

CATALOGUE ORGANISATION AND TERMINOLOGY

Catalogue entries are organised as follows:

- Title and year or years of construction
- Description of the work, including materials, dimensions and inscriptions
- Exhibition history
- References in the literature (including letters and talks by the artist)
- Collection (focusing on the first sale)
- Notes (including Rosalie Gascoigne (RG) remarks, construction history and notes on titles)

Listed works and omissions

The catalogue includes all works that were exhibited by the artist (including those she later dismantled) and a few works that were not exhibited, because they were either sold between exhibitions or given to friends, or because RG chose not to show them. Notable among the works not exhibited are those I have identified in the catalogue as homages, which she made for her personal pleasure.

Other works and works-in-progress known from photographs but never exhibited, or dismantled by the artist, are not catalogued. There are two exceptions. The first concerns some early, mostly metal, constructions made between the mid-1960s and 1972. Those that survive — either because RG kept them and others because she gave them to friends or sold them from her 1974 exhibition — would have been catalogued anyway. But she dismantled others, either in the move from Deakin to Pearce in 1969 or when she abandoned that line of work after her 1974 exhibition (including works that she had exhibited). Photographs of iron works displayed in her living room or garden in the late 1960s, contemporary press references and 35 mm slides taken in the early 1970s suggest the works were well regarded by the artist at the time and therefore warrant inclusion in the catalogue. Several were reproduced in Vici MacDonald's 1998 monograph with RG's agreement. The other inclusion concerns a few works made with animal bones in 1972–73, which do not survive because they gradually deteriorated due to the effects of exposure to the elements.

Catalogued studies essentially are small exercises by the artist in varying degrees of complexity, using whatever materials were at hand and caught her eye, including the trimmings of completed works. Sometimes RG might try studies as an element of a larger work (e.g. see *Palings* 1994/98 and [*White wood study #5*] c. 1995/98). They reflect her practice of working in units that she would assemble into larger works. None were exhibited in her lifetime and probably the artist herself would not regard them as finished works: she would tell her studio assistant that a work was not finished until it left the studio.¹ Nor were they ever conceived of as preparatory works for a larger work, which was contrary to her way of working. ‘Studies’ do not include pieces found in the studio that could be characterised as offcuts from completed works or the sawn-up remains of destroyed works.

The Biographical Note, Rosalie’s Materials and catalogue entries include information about RG’s work practices.

Early flower and dried arrangements, installations at the Academy of Science building and ikebana are not catalogued but references to them and images are included in the Biographical Note and in the photo-essay Flower Arrangements, the Academy of Science and Ikebana.

Chronological arrangement and numbering

Works are listed chronologically according to the year in which the work was completed (see ‘Dates’, below). Within each year, works are listed alphabetically. Works are numbered sequentially.

Illustrations

Wherever possible works are illustrated, even if the only image available is a poor one (but sufficient to give an indication of what the work looked like), so the colour might not always be accurate. There are no known images for some early works. The source for each image is credited. Where the term ‘photograph’ is used this means that the image has been sourced to a print or a negative rather than a digital image. Copyright of all images of RG’s work is vested in the Rosalie Gascoigne Estate and managed by the Copyright Agency.

Titles

Titles used are those given by the artist, which are usually the title under which the work was first exhibited. If RG changed the title her preferred title is used, as in *Bottled glass* 1974 (changed from *Pickled glass*), but the catalogue entry includes a reference to the original. Alternative titles used in exhibitions or other records are included in the List of Works, cross referenced to titles used for cataloguing. Some works, usually those that were not exhibited, do not have titles given by the artist, but have been given one in the catalogue as an aid to identification, in which case the title is shown in square brackets, as in [Homage to ...] or [Wood study #1]. A rare reference in the form ‘R.G. 21’ or similar is a reference used in probate documentation for RG’s estate. Capitalisation of titles follows Australian art-museum style for minimal initial capitals (also RG’s practice, when listing works, though when inscribing works her practice varied, and many titles are inscribed all in capitals).

1 ‘Finished works’: Peter Vandermark in Mary Eagle 2000, p. 25.

RG usually named her works when she was preparing them for exhibition. She preferred titles that were not prescriptive, leaving room for viewers to bring their own experience to bear (for example, see the notes on *Pale landscape* 1977). In an early statement, she put it this way: ‘My pieces can be looked at in different ways. I try to provide a starting point from which people can let their imaginations wander — what they discover will be a product of their own experience as much as of mine. My aim is to be both allusive and elusive.’²

RG put a lot of thought into the titles of her works, and her skill with words and their meanings played a big role. So did her poetic sensibility and the feelings that came to mind as she contemplated her pieces. Wordsworth’s ‘emotion recollected in tranquillity’ was a catchcry.³ But the imaginative leap behind the names of retroreflective works such as *Plainsong* 1988, *Vintage* 1990, *Cat’s eye* 1992–93, *Canary bird* 1996, *Siesta* 1997 and *Cloud cuckoo land* 1998, for example, can only really be explained in terms of the mystery that lies at the heart of her creative process: you see what she is getting at, but how did she get there? This holds for works across all categories of material. Many catalogue entries include comment on the title.⁴

Dates

Works are catalogued according to the year in which the work was finished, or the last year when a range is stated. A range ‘1980–81’ indicates continuous work, whereas ‘1980/81’ indicates two separate stages of interrupted work and ‘c. 1980–85’ indicates an unknown date within an estimated range. Dating of assemblages reflects the known or likely time frame in which the components were brought together in the assemblage, rather than the dates on which particular components might have been constructed (entries record instances where components are known to have been constructed earlier). Dating was determined by reference to inscriptions on the work itself, photographic records, exhibition catalogues, correspondence and RG’s talks. Catalogue dates do not always match the date inscribed by RG or the date given when she first exhibited the work. RG’s practice was to inscribe works when she was about to exhibit them, rather than when she had just completed them, not least because she might change her mind after watching the work for a while. Sometimes — but not always — RG dated works according to the year of completion rather than the time span in which the work was constructed, and for a few works there is evidence that the date RG inscribed on a work is incorrect. In both cases, the catalogue entry includes an explanation for the nominated date (usually in the form of a reference to photography or a letter). The backs of many works have not been examined, which might later lead to minor revisions to dating.

Description of works: Materials, dimensions and inscriptions

The second line of each catalogue entry describes the work, with details of the materials used, size and inscriptions. If there is no record of materials or dimensions (mostly in some early works) this is recorded as ‘no record of materials or dimensions’, as appropriate. Many works were not examined by the author; descriptions are based on BG’s records, or the records of public institutions, commercial galleries and auction houses.

² RG artist’s statement in Robert Lindsay *Survey 2: Rosalie Gascoigne* National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1978 (exh. cat.). For a late-career expression of her approach to titles see 1997 Ross.

³ ‘And suddenly there’s an association in your mind, or something you have had an emotion about. It’s that Wordsworthian thing about emotion remembered in tranquillity. Because you felt about various things in your life, and suddenly you’ve got these inanimate objects and ... you can plug into that’: 1980 Gleeson; the William Wordsworth quote is from his preface to *Lyrical ballads* (2nd ed.) 1800.

⁴ On titles see also Peter Vandermark and Marie Hagerty in Mary Eagle 2000, p. 26.

The description of materials usually includes its original use, as in ‘wood from soft-drink box’. Sometimes more detailed information on sources is included in the notes. I have not tried to identify the types of paints used, though in the case of found or recycled materials a starting assumption would be that the type of paint used reflected the common technology when the original item was made. Additional information on materials is included in the chapter on Rosalie’s Materials in this catalogue raisonné (see p. 99 ff.).

Terms used for materials:

- *Composition board*, also known as MDF (medium-density fibreboard), is a wood product produced in the form of a board or sheet, formed of cellulose fibres or particles derived from wood or other sources, and used principally as a building material. Sometimes referred to as particle board or craftboard (a brand name) in BG’s records. RG used composition board mostly as a backing or base for her constructions.
- *Masonite board* is a type of composition board made of steam-cooked and pressure-moulded wood fibres in a process invented by William H Mason. When finished with a protective (waterproof) coating, Masonite board is used as a building material.
- *Plywood* is made from thin sheets of veneer glued together with the grain of each sheet at right angles to the sheet below; it comes in different thicknesses, depending on its intended application. The variations in thickness are achieved by varying the number of sheets laminated together to make the board. This catalogue raisonné does not distinguish between the various types of plywood. In some forms it is known as marine plywood, which usually comes in thicknesses of 3–18 mm (BG sometimes referred to ‘marine plywood’ in his notes). Despite its name (and popular misconception), marine plywood is not waterproof, although its glue lines are. RG almost always used weathered or recycled plywood and rarely used new plywood, other than to back works; on the one or two occasions when she might have used new plywood (or Masonite) in her compositions she first coated it with white paint. In the absence of a positive identification, the term ‘plywood’ in this catalogue may also refer to a form of composition board with a timber veneer surface, usually known as sliced Pacific maple (SPM) or jarrah-based pine or particle board.
- *Plywood (or builders’) formboard* comes in different thicknesses, usually 12 mm or 27 mm, and is used to contain poured concrete. It is coated with a synthetic (phenolic surface) film to provide a smooth surface for finished concrete. The film is usually coloured black or brown and the coated product is sometimes referred to as FSC-coated plywood, including in this catalogue raisonné. (In BG’s notes the term formboard seems to have been used more broadly.)
- *Road signs*. This catalogue raisonné refers to three types of road sign: retroreflective plywood road signs, reflective plywood road signs and hand-painted road signs. A few works make use of wooden material from yellow-and-black road-safety barriers that might include reflective elements.
 - *Retroreflective plywood road signs* used by RG are usually made of plywood covered with stencilled reflective synthetic polymer film, though she once spoke of them as being made with Masonite board (which is probably not robust enough for most signs). In this catalogue, road signs are all termed ‘plywood’ to distinguish them from signs made of aluminium, which RG did not use. They are mostly yellow. Retroreflective surfaces send a high proportion of the light back to the viewer, rather than scattering it. There are several types and grades, giving different levels of retroreflection, effective view angles and life spans.
 - *Reflective road signs* do not have the same retroreflective brightness as the retroreflective road signs. They are usually orange or red, and again usually made with plywood or aluminium (the latter not used by RG).
 - *Hand-painted road signs* (usually plywood or Masonite board), made to advertise items for sale at roadside stalls, were also collected by RG.

- *Wood*. RG used weathered or recycled wood in many forms: crudely cut hardwood used for fencing, milled wood used in building (sometimes with undercoating) and wood from manufactured items such as soft-drink boxes or furniture. Where possible I have tried to be specific.
- *Plant materials* specify the common name as well as the botanical name of the material, where known, for example, 'dried grass (possibly African lovegrass *Eragrostis curvula*)'.
- *Insulators* are devices made of glass or ceramic used to attach telephone, telegraph or power lines to utility poles and transmission towers.

Where known, the description of a work includes details of the support or backing, usually plywood (new or recycled, in varying thicknesses) or composition board. Most panel constructions from 1980 onwards are braced with aluminium strip in varying thicknesses (although I have usually not mentioned this in individual entries).

Measurements are given in centimetres, height × width × depth. The term 'variable' has been used for some installation works to indicate that the layout of the work as a whole might be adjusted to take account of the specific circumstances of the display.

Signatures and other inscriptions are described where known. The backs of many works have not been examined and BG did not record inscriptions (in many cases works were inscribed just before they were exhibited, sometimes in the gallery as a show was being installed). If data for signatures and other inscriptions are available the details are transcribed. Slashes in the transcription indicate line breaks in the inscription. 'Rosalie Gascoigne' indicates a cursive signature; 'ROSALIE GASCOIGNE' or 'R.G.' indicates a name or initials written in capitals. If a work is known to be inscribed, but there is no transcription, the entry simply records that the work is inscribed — with RG's name or initials, title and date (if this is known, and as the case may be). If a work is not inscribed this is stated. If there is no record of an inscription, the field is left blank. RG usually inscribed works with a black fibre-tipped pen on the back or, sometimes, underneath. Where known, the location of the inscription is also recorded. Some works have additional markings indicating the sequence or orientation of the panels, and their spacing, and this information is also recorded.

Framing

RG exhibited her works unframed. In 1985 she made known her view on framing: 'I am very interested in the concept of not framing anything nor shutting anything in. I believe it is a thing that Colin McCahon in New Zealand has decided against — frames. I find it works for me. It gives the work the rangy look, the free look, not refining or restricting anything too much. More universal.'⁵

Exhibition history of works

Exhibition histories include displays by public institutions, commercial galleries and auction houses. RG exhibited most of her output other than her homages and studies. If a work is known not to have been exhibited the entry says 'not exhibited'. Solo exhibitions are cited in the catalogue entries by date (year only), title of exhibition, gallery, catalogue number (as [x] if not numbered) and price (where applicable), with notations regarding any alternative titles used and references or illustrations in the exhibition catalogue and

⁵ 'Not framing anything': 1985 School of Art.

catalogue essays. Group exhibitions are cited by date, title of exhibition and gallery, with notations on any alternative titles use, references or illustrations in the catalogue. Full exhibition details are in Appendix 1: Solo Exhibitions and Appendix 2: Selected Group Exhibitions. Details of exhibition reviews are included in the appendices and sources are not repeated in the Bibliography. Correspondence between RG and her dealers has sometimes provided additional information.

For auctions, the entry gives date, title of auction (if relevant), name of auction house, location (abbreviated S. — Sydney, M. — Melbourne), lot number and page references in the sale catalogue. Information is also included about works exhibited by commercial galleries, including any references or illustrations in the catalogues.

Literature and illustrations

References are arranged chronologically. The catalogue makes extensive use of family letters, which are cited by date then initials of author and recipient, as in c. Jan 1974 RG to TG. If the letter was published in Mary Eagle (ed.) *From the studio of Rosalie Gascoigne* ANU Drill Hall Gallery, Canberra, 2000 (exh. cat.), the reference is accompanied by a page number, as in 25 Jan 1974 RG to MG, p. 43.

Abbreviated citations are used for Rosalie's talks and interviews, in the form of the date and either name of interviewer or location of the talk (as in 1982 North and 1985 School of Art). If the extract is from a published talk a page reference is given. Full titles are listed in the Bibliography.

Citations for other references (such as books, and journal and newspaper articles) use the author–date format, for example, Vici MacDonald 1998. References occurring only once or twice are presented in full in the catalogue and are not repeated in the Bibliography.

Ownership of works

Provenance — or history of ownership — is usually not detailed, other than for the first sale. The primary objective is to document when a work first changed hands, from RG's to a new owner. Private owners usually prefer to remain anonymous so are not named (with a few exceptions). If a work is in a public collection this is stated, including year of acquisition and registration number; Appendix 3 contains a list of public collections and the works they hold. Where a work was part of RG's personal collection or her estate this is stated.

'Dismantled' indicates a work was dismantled by the artist; 'destroyed' indicates someone else was responsible (usually with an explanation).

Notes

Some catalogue entries include additional information, on matters such as the source of the materials, construction history and sourcing of the title. Comments by RG relating to a particular work may be drawn from family letters or from her talks and interviews, and are sourced with an abbreviated reference to the full citation in the Bibliography.

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