



Mark Pearse,
Dick Hood from
Mundara, 2006



George Tetlow, Flight from Tibet, c. 2008

Inner glow

Lorraine McLoughlin, George Tetlow
and Mark and Jill Pearse: Lives in Art

-BY JOHN NEYLON-

Lorraine McLoughlin's previous book *Barbara Robertson: An Australian Artist's Life* explored a quite special artist's contribution to a narrative of social engagement that has characterised aspects of South Australian art from the 1940s to the present day. This latest book introduces a later generation of artists, who, like Robertson, embraced the Fleurieu Peninsula as a place where – from personal perspectives – art and life became inseparable. The author has lived in Yankalilla since 2001 and continues to play an active role in developing community arts activities. Her two books are splendid examples of the kind of contribution a person with a passion for the arts and literature can make to the telling of a local community's stories beyond the usual filters of pioneering history and sport.

The Fleurieu has been attracting artists since the later 19th century and its artistic narrative is beginning to form good bones. The particular contribution McLoughlin makes to this account is to personalise a broad process of cultural colonisation of Adelaide's outlying Hills and Fleurieu regions that began in the 1960s and continues to the present day.

During the 1960s and into the 70s, when Tetlow and the Pearses were cutting their teeth as artists, it was quite common for creative folk to head for the hills and set up studios in some restored stable, farmhouse or cottage. This trend was as much ethos as economics. Mark and Jill Pearse were always scratching to make a living as artists. When first overseas, in London and Europe in the mid 1960s (Mark had been awarded an NGV Travelling Scholarship), they

undertook all kinds of menial work to scrape by. This pattern of improvising and doing whatever it took to survive as artists continued across their working lives. There are many in Adelaide who recall Mark as an active potter. The Pearse's Uraidla Pottery, established in the early 1970s, effectively sustained the family. McLoughlin traces this duality of practice, painting and pottery, across Mark's working life. The rough-hewn character of his painted landscapes, particularly trees, approximates the modelling and textures associated with hand built and carved clay forms.

As an English lad with some training and dreams of becoming an artist, George Tetlow was catapulted in 1959 into a kind of outback that many native-born Australians mythologise but secretly give thanks they never have to live in. He worked in mining and construction camps in Mt Isa and later Woomera. Somehow, in the heat, glaring light, dust and isolation (the antithesis of the Pearse's gloomy, grinding London) he found time to make drawings and paintings. This experience primed his self-confidence to become a journeyman artist, capable of pinning down travel experiences on the run. And travel he did – from the early 1990s to northern India, the UK and Turkey, Morocco, across Europe, China

and inland Australia. Book illustrations reflect the artist's inquisitive eye and skill in creating graphic cameos of 'other' places. The best of these have an astringency of touch that deflects any sense of these images as visual souvenirs.

Tetlow's pathway eventually took him into lecturing at the SA School of Art within Graphic Design and Illustration. Within this field, he made his mark as a highly regarded teacher and also a successful collaborator with arts and science educators in the production of resource materials. A consistent note in the various tributes of colleagues and students is an appreciation of Tetlow's drawing skills and creative imagination. The artist, with his partner, the jeweller Erika Inhofer, who had migrated from Germany in 1984, bought a property in Normanville. Stables on the property were eventually converted into the well-known Fleurieu gallery destination Studio 13.

The author has written this book from the vantage point of close association with the artists and the Fleurieu context that means so much to them. From an art-critical perspective the book needed a different structure, one which more emphatically separated art from life (read social history) and consigned biographical breakout panels and secondary domestic details to end notes. Tetlow, for example, emerges from this publication as an exceptional draughtsman whose work deserves a wider audience and closer scrutiny. It should be added that the book comes with a DVD of interviews with the artists.

But this is not a conventional art book. It's more an engaging, extensively researched and perceptive portrayal of creative lives played out against a backdrop of youthful questing, extraordinary effort and perseverance, passion and a not-so-distant Adelaide reaping the benefits of the Dunstan era. In this sense the artists, their local and the wider community have been well served.



Lorraine McLoughlin, George Tetlow and Mark and Jill Pearse: Lives in Art, 2015

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