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MEETING A DREAM: ALBERT TUCKER IN PARIS 1948 - 1952

I'm going to be just a piece of blotting paper... the old 'shut eyes and jump' is going to be my philosophy for quite a time
Albert Tucker, 1947

***Meeting a Dream: Albert Tucker in Paris 1948 – 1952* is the inaugural exhibition in the new Albert & Barbara Tucker Gallery at Heide Museum of Modern Art, 18 July – 5 November 2006.**

This is an important exhibition that for the first time thoroughly documents Australian artist Albert Tucker's period in Paris. The exhibition displays over 50 artworks, including many of the paintings he exhibited in his 1952 solo show at Galerie Huit in Paris, as well as works on paper and photographs not previously shown in Australia.

Albert Tucker left Melbourne in 1947 and began a thirteen-year journey through Europe and North America. After a brief stay in London, Tucker made a much-anticipated passage to Paris in 1948, where he believed he would find the centre of modern art. He immersed himself in Paris' cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Tucker made Paris his base for four years, using the time to experiment with materials and consider his artistic future. He became heavily influenced by leading European artists, particularly Dubuffet's techniques, Picasso's fractured female forms, the vigour of German expressionism, and the constructive possibilities and flattening and abstracting of form employed in synthetic cubism.

After settling at the Hotel de l'Avenir on the Left Bank, Tucker soon found a pattern of living and a lively group of fellow expatriates as company. During the early months he linked up with English art critic, Laurence Alloway and Australian author, Robert Close. The group congregated at the popular cafés in Boulevard Saint-Germain-des-Prés, such as Café de Flore and Café Royale.

In early 1952, Tucker undertook an ambitious and unlikely project. He began building a small towable caravan in his room at Hotel de Verneuil near the Ecole des Beaux Arts, which was lowered section by section from the window for assembly in the street below. Tucker moved the caravan to the banks of the Seine River, parking it close to the water and securing uninhibited views of Notre Dame, and stayed there for five months. The caravan, neatly fitted out and complete with kitchen facilities, was to serve as a ticket for his travels into the rest of Europe.

The Paris period culminated in a solo exhibition at Galerie Huit in May of 1952. Galerie Huit was an artist-run space, managed by a group of expatriate Americans. The exhibition – his second solo show after one at Kunstzall von Lier in Amsterdam in 1951 – received several small critical reviews in the local press.

Critics were beguiled by his painterly drawings and rousing paintings: 'He readily reaches his goal and his distorted figures introduce us to a nightmarish universe', noted reviewer Georges Fourdalle (*Les Arts*, June 1952).

'Tucker's interests in cubism', says Lesley Harding, Curator of the Tucker Collection & Archive at Heide Museum, 'were most concerned with its schismatic and transformist possibilities. His work was heavily tempered by a tendency to slip back to expressionism, its abbreviated forms and emotional effects perhaps better suited to his artistic temperament. This experimental period does reveal Tucker was notionally cut adrift by his research, yet he was simultaneously headed towards a more definitive path. He was showing in his art – at a time when day to day survival was of paramount concern – the humanity with which he ultimately empathised in others'.

The **Albert & Barbara Tucker Gallery**, together with the **Tucker Study Centre**, is part of Heide's 2005-06 Redevelopment Program. The Gallery will present newly researched perspectives and contextual interpretations of the work and life of Albert Tucker, through changing exhibitions that look both in-depth at the artist himself, as well as the artist within broader contexts. These exhibitions will draw upon the significant collection of artworks and archive material gifted to Heide by Barbara Tucker, as well as other public and private collections. The new Tucker Study Centre will be open to the public throughout this inaugural exhibition, showing personal archival material from Tucker's time in Paris.

Lesley Harding, Curator, Tucker Collection & Archive, is available for interview.

Heide Museum of Modern Art is currently closed during the final stages of the 2005-06 Redevelopment Program. The new Heide will reopen 18 July 2006.

MEETING A DREAM: ALBERT TUCKER IN PARIS 1948 – 1952

18 July – 5 November 2006

Heide III: Albert & Barbara Tucker Gallery

Curator: Lesley Harding

Heide Museum of Modern Art

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Hours: Tue-Fri 10.00am – 5.00pm; Sat/Sun/Public Holidays 12.00noon – 5.00pm

Admission: All Areas - Adult \$12, Seniors \$10, Concession \$8.

Single Area (Heide I only) - Adult \$8, Seniors \$7, Concession \$5.

Gardens – Free

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