



**John Leslie
Art Prize
2014**

**Michaye Boulter
Hamish Carr
Jason Cordero
Dale Cox
Chris Delpratt
Mark Dober
Emily Ferretti
Linda Gibbs
Janet Green
Stephen Haley
Sarah Hendy
Sophia Hewson
Chris Langlois
Frank Mesaric
Lynn Miller**



John Leslie Art Prize 2014

**David O'Brien
Michael Peck
Annika Romeyn
Laura Skerlj
Shannon Smiley
Fiona Somerville
Chris Stubbs
Remnin Alexander Tayco
A.J. Taylor
Nathan Taylor
Sarah Tomasetti
Amber Wallis
Brett Weir
Kim Wilson
Catherine Woo
Alice Wormald
Chee Yong
William Young
Alex Zubryn**



Director's Foreword



ANTON VARDY

Director, Gippsland Art Gallery



The Gippsland Art Gallery is proud to host the John Leslie Art Prize 2014. Now in its eighth year, the \$20,000 non-acquisitive biennial prize for landscape painting remains the most significant prize for landscape painting in South Eastern Australia. This year has seen a significant increase in the number of entries, with 416 artworks submitted for selection from every state and territory in Australia confirming the Prize's reputation as an important national award.

The Selection Panel of Clive Murray-White (Artist and Advisory Group Member), Claire Marston (Chair of the Advisory Group), Simon Gregg (Curator) and myself had the unenviable task of narrowing down the entries to the 35 finalists. This task was made all the more difficult by the high quality and consistency and sheer number of entries received. We could have easily filled a gallery many times the size of the space available. We thank everyone who entered paintings for this year's prize, and for making this the most competitive field yet.

The finalists in 2014 represent a remarkable array of talent. Between them they cover almost every approach to landscape painting. Their works will inspire, excite and challenge all who visit the exhibition. They enter the pantheon of artists chosen before them, and provide a vivid and telling account of the state of

landscape painting in Australia in the early part of the twenty-first century.

The previous winners of the Prize have been Tony Lloyd (2012), Jason Cordero (2010), Andrew Mezei (2008), Brigid Cole-Adams (2006), Mark McCarthy (2004), Vera Möller (2002) and David Keeling (2000). In an innovation to this year's Prize we've invited the immediate past winner Tony Lloyd to join our esteemed Judging Panel of Dr Gerard Vaughan, Professor of the Australian Institute of Art History, The University of Melbourne and Jane Devery, Curator of Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Victoria. Our Judges will not only select the winner of the John Leslie Art Prize 2014, but also a special non-acquisitive Prize for Best Gippsland Work with a purse of \$1,000.

The winners will be announced at a gala opening event on Friday 19 September by the Hon. Peter Ryan MP, Deputy Premier of Victoria.


This significant Prize is made possible by the very generous support of Mr John Leslie OBE Patron of the Gippsland Art Gallery. John is a long time resident and former Mayor of the City of Sale whose support and encouragement for the arts in all its forms extends back many decades. This Prize is but one testament to his passion for the arts and support of artists.



SITES OF SPECTACLE
An overview of the
John Leslie Art Prize 2014



SIMON GREGG
Curator, Gippsland Art Gallery



If a stroll among the works comprising the John Leslie Art Prize for 2014 is anything to go by, it seems artists are seeking an escape. On the whole there is little of the usual gritty realism this year, and more excursions into fantasy than ever before. There is a shared interest in capturing or evoking spectacle through landscape, and in taking us to places that, while appearing familiar, cannot be entered by conventional means.


One explanation for enduring appeal of landscape is its multi-functionality. It serves a variety of purposes, from recording actual geography to providing a fertile base from which the artist's imagination can grow. It makes allowance for politicising, fantasising, and rationalising; it is a gauge that captures the hopes and fears of a society while still remaining that most humble tests of artistic talent. Artists of all styles are drawn to landscape because it places no limit on expression, yet it carries with it a tradition that spans many centuries.

The paintings that have been shortlisted for this year's prize—from a total field of 416 entries—share a dreamlike quality that proves the ongoing validity of the genre. Drawing on each of the four elements, of earth, fire, water and air, each artist has provided a singular vision that is entirely theirs, and by engaging the shared language of landscape, succeed in speaking to us all. One such work that embodies the many traditional qualities of landscape while investing it with something new is

HAMISH CARR's *Hypostatical Exchange*. This dazzling work speaks of the spectacular without resorting to literal description. We feel elevated and carried through the picture's space, in and out of realms that defy ready identification.

There are a range of works that operate in a similar fashion, capturing a sense of spectacle within familiar yet unreachable geographies. ACT artist **ANNIKA ROMEYN** references geology and invokes the permanence of rock faces in her exquisite watercolour *Luminous Earth*. Here a subject formed over millennia becomes a glittering cascade of ephemeral colour and splintering light. **LAURA SKERLJ** shares Romeyn's fascination with natural minerals, in a work that is part geological survey, part imaginary landscape. Skerlj's *Cosmic Cutting* presents the findings of a subterranean study on another planet, in which mountains, crystals and minerals collapse into one another in delirious oceans of prismatic colour. **ALICE WORMALD** continues the pioneering spirit in *Weir*, a work that seemingly takes us above and below virgin terrain. By compressing and extended fragments of landscape Wormald accelerates and decelerates our passage through this myriad world, leading to a feeling of dizziness. That this world is off any known map is but little concern; its heights and troughs are sites of mesmeric beauty.

Further attesting to the poetry of painting is **AMBER WALLIS** and **EMILY FERRETTI**, who each deconstruct conventional pictorial fields. For Wallis, the



dismembered remains of her landscape in *Gum Colours/ Limb Flags* reassemble in colossal expanses of rhythmic colour and gesture. Like clouds in the sky, the passages of paint seem to move before our eyes: at one moment we see a tree, another it becomes a mountainside. The dictates of scale are similarly renounced in Ferretti's *Glint (Dawn)*. Here, the foreground detail looms large as elegant swathes of foliage ebb and flow to the beat of the artist's brush. Flecks of light-coloured paint animate the underlying swirls of spectacle that gather below the semi-transparent surface.

A spectacle of another kind looms in other works. The threat of catastrophe hangs over *TRACT 41* by **DALE COX**. The five-time finalist presents a slice of burning earth against a strangely vacant backdrop, like a specimen of scientific curiosity. The fire that illuminates the segmented valley is in its early stages, yet even at its eventual height we anticipate the threat to life will be nominal. Not so in *I Recalled the Sky* by **JASON CORDERO**, who in contrast to Cox describes no actual source of danger, and yet we feel a pernicious thrill of dread. Cordero, a former winner of the Prize, adroitly manipulates the theatrics of atmosphere in a rapturous scene in which suspense and anticipation are the key protagonists. Here, fluffy cumulus clouds are drawn upward toward the towering vortex of a biblical storm, which threatens to consume all in its path. A different take on a similar theme is *The Divine* by **MICHAEL PECK**, in which a phenomenon with no

meteorological precedent propels the substance of a landscape upward in a powerful rift. Cloud, mountains and lake are caught in this environmental anomaly, which disrupts an otherwise serene image of remote arcadia. The monochromatic presentation amplifies the sense of dream realism, whose effects are both profoundly hypnotic and intensely frightening.

Dream realism is a common theme among these finalists, a fine case in point being *Turf* by **KIM WILSON**. A dense ensemble of coastal tea trees is invaded by a predatory shark, circling the upper limbs in search of prey entirely unperturbed by its apparent spatial displacement. The scene is presented as so matter of fact that we tend to adopt the shark's casual acceptance of its situation. Can the same be said for **SOPHIA HEWSON**'s *The Never Never*? Certainly the nude at the keyboard seems blissfully unaware that her presence is a physical impossibility. Yet she occupies the scene with a clear ambivalence for the glowing red spinach plains that surround her, or the distant blue mountains that are, for her, at arm's reach. Clearly the appeal of 'screen time' is greater than that offered by any natural attractions. But there can be no ignoring the natural attractions in *Before the Fall* by **LINDA GIBBS**. The majestic waterfall glitters and glows as if caught in a perpetual dream state, its sparkling deluge pouring from a source of metaphysical origins. Gibbs' lullaby landscape captures the ebb and flow of consciousness as we drift in (or out) of sleep, at the precise moment when the unfathomable takes form.




The spectacles of fire and flood loom large in the artistic imagination, and for no artist more so than **JANET GREEN**. The first artist in the history of the Prize to have two entries shortlisted, Green's works *New Life*, *South Gippsland* and *Stranded*. *South Gippsland* attest to the evocative power of natural disaster. Much more than empirical observations from nature, Green stirs her eerie images with an elegiac disquiet by bringing her imaginative faculties into play. *New Life* and *Stranded* are two parts of a pair, each employing symmetry and dense atmospherics to enrich the emotional resonance of her vision. A particularly painterly patina characterises the work of **A.J. TAYLOR**, which energises the quietude of his idyllic scene. We are reminded at every turn that his *Hawkesbury 9* is a painting—a virtuoso performance in which the cumulative effect of clean and calculated brushstrokes amounts to a image rich in volume and texture. The same respect for the medium inhabits *Raining* by **CHRIS DELPRATT**. His easy expertise with the brush, and with paint that is whisper thin, results in an image in which we can almost feel the damp air caressing our skin. By including only what detail he needed to, we sense the painting's fragmentary nature; its breath and its pulse.

A well developed technical ability and admiration for the landscape lexicon distinguishes *You Yangs painting 4* by **MARK DOBER**. This vast panorama is an exercise in colour harmony, achieved through the almost total elimination of tonal depth. Working in a mode that has its roots in Post-Impressionism, Dober's

painting answers only to its own internal compositional logic. Similarly *Daintree*, by **ALEX ZUBRYN**, goes beyond pictorial realism and seeks to capture a psychological truth within the subject. This engaging study in foliage and tree roots resonates bodily, reading like the tangle of veins and vessels within the body. As life pulses through the system the exterior becomes a chaotic web, impossible to untangle. Zubryn's painting finds a likeness in *Water Song on Landcox Pond* by **LYNN MILLER**. The intricate line work here is the result of ripples on the surface of a pond, complicated by the reflections of tree leaves above. While the resulting abstraction has its basis in observed reality, it functions primarily as a piece of decorative fiction, where rhythms of parallel lines dance to an unheard tune. There are rhythms also in *Time Piece #3* by **BRETT WEIR**, but here they relate to a high-speed passage through space. The details of earth, sky and intervening horizon become a blur, and the clouds elongated wisps to signal our accelerating motion. But the streaks of sensual paint on copper also capture a static, frozen image caught in a moment fluidity and indeterminance; a 'time piece' immemorial.

A number of artists here amplify the details in the everyday, to bring to our attention the often missed fragments of magic that routinely surround but elude us. Fortunately no meteorological event escapes the scrutiny of **CHRIS LANGLOIS**, whose subject (and daily obsession) is the colour and weight of the heavens. In *Weather System (Mundi Mundi) No.1*, Langlois records with due




precision the spectacular scenery that hovers above our heads, to remind us that for every breathtaking landscape there is another to be found in the sky. Like a mountain painting in reverse, Langlois studies the anatomy of weather systems to capture for eternity in oils what in life is gone in a heartbeat. The same but different, **SHANNON SMILEY** is a painter of beautiful things that, perversely, grow from the gutter. Smiley looks for the overlooked, recovering from memories the pockets of overgrowth and decay that fill the gaps in our urban wanderings. In *Untitled, Burnley*, an unmaintained corner of council land comes under this wily artist's eye. The result is pure artistry; without adding anything Smiley creates a work of breathtaking elegance. **DAVID O'BRIEN**, meanwhile, calls upon the spirits of Sydney Long and Shakespeare to formulate *Echo*, a work that on the surface depicts an overgrown piece of scrub. There is nothing improbable in the presence of two children and dog, yet they somehow enhance the mythological undercurrent that also seems to inform the quality of light and blazing vitality of the colours. We can't help but feel that magic is in the air.

In passing through the eyes of the artist each scene becomes filtered, magnified, and recalibrated. For **NATHAN TAYLOR** this process results in a clarity of vision, where a pile of junk overflowing from a wheelie bin becomes the unsuspecting subject of a study in visual harmony. In *More than Welcome*, Taylor's process is nothing short of alchemy, with the consumerist rubbish inheriting the properties of a majestic landscape painting.

In **STEPHEN HALEY's** *United*, a service station loses all colour and detail, to become a ghostly white service station apparition. This transformation forces us to look differently; we come to admire the accumulation of shapes and planes as an early Modernist abstraction, in which the landscape elements become compressed, homogenised and clinically sterilised. For **FIONA SOMERVILLE**, the landscape elements in *Batch and Boree* emerge as if from a preternatural swamp. The hills and tree wobble and jostle, dance and sway, within a newly formed visual vocabulary, while the bricks, canvas awnings and corrugated metal sheets make motions towards picturesque ruination. But rather than medieval, these ruins will be familiar to anyone driving through the Australian bush, complete with dogged blowflies.

Other works, such as *Winter Sun Rising at Cradle Mountain* by **SARAH HENDY** are more sincere in their overtures to past art traditions. Hendy shows us the view through a telescope toward the distant mountain, which in composition and treatment strongly recalls the early colonial Australian painters. Treading a fine line between the formulaic and the fantastical Hendy is in complete control, suspending us in a virtual space that denies us any real footing. The unidentifiable strangeness that inhabits this work is apparent also in *Silence 3* by **SARAH TOMASETTI**. Here we encounter the ancient ghosts and spectres of landscape paintings past, carved in fresco plaster like a timeless watchful sentinel. These snow-capped mountains, seemingly disappearing from



view, ache with an impossible longing and inconsolable loss. Similarly, *Crossing* by **MICHAYE BOULTER** speaks of metaphysical experience and transcendent realms. The sense of absence as we gaze out across this empty, infinite expanse of ocean is almost harrowing, and yet it also lulls us into a meditative sleep (from which we may never awake). The 'crossing' being contemplated here is to another shore from which there is no return.

The various spectacles that comprise this year's Prize come in many shapes and forms. In *Art, Life and Other Things: Such as Dreams are Made on* by **CHEE YONG** the spectacle is a fragmentary wisp of vaporous cloud, caught high on the breeze. The viewer becomes a bystander (most likely flat on their back in a field), unable to intervene. The same goes for *Seaton* by **CHRIS STUBBS**. We can only stand and watch helpless, shoulder to shoulder with the CFA fire fighter, as we observe the smoke and embers quietly smoulder after the catastrophic Gippsland fires of 2013. In contrast, the rounded hills in **WILLIAM YOUNG's** *If it's Found, What then?* could only be located within the imagination of the artist. The hills dip and curve in a progression of downward arcs toward the stream at the picture's base, in so doing forming a cartographic map of the artist's inner workings. As such, the work functions more as a psychological profile than an empirical observation.

A similar conclusion might be drawn of *Water's Edge* by **REMNIM ALEXANDER TAYCO**. In approaching the work we enter the dark, stormy waters of the artist's

mind. This fascinating image changes at every turn: from choppy, gestural clouds through to the teeming, Gainsborough-esque trees, but nothing could predict a lake composed of brightly coloured geometric elements. Something has broken down in the art historical trajectory, and we are all the richer for it. Likewise **CATHERINE WOO's** *Ebb* proposes an alternative route for the future of landscape, in which resemblance and narrative are substituted for an encounter with the actual and physical. Her work leads us over what might be a desert plain or an arctic ice plateau; in either case we feel the ripples and congealing pools as if we were actually there.

Our final site of spectacle belongs to **FRANK MESARIC**. In *Figure and Cypress Pines, Denison*, the eye is immediately drawn to the gaunt, naked man in the foreground, framed by a white sheet. We observe, also, the red haze behind the trees in the middle ground, which places our senses on high alert. The eerie mood of the work cannot be allayed by explanations, instead we must watch and wait for the scene to unfold.

The same might be said of the Prize as a whole; the works gather here under a common atmosphere of suspense, not only in anticipation of who will emerge as winner, but in expectation of the next chapter of landscape painting. If the fine ensemble here is any indication, it will be unlike anything previously encountered. ■



CATHERINE WOO
Ebb
2014
Mixed media on aluminium
120 x 120cm



SARAH TOMASETTI
Silence 3
2014
Oil and graphite on fresco plaster
100 x 100cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE



HAMISH CARR
Hypostatical Exchange
2013
Acrylic, pigmented ink and pencil on linen
188 x 180cm



ANNIKA ROMEYN
Luminous Earth
2013
Watercolour on paper
167 x 117cm



AMBER WALLIS
Gum Colours/Limb Flags
2013
Oil on linen
150 x 200cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE



LAURA SKERLJ
Cosmic Cutting
2013
Oil on linen
162 x 193cm



EMILY FERRETTI
Glint (Dawn)
2014
Oil on linen
184 x 169cm



MICHAEL PECK
The Divine
2014
Oil on Russian Birch
160 x 120cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE



LYNN MILLER
Water Song on Landcox Pond
2014
Oil on linen
150 x 200cm



ALEX ZUBRYN
Daintree
2014
Acrylic on paper
76 x 229cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE



MARK DOBER
You Yangs painting 4
2014
Oil on canvas
112 x 250cm



KIM WILSON
Turf
2014
Oil on canvas
122 x 204cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE



A.J. TAYLOR
Hawkesbury 9
2013
Oil on board
183 x 183cm



SOPHIA HEWSON
The Never Never
2014
Oil on board
62 x 102cm



REMIM ALEXANDER TAYCO
Water's Edge
2014
Oil on linen
45 x 63cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE



NATHAN TAYLOR
More than Welcome
2012
Acrylic on board
40 x 80cm



DALE COX
TRACT 41
2013
Acrylic on canvas
110 x 197cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE



JANET GREEN
Stranded. South Gippsland
2013
Acrylic on canvas
50 x 138cm



JANET GREEN
New Life. South Gippsland
2014
Acrylic on canvas
66 x 130cm



MICHAYE BOULTER
Crossing
2014
Oil on linen
122 x 198cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE

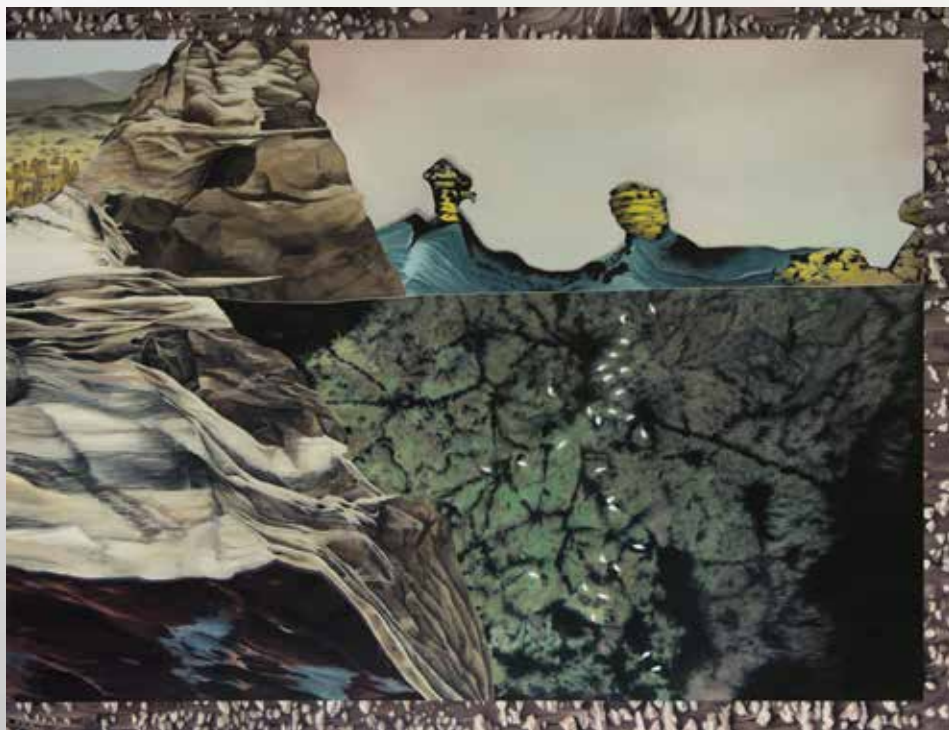


CHRIS LANGLOIS
Weather System (Mundi Mundi) No.1
2014
Oil on linen
153 x 213cm



STEPHEN HALEY
United
2013
Oil and acrylic on linen
137 x 183cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE



ALICE WORMALD
Weir
2014
Oil on linen
130 x 170cm



CHRIS DELPRATT
Raining
2014
Oil on canvas
60 x 150cm



SHANNON SMILEY
Untitled, Burnley
2014
Oil on canvas
120 x 95cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE



FRANK MESARIC
Figure and Cypress Pines, Denison
2014
Oil on canvas
150 x 120cm



WILLIAM YOUNG
If it's Found, What Then?
2014
Oil on canvas
50 x 50cm



BRETT WEIR
Time Piece #3
2013
Oil on copper
80 x 120cm



SARAH HENDY
Winter Sun Rising at Cradle Mountain
2014
Oil on prepared cotton Coventry rag
45 x 45cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE



JASON CORDERO
I Recalled the Sky
2014
Oil on linen
152 x 102cm



DAVID O'BRIEN
Echo
2014
Oil on canvas
153 x 122cm

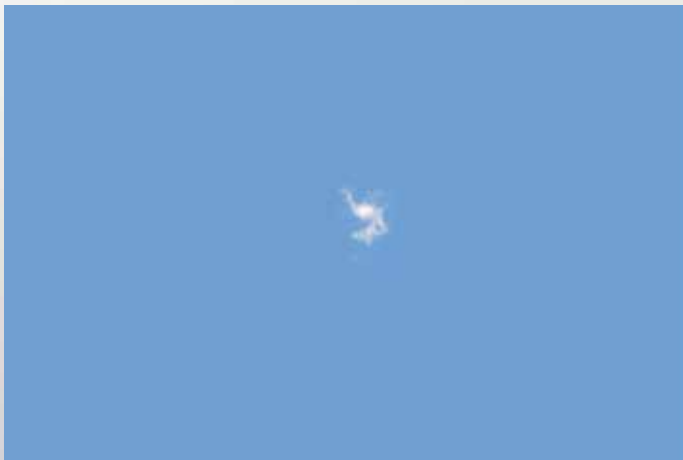


FIONA SOMERVILLE
Batch and Boree
2012
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 120cm



LINDA GIBBS
Before the Fall
2014
Oil on linen
183 x 112cm

NOTE: IMAGES ARE NOT TO SCALE



CHEE YONG
*Art, Life and Other Things:
Such as Dreams are Made On*
2014
Oil and acrylic on linen
100 x 150cm



CHRIS STUBBS
Seaton
2014
Oil on panel
74 x 124cm

JUDGING PANEL

Dr Gerard Vaughan
Professorial Fellow
University of Melbourne
and former Director
National Gallery of Victoria

Jane Devery
Curator, Contemporary Art
National Gallery of Victoria

Tony Lloyd
Artist

SELECTION PANEL

Claire Marston
Chair, Gippsland Art Gallery
Advisory Group

Clive Murray-White
Artist and Member, Gippsland
Art Gallery Advisory Group

Anton Vardy
Director, Gippsland Art Gallery

Simon Gregg
Curator, Gippsland Art Gallery

PAST WINNERS JOHN LESLIE ART PRIZE

2000
David Keeling

2002
Vera Möller

2004
Mark McCarthy

2006
Brigid Cole-Adams

2008
Andrew Mezei

2010
Jason Cordero

2012
Tony Lloyd

EXHIBITION

20 September to 23 November 2014

**OPENING &
ANNOUNCEMENT OF
WINNERS**

Friday 19 September 6.00pm

The Hon. Peter Ryan MP
Deputy Premier of Victoria



Gippsland Art Gallery
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Director: Anton Vardy
Curator: Simon Gregg
Education Coordinator: Louisa Waters
Information Officer: Lesley Scott
Gallery Support Officer: Krystal Rawnsom
Gallery Assistant: Nicole Richardson
Gallery Assistant: Chantel Henderson
Gallery Technician: Lindsay Roberts
Gallery Trainee: Michael Kewish

OPEN

Monday to Friday 10.00am to 5.00pm
Saturday & Sunday 12.00pm to 4.00pm
For public holiday hours visit website

FREE ENTRY

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