Oil on masonite 18 x 20 cm

*Glenmore Bakers Swamp* 1991  
Oil on masonite 20 x 15 cm

*Yesteryear* 2007  
acrylic on masonite 75 x 50 cm

*Wyangala Hillside* 2007  
Oil on canvas on masonite 90 x 60cm

*Long Shadows* 2000  
Oil on canvas on masonite 60 x 45cm

*Megalong Valley View* 2002  
Oil on canvas on masonite 120 x 90cm

*Mallowran Shed* 2008  
Oil on board 50 x 30cm

*Boundary Rider* 2009  
Oil on canvas on masonite 105 x 75cm

*A Timeless Land* 2009  
Oil on canvas on masonite 78 x 38cm

*Summer Holidays* 1999  
Oil on board 40 x 30cm

All images collection and © of the artist



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### WPCC Staff:

Brigitte Leece Manager  
Linda del Bao Centre Coordinator  
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Kent Buchanan Assistant Curator

Brigid Palin Visitor Services Officer  
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Cover: *Yesteryear* 2007 acrylic on masonite 75 x 50 cm Collection of the artist Image © of the artist  
Above: *Wyangala Hillside* 2007 Oil on canvas on masonite 90 x 60cm Collection of the artist Image © of the artist

Dubbo Regional Gallery - The Armati Bequest  
Western Plains Cultural Centre  
76 Wingewarra Street PO BOX 81 Dubbo NSW

Opening hours:  
Wednesday - Monday 10am to 4pm  
Closed Tuesdays, Good Friday,  
Christmas Day and Boxing Day

Tel: 02 6801 4444  
email: [info@wpccdubbo.org.au](mailto:info@wpccdubbo.org.au)  
Visit: [www.wpccdubbo.org.au](http://www.wpccdubbo.org.au)



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# BILL O'SHEA

## Beyond the Sandstone Curtain

23 May - 13 September 2009

Proudly supported by Peacockes Solicitors

## BILL O'SHEA

### Paintings from the West of the Great Divide

Bill O'Shea is a well known regional painter whose entire practice is inspired by the beauty and character of the Western Plains of central NSW.

O'Shea began his passion for drawing and painting in his early days in Sydney. He started to paint more seriously from the mid seventies when, during his daily trips to local Sydney suburb of Camden, Windsor and Pitt Town, he discovered a liking for rural subjects. These semi-rural outskirts of the big city held history and heritage and were at that time still considered as "the bush".

By the late 1970s O'Shea was making frequent trips to more remote areas, *further west* from the big city 'to paint and enjoy the landscapes'. These excursions were three to four days at a time aiming to search and discover subjects he considered 'typically Australian'.

Ventures to grazing and mining areas where original buildings still stood came next: wool sheds, old inns, pubs and homesteads become the main stopovers on these trips and subjects of O'Shea's paintings.

The artist's palette from this period was simple and earthy with white, ochre, light red, burnt umber; hardly a blue to be seen. This *Ochre and Earth Phase* was to some extent directing O'Shea to stay away from blues and greens for several years.

In 1980 O'Shea was invited to have his first solo exhibition at Stuart Town to raise funds to restore the old Railway Hotel for community use. Painting the local area was proudly recorded as a "bush launch". Several major artworks from this exhibition are still on display in the Railway Hotel.

The following year O'Shea spent most of his time in the far West region and decided to move to one of the much loved heritage buildings in Bourke Road near Wellington.

Whilst painting in the area he was attracted by an old sandstone homestead, once a hotel on the Cobb & Co run. O'Shea established

his painting studio and regionally renowned Baker's Swamp Gallery.

The Jinchilla Gallery in Dubbo established by Betty Linderman, promoted and sold several of O'Shea's major works over a number of years. In 2003 O'Shea moved to Dubbo to establish new studio/gallery in Sheraton Road where he still lives.

The move from Bakers Swamp allowed O'Shea to travel to the Centre, the Top End down through the East Coast. These areas have inspired a number of new works but although visually attractive and captivating, the landscape of the Central West NSW stays closest to his heart.

O'Shea has achieved wide acclaim with his artistic translation of Australia's rural landscape. His style will be defined and promoted as distinctively dramatic and one that shows beautiful depictions of the Australia we all recognize and hold precious. For more than two decades Bill has produced thousands of paintings from here that are housed locally, nationally as well as overseas.

The exhibition *Beyond the Sandstone Curtain* features an exciting selection of new paintings selected from O'Shea's studio. Most of these works have a propensity to record the subject matter and rural sceneries in a naturalistic manner – the way we observe and experience the countryside.

But alongside their realistic accuracy these scenes have the power and presence of more than a landscape. It is perhaps a hidden content enriched by the passion of the painter who dedicated his practice exclusively to the landscape that stretches out *West of the Great Divide*.

#### Adnan Begic

Curator, Western Plains Cultural Centre  
April, 2009

## HEART OF THE COUNTRY

Born in Sydney in 1934, William (Bill) O'Shea is widely regarded as one of Australia's best-selling painters. Bill is a true 'country boy' at heart....and with his own unmistakable style he makes beautiful pictures which dramatically typify our Australian scenery.

Contrary to the evidence of his chosen lifestyle and work, Bill (the youngest child in a family of six) describes himself as 'the city boy'... he was the only sibling not born in the bush, as his family had moved from their dairy property at Kempsey before his arrival. His father – who had been a Light Horseman during World War 1 – was killed in a building accident before Bill was born.

He became a ward of Legacy, which later helped to shape his working life.

"Legacy people with some influence helped me to find a job in ticket writing," Bill explains. "It was after World War 2, and many artists came home to Australia but could only find jobs as ticket writers at that time. Through working with these old hands, I picked up many tips."

Staple subjects for this artist have been woolshed, shacks, mining and farming scenes, timber mills, homesteads, and country pubs.

His pictures have the power to invoke an aura of the real Australian bush wherever they are hung.

A fourth generation Australian, Bill worked in poster design and silk-screen printing early in his career. While living in Sydney he also lectured part time on stencil cutting and silk-screen printing at the Sydney School of Graphic Arts in Ultimo.

In 1974 he took the bold step of committing himself to art on a full-time basis. To placate his employer at that time, he persuaded a friend to take over his day job before cutting himself adrift to face an uncertain future.

"Selling any painting, back then, for up to \$20.00 was considered 'not bad money'," claims this unassuming artist.

It proved to be an excellent career move for Bill, and put him on the pathway towards far greater accomplishments.

He recalls becoming interested in art as a boy, thanks to a friend of his mother.

"I would get her to draw, when she visited," he explains. "I would try to follow her example. It felt magical, drawing things on paper."

Seven years of ticket writing experience provided his only form of art training.

"I just picked it up as I went," he says, "Self-taught, I suppose."

As his skills developed, so did his notoriety. By the late '70s, Bill O'Shea had become well known – largely due to his exhibitions and his generous support for charities.

Stuart Town (located between Orange and Wellington) became an important place for this artist. Formerly known as 'Ironbark' the town was immortalised in Banjo Patterson's poem 'The Man From Ironbark'. Bill staged an exhibition for Stuart Town locals to raise money for the restoration of their Railway Hotel.

"I elected some subjects from the township and nearby locations in the district," Bill relates. People came from everywhere, and the exhibition was a sell-out."

Another important landmark in Bill O'Shea's life was a move to the central west of New South Wales in 1981. He established the successful Bakers Swamp Gallery at 'Glenmore' near Wellington, and for more than 20 years produced numerous works at his studio in this charming rural setting.



*Wyangala Hillside* 2007  
Oil on canvas on masonite  
90 x 60cm  
Collection of the artist  
Image © of the artist



*Mallowran Shed* 2008  
Oil on board  
50 x 30cm  
Collection of the artist  
Image © of the artist

In 2003, Bill relocated to Dubbo – where he continues to operate a busy studio and gallery. Bill O'Shea has clearly found his true home in the heart of the country, surrounded by boundless inspiration for a seemingly endless succession of paintings.

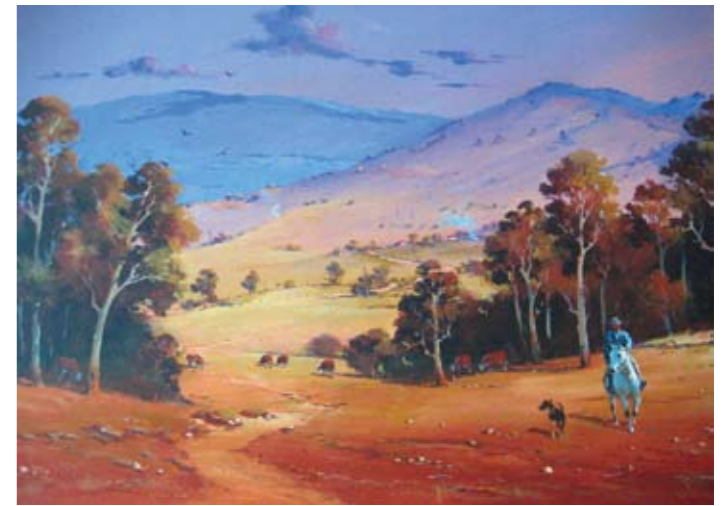
He has held many one-man exhibitions over the years and has been extremely active in supporting charitable causes through his art. His work has found its way into many overseas collections, aside from countless homes and businesses in Australia. He is particularly proud of his role in preserving our country's natural and architectural heritage on canvas.

Bill was awarded a Fellowship by the Australian Institute of History and Arts in May 2001, in recognition of many years of contribution to the field of traditional art.

In his tireless and continuing artistic career, Bill O'Shea FAIHA still does commission work for eager collectors. Many of his paintings are also featured on calendars, cards and souvenirs.

#### Trevor Lang

*This article was originally published in Artist's Palette Issue 50 2007*



*Boundary Rider* 2009  
Oil on canvas on masonite  
105 x 75cm  
Collection of the artist  
Image © of the artist



*Summer Holidays* 1999  
Oil on board  
40 x 30cm  
Collection of the artist  
Image © of the artist