

# THE YOUNG DOBELL COMPETITION



**William Dobell**  
*Sketch for beach carnival*  
[Bondi Beach] c.1960  
Oil on board, Bequest  
from the Estate of Ruth  
Spenser Komon, 2002  
Cultural Collections,  
Lake Macquarie  
Museum of Art and  
Culture Yapang.

In celebration of the Lake Macquarie Dobell Festival, Lake Macquarie City Council is inviting budding artists aged 5 – 18 to participate in the Young Dobell competition.

Sir William Dobell was a three-time Archibald Prize winner who lived in Lake Macquarie, and was known for his portraits and landscape artworks.

His beloved pet dogs were also a favoured subject matter.

**Theme categories: Portrait, Pet, or Landscape**





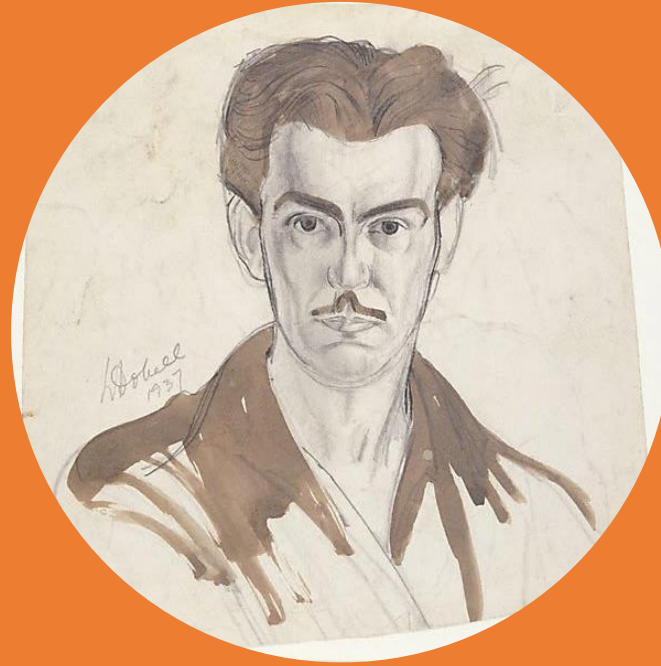


# William Dobell

## THE ARTIST

Born: Newcastle, NSW 1899

Died: Wangi Wangi, NSW 1970



# LEARNING ABOUT ART

Dobell, born in Newcastle, New South Wales, held various jobs in his youth, from deterring dogs at a fabric store (a dog walloper) to drafting houses and working as a cartoonist for the newspaper. He later studied at the Julian Ashton Art School in Sydney starting in 1924. In 1929, he earned the New South Wales Society of Artists Travelling Art Scholarship, allowing him to study in London and tour Europe, where he absorbed the works of renowned painters like Rembrandt, Renoir, Turner, Constable, and Van Gogh.

During his travels, Dobell frequented parks and cafes, sketching people, many of which would become the inspiration for his later paintings.

Dobell learnt all the art rules and techniques before he started to break them.



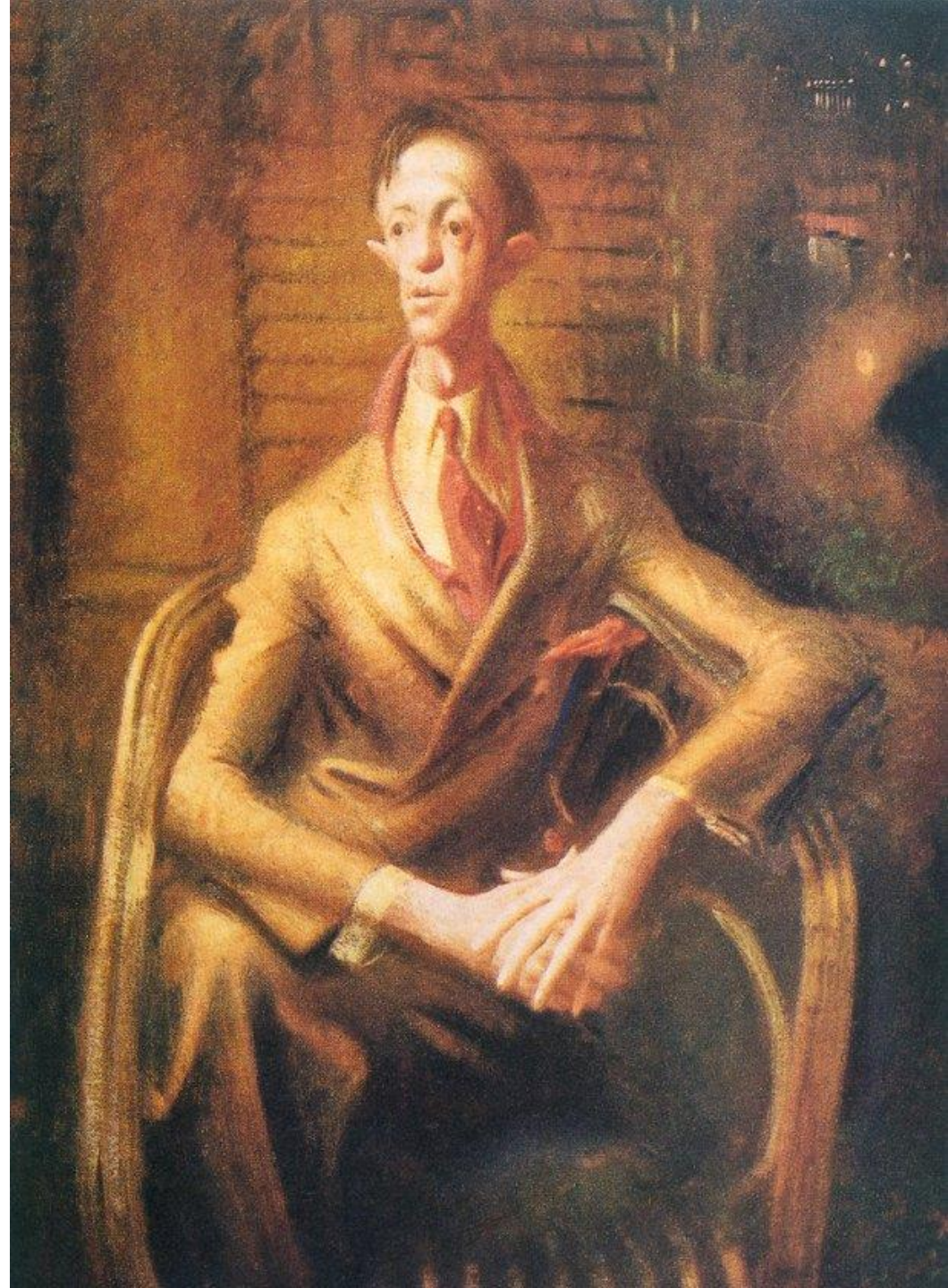


# PAINTING JOSHUA

During World War II, William Dobell and Joshua Smith worked together in the Civil Construction Corps and became great friends. Their job was not to paint battle scenes, but rather to camouflage aircraft hangars and storage sheds by painting rows of cabbages and cauliflowers.

Dobell's portrait of Joshua Smith won the 1943 Archibald Prize, but the judges' decision was challenged in court on the grounds that the painting was a caricature or cartoon and not a portrait. Although Dobell won the court case, his confidence in his art was shattered.

Art critics, gallery directors, artists, and medical experts were asked for their opinions on the painting. Many believed that the artists who took Dobell to court were afraid of the changes in modern art. The court ruled in favour of Dobell, but the experience was soul-destroying for both him and Smith. It also damaged their friendship beyond repair. In 1944, Dobell moved to Wangi to escape the negative attention the case had brought.











Dobell said that he was 'trying to create something, instead of copying something' when he painted the work.



# DOBELL'S LANDSCAPES

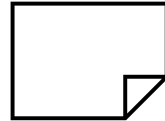




# CREATE a Landscape

When Dobell first came to live at Wangi, he was ill, nervously exhausted and unable to paint. As he recovered, the scenery around him took his interest and he began to do little sketches of the lake, then painted 'Storm Approaching Wangi' which won him the Wynne Prize for Landscape in 1948. Think of your favourite outdoor place. What do you see? What would you hear? What do you do there? Create the landscape you are imagining in the frame provided.

Make sure your work is A4 Landscape.

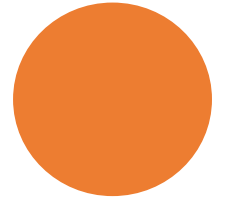
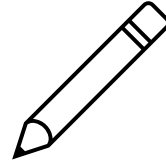


**Extension:** Dobell loved to create greeting cards as gifts for family and friends.

Make a postcard and send it to your family or a friend.



Postcard: William Dobell  
*Greetings from Wangi for new  
year 1958* Mixed media on  
paper private collection







**WILLIAM DOBELL, 'STORM APPROACHING, WANGI', AFTER 1948**





## PAINTING MARGARET

In 1948, a chance encounter between artist William Dobell and Margaret Olley at a party led to one of the most iconic portraits in Australian art history. Margaret was dressed in an extravagant costume made of ex-war parachute silk, which caught Dobell's eye. He asked her if he could paint her portrait, and she agreed.

Margaret sat for him in his flat in Kings Cross, wearing regular street clothes and a hat adorned with flowers. When she saw the finished portrait, she was taken aback to see that Dobell had painted her in the fancy dress she wore to the party.

Dobell was so excited about his creation that he ran through the streets of Sydney with the still-wet painting to get it to the Art Gallery of New South Wales for the 1948 Archibald Prize, which he ultimately won.

William Dobell, *Margaret Olley* 1948 oil on hardboard,  
114.3 x 85.7 cm board; 148.0 x 118.5 x 13.0 cm frame  
Purchased 1949, Art gallery of NSW Collection





Above: William Dobell and Margret Olley.





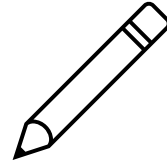




Dobell did many sketches before creating the award-winning painting



# CREATE a Portrait

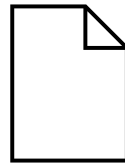


Create an A4 picture of yourself or someone special. A self-portrait is a portrait of the artist by the artist.

Dobell painted portraits of many people, but he also painted his own portrait many times, as a young man and as an old man.

Look in the mirror or take a photo and draw what you see.

Make sure your work is A4 portrait.



Top: **William Dobell** *Self portrait* 1932, oil on wood panel, Purchased with assistance from the Trustees of the Sir William Dobell Art Foundation 1985 © Courtesy Sir William Dobell Art Foundation  
Bottom: **William Dobell** *Self portrait* c.1970 Mixed media on board Oil on board, Bequest from the Estate of Ruth Spenser Komon, 2002 Cultural Collections, Lake Macquarie Museum of Art and Culture *Yapang*

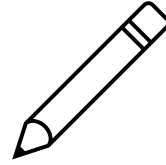


# DOBELL'S DOGS





# CREATE a Pet Portrait

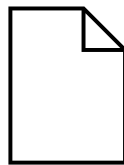


Dobell loved Cocker Spaniels and he would draw pictures of them in his sketch book.

SKETCH a dog or pet.

Use quick lines to capture the fun and movement of the dog.

Make sure your work is A4 portrait.





# ENTER Young Dobell competition

There are two theme categories and seven age groups in the competition

**Theme categories:** Portrait • Landscape

## Artwork Guidelines:

- Only one artwork in each category may be submitted per entrant
- Artworks can be a drawing or painting using any art materials; however, artwork must be two-dimensional
- Artworks must be submitted digitally as JPEG file. Entries selected for exhibition will be reproduced from digital file for exhibition display
- Artwork should be submitted as A4 (210 x 297 mm) with a minimum of 300dpi in PDF or JPEG formats
- Artwork files larger than 4 MB will not be accepted

## About your portrait subject

- We prefer that the portrait is painted from life and that the subject has a sitting for their portrait. Artists may also create the portrait from memory or take a photograph to use for reference.

## About your landscape subject

- We encourage landscape artworks based on a setting of importance and the local area. Artworks could be produced outdoors or reflecting on place.

## How to enter:

- Complete the online entry form, which includes a brief statement (less than 50 words) telling us about your artwork. This form must be signed by a teacher, parent or legal guardian.
- Your artwork should be photograph or scanned and a digital copy submitted.
- Find out more about how to enter: [Young Dobell 2025 - Museum of Art and Culture | Yapang](#)



William Dobell  
*Study of sleeping dog*  
(Late Sydney Period)  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, gift of the Trustees  
of the Sir William Dobell Art Foundation 1990. ©  
Courtesy Sir William Dobell Art Foundation