Chapter Two...

In 1982, Adelaide Central School of Art opened in a large space in Bloor Court, just off Currie Street in Adelaide. The School was the brainchild of Rod Taylor and Heather Nicholson and provided studio spaces and informally assessed tuition in the visual arts. Bloor Court was the first of the School’s locations occupied from 1982-1988.

As 1988 drew to an end, Adelaide Central School of Art moved to the second of its locations, Gilles Street, on the north-west corner of King William Street, just shy of Premier Art Supplies and the Brecknock Hotel. The School would stay at this location until 1993 before starting the academic year in 1994 at its third premises, on Osmond Terrace in Norwood.

At Gilles Street, both the School and its Studios were situated in a run-down warehouse with vast open spaces, allowing for a unique and dynamic teaching environment that continued to thrive and grow. The School’s time at Gilles Street was a turning point; as enrolments increased, the School was accredited with a Certificate, Diploma and then Advanced Diploma. The School also changed is structure, becoming a private company, overseen by a Board of Governors with William (Bill) Anschutz as first chair. Likewise, Adelaide Central Gallery was established.

Chapter Two… is the second of the three scheduled exhibitions, starting from 2013 when the School moved to its fourth location at the Glenside Cultural Precinct. The final exhibition celebrating the contributions of the lecturers, artists and associates involved with the School at Norwood will be staged in 2015.

While nine artists- William Anschutz, Johnnie Dady, Rita Hall, Dee Jones, Christopher Orchard, Anna Platten, Rory Richardson, Rod Taylor and Lisa Young have been included in Chapter Two…, the School’s time at Gilles Street was particularly fruitful and there were many others involved with the School, while not included in this exhibition, and their contributions are acknowledged.

“The time in Gilles Street seemed to be one of continual, accelerating and exhilarating change. This was happening to us all on an individual level as professional artists – we were then early in our careers - but significantly in a collective way we formed part of a bigger whole that we loved and were committed to.” – Anna Platten
Recollections by the artists from Gilles Street

Rod Taylor AM (Founder)

This is a general and very brief outline of Adelaide Central School of Art's development as an institution during its Gilles Street days. In terms of the on-going experience and precise sequence of events in the life of the School, I have to say that my memory of those years is now a little fuzzy. It was such an intense and fast paced period – something important and involving always seemed to be happening, or about to happen. For a more colourful and detailed insight, I recommend Maureen Gordon's very affectionate chronicle, Adelaide Central School of Art - A Short History.

In 1989 the School and its studios moved to Gilles Street in the then semi-industrial, southern edge of Adelaide, from its first home in Bloor Court, a little lane off Currie Street in the busy northern part of the city. It wasn’t a planned move to expand or upgrade, but a move forced by the decision of Bloor Court building's owner to develop the site - it's now a car park. The three-storey old warehouse building in Gilles Street was finally chosen as the next site because it offered a relatively long lease, lots of space and wonderful light.

Although the School had been growing steadily at Bloor Court, the considerable increase in the size of the new site and a significant increase in rent presented a real challenge and a big leap in faith. It was a very stressful time. I can't recall what advertising and publicity we employed, but, for whatever reason, and to everyone's relief, the growth in enrolments and number of artists wanting studio spaces, accelerated and almost immediately it was apparent that it was going to be a success.

In fact, the growth and change in scale eventually led to the employment of our first, fulltime office and business administrator, Marrianna Stamataki, in 1990. Marrianna proved to be wonderful and was crucial to our development and professionalisation right through our accreditation processes and eventual establishment in Norwood in 1994. Just before our move to Norwood the very special Sally Dukic joined as an office assistant and stayed with us for 14 years, in the later years as our Academic Administrator.

It was also good fortune in the early years at Gilles Street that my old friend, solicitor, and business advisor, David Johnson – who had, in fact, found the Bloor Court site six years earlier – introduced me to the extraordinarily generous William (Bill) Anschutz OAM. Bill, who had recently sold his business and joined the studios in his retirement, brought in the mail. She handed a somewhat official looking envelope to Rod Taylor who quickly tore it open and read it. The look on his face was triumphant. 'We have been granted Diploma status!' he said joyfully. Sue Tweddell, who had anticipated this drew a bottle of champagne out of the fridge and we all shared a taste. Then Rod put his mug or glass down, rubbed his hands together and said 'Now for the Degree course'. Rod Taylor's achievement in advancing Adelaide Central School of Art must never be forgotten.

We now had a three part institution – school, studios and gallery, a macrocosm of the art world, as we publicised – overseen by good governance and leadership, managed by a professional administration, some capital, and, with Sue, as everyone observed, some style.

While all of these things clearly mattered in the establishment and status of the Adelaide Central School of Art in the community during that period, the fact is that the essence of the School – its core assets – were its remarkably talented and committed teachers and artists, and original, clear educational ideas expressed in a very successful curriculum.

Not all of the artists at Bloor Court followed the School to Gilles Street, but those who did included Chris Orchard and Anna Platten. These now well established artists, who started teaching at that time, together with others who joined the School slightly later in the period, notably Dianne Longley, Johnnie Dady, Lisa Young and Geoff Gibbons were integral to the success and reputation that the School enjoys to this day.

Johnnie Dady

I started at teaching at the Adelaide Central School of Art in 1992, although I had often worked there prior to this as a life model. Five of us were teaching then and four of us smoked, which (and it's odd to imagine it now) we did while we were teaching.

One floor of the huge warehouse environment at Gilles Street was able to accommodate two or three classes simultaneously and still have space for a gallery and studios for a large amount of practising artists. In 1993, on the floor below which was a car park, I started what is now the sculpture department. The disused factory offices served as a projection area by day and were occupied by a homeless man by night: a relationship that seemed to work fine.

The work from this period is spread far and wide and I can't recollect where; I have only a few sketch books left. For three years up and until 1993 the work was mainly figurative drawing and sculpture, with a radical change about to happen in 1994.

Rita Hall

I taught for a semester at Gilles Street after taking life classes at Bloor Court in 1987. Rod Taylor had invited me to establish printmaking classes at the new campus, so in the Summer of 1988, I set up a basic facility. A small etching press was borrowed from South Australian School of Art, thanks to Peter Schultz, and I found a tiny balcony above the car park for the etching tray. Battleship lino was ripped from the floor to make linocuts.

It all worked well in the bedlam which was the first year of Adelaide Central School of Art at Gilles Street. Due to an enthusiastic group of students, including James Jones who later became one of the first graduates, printmaking was to become an important part of the School's history.

Dee Jones

Gilles Street was a place of comradeship and a pool of inspiration where those of us who had studios shared ideas and encouragement.

One morning, as we gathered around the kitchen area, Sally Dukic brought in the mail. She handed a somewhat official looking envelope to Rod Taylor who quickly tore it open and read it. The look on his face was triumphant. 'We have been granted Diploma status!' he said joyfully. Sue Tweddell, who had anticipated this drew a bottle of champagne out of the fridge and we all shared a taste. Then Rod put his mug or glass down, rubbed his hands together and said 'Now for the Degree course'. Rod Taylor's achievement in advancing Adelaide Central School of Art must never be forgotten.
Christopher Orchard

The Move To Gilles Street

The School and studios moved to an old David Jones warehouse on Gilles Street. The building had three floors with lanolin infused jarrah floorboards. The ground floor became our car park and a couple of studios; the first floor was where the school and studios shared about half the area each. At this stage there were about 20 artists renting studios of varying sizes divided by sheets, chipboard, Masonite and sometimes nothing, just open space. The top floor was the home of every pigeon in Adelaide and was pretty much held together by pigeon poo.

The whole outfit rapidly settled into a harmonious colony serviced regularly by meetings at the legendary Brecknock Hotel and supplies from Premier Art Supplies across the road.

My studio was located on the western side of the first floor against a vast galvanized iron wall that radiated heat in summer and refrigerated air in winter. The floorboards creaked and gave of a faint smell of lanolin, which lent a wonderful atmosphere to the collective space. Stephan Twain-Wood and I cobbled together an application to Arts SA to fund the establishment of a gallery within the first floor between the studios and the school. This pretty much consisted of dozens of porta flood lamps mounted to exposed ceiling beams and fairly rudely built Gyproc walls with an improvised hanging system. At this time, Sue Tweddell and her husband Dr Ed Tweddell took an interest in the School and studios and Sue volunteered to steer the Gallery into better shape. She was no slouch and threw herself into sanding and sealing the floor of the gallery and organising the opening of the space with an inaugural exhibition of my small gouache works, which sold out!

Classes at the school were increasingly well subscribed and Rod Taylor and Anna Platten were rapidly becoming sought after as teachers of ‘real’ content in drawing and painting. There was no formal assessment, more critical appraisal and the identity of the School, Studio, and Gallery as an interdependent whole was becoming recognised as more studio and thrived. I was inspired by my time in Space Studios in London.

The time in Gilles Street seemed to be one of continual, accelerating and exhilarating change. This was happening to us all on an individual level as professional artists—we were then early in our careers—but significantly in a collective way we formed part of a bigger whole that we loved and were committed to. It was that sense of being a part of something bigger that always evolving, changing and growing that characterised the Gilles Street years for me and I think has made Adelaide Central School of Art so attractive to so many ever since. It is a lovely thing and a privilege in life to feel a useful part of something one believes in.

The Move To Gilles Street

The school was outgrowing the site and the occupational/health issues associated with the building were too big to be dealt with adequately. For some time since I returned from London I had been advocating in public forums, that artists should, when possible, take ownership of real-estate in which they can work and thrive. I was inspired by my time in Space Studios in London. Bridgegate Riley, Alan Jones and others were buying warehouse properties in East London to be used as studios assisted as well by the Henry Moore Foundation.

It would not be long before Chapter 3 began.

Anna Platten

The warehouse building seemed massive after Bloor Court, so big it seemed that I wondered at the time if taking it on wasn’t a bit risky. However, as enrolments quickly grew and the huge studios rapidly filled, time proved that Rod had made a far-sighted decision.

The building’s high-ceilinged vast open spaces were just perfect—while being too derelict and pigeon infested for much commercial use—and the place oozed ‘atmosphere’. One long well lit partitioned area became the class room with a few ‘unisex’ toilets on the other side of the thin partition. Near the top of the wooden stairs as you came in was a daggy kitchen sink and the tea urn. Opposite this sink was eventually the ‘office’ - constructed like everything there in those days - cubby house style from materials found on site - usually heavily pigeon pooned bits of masonite. It seemed that everyone just pitched in to help build these things, students, staff and studio members. In this office worked the wonderful Marianna Stamatakis and Sally Dukic. How they did any work on the one scrounged desk in what was also the ‘Common Room’ with everyone chatting endlessly to them is a feat in itself.

It seemed so easy for each artist to lay a stake for themselves between the handy placed jarrah columns and it was FUN! My memories are that we all seemed to love the same music, love seeing what each other was doing, loved catching up at the tea urn and loved being in such an eminently groovy space.

We had wonderful parties (jarrah floors are great for dancing!). Most memorably our DJ Driller Jet Armstrong ingeniously suspended his turntable from a wire sling he looped to the rafters to stop our stomping vibrations from bouncing the needle off his records. This turntable he then swung in time to the music – wild!

Something about the ‘cubbyhouseness’ of the place made everything more a bit of play - it felt as if we could make anything out of anything - and even perhaps we were freed to become new versions of ourselves on the way.

So best of all were the people - far too many in a short spiel to do justice to. It was a time of forming great friendships and of a new ‘family’ for me.

I had just begun teaching and was very very green at this, even to the point where a student in confusion had to demonstrate to me how to correctly measure proportion! Through the students I learnt a lot, not just (in teaching them) about the making of paintings and drawings, but also about life and about how very wonderful most people are deep down.

Fellow studio members were life mentors for me too, in particular Lisa Young, Dee Jones, and Dennis Barker. Certain things stand out: Rod’s courage, the calming, good-humoured ‘give it a go’ energy of Chris Orchard and Johnnie Dadi, Marianna Stamatakis’ laugh, Sue Tweddell’s grace and Sally Dukic’s calm.

Dear Bill Anschutz contributed an enormous amount, not the least of which was taking the school very seriously. He would sort of squint his eyes a bit as if he could look into the future and see the amazing achievement that Adelaide Central School of Art is today.
Rory Richardson

The 1980s were not a happy time for me. I had a pretty terrible childhood and being in the middle of the second Ash Wednesday bush fire left me pretty shattered. It was no surprise that I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety before I was 21 years old. Fortunately, growing up in the Adelaide hills and extensive travel throughout Australia bestowed in me a love of nature. I would often catch the bus toward Western Australia, get off at Penong and hitchhike down to Cactus Beach where I would stay for a week or two surfing and drawing. My paintings I originally started at Gilles street were an imaginary world where I could escape to. They involved a pair of lovers who were often threatened by something but always saved or protected by a creature of some sort. All the paintings were done in an abstract manner with any representation being hinted at but not displayed. Simultaneously I created sculptures of animal critters using found materials.

I believe the Studios and School really blossomed at Gilles Street. We were there for a good period of time and business and financial advice from Bill Anschutz and Sue and Ed Tweddell along with some hard work by all everything seemed to fall into place.

Lisa Young

I moved as a student with the School from Bloor Court to Gilles Street. The old first floor warehouse was bohemian and roomy, the small collection of easels lost in the new teaching space when we first arrived, and the studios in a massive open space with no working walls. The enrolments went up and Rod employed Anna Platten, Chris Orchard and Johnnie Dady to help him teach. There was such freedom and minimum bureaucracy; if the phone rang Rod answered it. I took over the studio space next to Rod when Anna went to Paris on a scholarship. Initially there were no rules, regulations or paperwork, but things picked up speed and started to develop. I had my first solo exhibition in the tiny new Adelaide Central School of Art Gallery, which was being expanded during the show, and after the opening Rod offered me a teaching job.

The students were a cross section of humanity of all ages. We were passionate about the school and we worked hard.

The Studios had a hard core of serious people and a changing population round the perimeter. I would arrive early every Saturday morning and stroll through the emptiness to see how people’s work was progressing. When someone left we all shifted round until we got the space we wanted, and after a few moves I scored the space next to Anna.

Working walls went up and we started to have studio exhibitions. Rod was inspirational and the Gilles Street period was stimulating, everything constantly evolving. It was one of the most exciting times of my life, and we started to have great Christmas parties.

Lisa Young works courtesy the Artist and BMGArt, Adelaide
Anna Platten works courtesy the Artist and Hill Smith Gallery, Adelaide
Johnnie Dady works courtesy of Greenaway Gallery, Adelaide and Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne
Christopher Orchard works courtesy the Artist and BMGArt, Adelaide
Anna Platten works courtesy the Artist and Hill Smith Gallery, Adelaide
Rory Richardson works courtesy the Artist and BMGArt, Adelaide
Rory Richardson works courtesy the Artist and BMGArt, Adelaide
Rod Taylor works courtesy the Artist and Hill Smith Gallery, Adelaide
Lisa Young works courtesy the Artist and BMGArt, Adelaide

Thank you to the private collectors who kindly loaned work for this exhibition. The artist recollections in this brochure have been provided by the artists.

Adelaide Central
School of Art

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