

## **JAMES GLEESON INTERVIEWS: TREANIA SMITH**

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, Treania, we've got a long way to go; right back to the beginning of your recollections of the Macquarie Galleries. That takes us back into, when, the twenties or the thirties?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh, not till the thirties because I was in the Edinburgh College of Art in the late twenties.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Tell us a bit about your own background first, where you studied and so on.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, when I first left school I studied with Max Meldrum. He was a friend of my father's and I was fascinated by the fancy studio, a huge place in Bourke Street, and I wanted to stay there and I wanted to study, so I did. At that time I was boarding with Harry Harrison and Daisy Darr, his wife, in the old McCubbin house on the Yarra in Melbourne. Louis McCubbin was occupying half of it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So you were involved with the art world right from the beginning?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, very much, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Were other members of your family interested in art?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh, my father, you see, was an architect, and also in his young days had drawn for *The Bulletin* and also for Steele Rudd's magazine.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh well, you were right in the thick of things right from early childhood.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. He was a member of a group in Melbourne which I think was called the T Square Club, and the Lindsay's and Max Meldrum and all sorts of people were members—Harry Harrison particularly, and so on.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What do you remember of Meldrum? Was he a good teacher do you think?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, he taught what he called the science of optics, and it was a grounding in tone mainly. It's something that you never forget, and it's very good for teaching because people don't make a mess when they're doing the Meldrum method. If they're just putting down what they see in the order in which it comes to the eye; that goes for tone. Black and white comes first, you see, and all the gradations after that. But also the colours that come, you learn which colours come fast and which come slow. You just put them in in the order and, really, it's a pushover for teaching.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** It's a technique.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, it's a technique that's very good for teaching and very useful for teaching, but it's not the whole story.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No. At that time Meldrum would have been how old, in his forties?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, I suppose. His children were about 10, 12, that age, so he probably was early forties.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Do you remember any particular works that he was doing at that time that stood out in your mind?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No. Well, you see, I went to this Bourke Street Studio. By the way, Arthur Streeton—now, wait a minute—yes, Arthur Streeton had a studio in the same building. I used to see him taking in his milk. That was all very thrilling because I'd only just left school.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This was in the twenties, late twenties?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, it was in 1919.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, goodness, as long ago as that?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, well, then Melbourne must have—

**TREANIA SMITH:** I think 1919. It might have been 1920. No, it was 1919 because I had just turned 17.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. Oh well, that does take us right back. You studied there for a number of years?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, no. I was only there not the best part of a year. Six months, six or eight months, I think. Not any longer than that because I had to go home. It was only just sort of an added bit on to my schooling.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** We were living in Queensland at that time. As I was an only child, I wasn't likely to be left there for years, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. When did you go to Glasgow?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Not for eight or nine years after that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I didn't go to Glasgow, to Edinburgh.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Edinburgh?

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**TREANIA SMITH:** Gerald Moira was the head of the school there and he taught Thea.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, and was it through Thea that you went there?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, I didn't know Thea then.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh. Well, what made you decide on Edinburgh?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, I had cousins who were at the Edinburgh University.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah, I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I had an aunt or several aunts who lived in or near Edinburgh, so I sort of got hung up there. I felt it would be a place where I could study. Better than London really in a way because of less things happening.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Thea Procter was studying at that time?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh no, not that time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Of course not, it would be much earlier.

**TREANIA SMITH:** She told me when I did meet her and told her that I'd studied at the Edinburgh College of Art and that Moira was the head of it, she said, 'Well, he taught me in London'. Now, wherever she studied, I don't remember where it was, but one of the famous schools there and he was there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, in London, not in Edinburgh?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, many years before that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's the same teacher.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Because, after all Thea would be 20 years older than me at least, I think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Then you came back to Australia, when, in the early thirties or late twenties?

**TREANIA SMITH:** I came back, yes. I think it was just 1930 when I came back. I had to come back. I started to come back I think about 1929, the end of it, and arrived either at the end of that year or the beginning of the next.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The beginning of 1930?

**TREANIA SMITH:** My father was government architect here then. That's why I came to Sydney.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Prior to that he'd been government architect in Victoria.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** So you lived in—oh no, you didn't live in Victoria. You lived in Queensland.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, I did. I lived there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So you lived in all the eastern states?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, I did.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Treania, when did you become involved with the Macquarie and how?

**TREANIA SMITH:** My father was on the board of the art school here.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The technical college.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Technical college. He was on the board of the university and the technical college both, you see. I wanted to continue sculpture because I had done that in Edinburgh.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I'd studied with a man called Alexander Carrick who did a lot of the work on the Edinburgh War Memorial. I'd got fascinated with modelling, I suppose that's all it was, and casting and things like that. I had done about 18 months with Carrick. I wanted to continue when I came out here. So my father said, 'Well, your best plan is it requires space', a great deal of space to do any sculpture.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** 'You'd better go up to the tech and get into Hoff's class'.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Rayner Hoff?

**TREANIA SMITH:** So that's where I went. When I was there I met Beryl Young, who was in the class.

**JAMES GLEESON:** She was the daughter of John Young?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, the eldest daughter. She was working there. So was Barbara Tribe.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, I remember Barbara Tribe.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Beryl and I became friendly and she mentioned one time when I had a picture in the Wynne Prize, put a landscape in there. But Wakelin had told John Young that he ought to take a look at it. So Beryl told me. I hadn't met Wakelin or John Young then but John Young wanted to meet me then. So that's how I did it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. So you met him.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Through him I met Wakelin.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Your actual working with the Macquarie, how did that come about?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh, that came about when my father was about to retire. I was thinking of getting a job at something and Beryl said, 'John MacDonnell was going up to Queensland, and dad would want somebody to help in the gallery'.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, I'd been trained for nothing, except going to art schools, that's all. So I wondered. However, I had an interview with him. By this time, I'm not sure, I think I had had a show there. I had four shows there before I took over the Macquarie.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I think I'd already had one before I went in. So I became the secretary. It was a very high sounding name. I didn't know whether I'd be any good at it or not but I worked at it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What year was that?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Now, I think that that probably—it's a bit difficult to remember exactly what year it was—it was either '35 or '36.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** When was my first show? I don't know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, we can look it up. I'll just turn off and look at the book. Well, Treania you showed in 1934, '35. Was it '36 as well?

**TREANIA SMITH:** I think so.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, '36 and '38. You were a member of the contemporary group and you showed with them also.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. I was elected to that I think after my first exhibition.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That group consisted of Enid Cambridge.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Thea Procter, Thea Procter particularly. She was the main one because she and Lambert had started it, you know. Wakelin and Lloyd Rees, Grace Cossington-Smith.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was De Maistre there?

**TREANIA SMITH:** De Maistre. But he was not living here then. I never met him.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. Oh, he'd already gone to London.

**TREANIA SMITH:** He'd gone to London. But he did show sometimes.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. Do you remember any of the shows in the twenties? You probably weren't there then. You were away.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I wasn't there in the twenties, no. I lived in Melbourne first and then I went to Edinburgh and I only came at the end of the twenties. So I don't really remember any of the shows. When I was finding out about the beginning of the gallery I did a lot of research on the shows, but that's all.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I had to find out what shows they had by books and advertisements and all that sort of thing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So you really begin to know about it in the second decade of the gallery?

**TREANIA SMITH:** In the thirties, yes. They started in 1925, didn't they?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, by 1935 I suppose I was well and truly into it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** But not as the director.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, you were secretary by that stage.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. It had been started by John Young and Basil Burdett.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Basil Burdett.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Where did John MacDonnell come into it?

**TREANIA SMITH:** He came as a third partner, I think I would say three years after they started.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I'd have to check on that. You know, I can find out. I have got some research on that but I don't remember the year just off hand.

**JAMES GLEESON:** When did Basil Burdett leave?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, wait a minute now. When was the big recession? That was when we—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Thirty-nine.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, John Young was away when that hit Australia. He used to tell me about coming back to a darkened gallery with Basil Burdett playing the spinet.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Nobody coming in and buying pictures?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, frightening.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, of course it was a bad time.

**TREANIA SMITH:** It was a bad time. At the same time Basil Burdett had matrimonial trouble and his wife left him and he was unhappy and he went, I think, abroad. Then when he came back he didn't return to the gallery but he was writing for the Ure Smith.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, was he?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, and later he was appointed.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Critic.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Critic for *The Melbourne Herald*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** *Herald*, that's right, of course. He was very largely responsible for the selecting that—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Bringing that big exhibition.

**JAMES GLEESON:** In 1939.

**TREANIA SMITH:** The first that Mrs Zander brought out.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Jocelyn.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, Jocelyn's mother.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Jocelyn's mother, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was that *The Herald* exhibition?

**TREANIA SMITH:** That was *The Herald* exhibition. It came here but it was really *The Herald*.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. Yes, I remember it very well.

**TREANIA SMITH:** We had it in the top of the new David Jones building.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's right, yes. It had an enormous impact.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Because it was the first sight most of us had had of Picasso.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, that's right.

**JAMES GLEESON:** And Braque and Gauguin.

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**TREANIA SMITH:** All that. It was in David Jones, wasn't it?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, it was in David Jones.

**TREANIA SMITH:** In the one down opposite the post office.

**JAMES GLEESON:** George Street. Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's right. So you came in when only John Young was there. Or was John MacDonnell?

**TREANIA SMITH:** John MacDonnell was still a partner but not partaking of the profits because he left that to John Young.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I began to try and keep the books, which I did adding on my fingers. I remember very well that it was, you know, difficult going.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** John Young was disillusioned because he'd had a marvellous beginning and all this thing had fallen into disrepair and, you know, things weren't selling and it was a very difficult time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** What they'd begun was, you know, very adventurous.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh well, they began with Wakelin, but they had exhibitions of Gruner which would sell out, and all sorts of people. You know, they didn't have an absolute policy of only the adventurous ones. It was the only place in Sydney where any adventurous painters could show.

**JAMES GLEESON:** At that time, yes, I know.

**TREANIA SMITH:** It continued like that for some time until art began to sell.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, that brings us to, you know, '38.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** End of '38. In '39 you came in as a partner.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, a lot of things led up to that. First of all there was a lady called Stella Scroggie. Ever hear of her?

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no. It doesn't ring a bell.

**TREANIA SMITH:** No. She was a teacher at SCEGGS. She retired and she had money and she put it all into a gallery in Rowe Street called the Lodestar.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, I don't recollect that.



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**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, she finally didn't do much good with this. Actually, she didn't know the artists and, you know, she only had a rough idea of how to run a gallery. So she gave it over to John Young. He put Jane Connelly—who was an actress and a very charming, delightful person—in as a secretary down there, or looking after the gallery down there. His idea was that he was going to sort of get new blood, new people to come in to look at these paintings. The same paintings but new people to look at them, because it was in Rowe Street and a different address.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** But after a certain time, as I was doing the books, I had a talk to him and I said, 'This thing is not working because the same people are either buying here or buying there. We're not doing any more but we're doubling all our expenses and you can't afford it'. So he closed the Lodestar then. That was, I think, about the time when he really began to feel tired, disillusioned and all that and he wasn't very well.

**JAMES GLEESON:** His daughters were married at this time, they weren't interested?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, they were. Jean of course married Robert Campbell, you know. Clarice wasn't married but Beryl was married.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Not interested in the gallery or coming into it?

**TREANIA SMITH:** I don't think they were. Well, Jean might have been but she was married.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Beryl might even have been but Jean was the one who would have run it, I should think. But Clarice was much younger and I don't know that it ever occurred to her. Anyway, as I say, he was very depressed and frequently we would have these depressing little chats together and I'd try and jolly him out of it all. But by that time I was ready to cut my throat.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This was all the bad time of the Depression.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, it was. Well, the Depression, you know, as far as art went, continued until the middle of the war.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I know, I know.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Everything else picked up but not art.

**JAMES GLEESON:** There was very little building I remember in Sydney.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, that's right. The architects, of course, at that particular time were mowing your lawns and things like that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes. It was a bad time for the arts generally in the thirties.

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**TREANIA SMITH:** Very. It the arts more than any other crowd.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Of course, because that was a luxury that people felt they could afford to—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well then, you see, the only thing that got it off the ground later on was when they couldn't buy refrigerators and they couldn't buy cars. There were none coming in here on the wharves, so they sometimes bought some art.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Strange how things work out.

**TREANIA SMITH:** That's how it happened, I'm sure.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It began to pick up?

**TREANIA SMITH:** It began to pick up a bit. People were ready to spend money then.

**JAMES GLEESON:** During the war period?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Because they had money, and they really didn't have an awful lot to spend it on.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, that's true, because everything was rationed and difficult to obtain.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. But John Young—I go back now—he was getting more and more tired and more and more disillusioned. Also he wasn't very well, I don't think. He had a big business in his restorations of pictures and things. He could carry on with that and he thought he would. Can we switch off for a moment?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. John Young was considering getting out of the gallery.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, he was, and he'd considered somebody who was living at that time in Western Australia. He did come over for an interview but he wanted to be a partner and John Young was tired of the whole business. He wanted to get out and just continue with his restoration work and things like that. So where do I go from there now?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, you were I think looking around for another job.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I was looking for another job, that's right. A friend of mine who was a doctor from Macquarie Street, I asked him if there were any jobs going up there, and he said, 'Why don't you take it over?'. It was something that had never occurred to me. But I told John Young more or less as a joke and he said, 'Why don't you?'. It was a simple as that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** How did Lucy come into it?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, Lucy was a friend of this doctor. He told me that she was thinking of doing the same thing in Melbourne. Two pieces of information that I ran to the other and wrote her a letter, as I had known her vaguely. Not very much, you know, we'd lost touch with one another quite a lot but I had seen her

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fairly recently. She'd been over in Sydney. So I wrote her a letter and told her that if I took it over would she like to be a partner. She seemed very interested. She rang me up and she asked me whether there would be enough in it to pay her board, and I promptly told her no. It made no difference apparently because she came. You know, because I was busy trying to work out how much we got. I couldn't possibly, I didn't think, make more than two pounds a week, if we did that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Goodness me.

**TREANIA SMITH:** But I was anxious to keep the gallery.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You were paying a big rent there, were you?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, I don't suppose it seemed big in the way rents are now, but it was fairly big.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Prices, of course, were terribly low.

**TREANIA SMITH:** They were. I mean, my first Lloyd Rees which I bought 43 years ago and paid off at five bob a week was an oil painting, a small oil painting but not very small. I think it was only eight guineas.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. I'm astonished when I look back at the catalogues at the prices.

**TREANIA SMITH:** In order to put all my cards on the table, I gave Lucy a complete rundown of all the figures that I could think of. In fact, I remember sitting in the train working out how much we could make out of Lionel Lindsay's prints per week, and they were fairly steady. Ten bob.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Goodness me.

**TREANIA SMITH:** A week. That was something you could count on.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This was the end of the thirties, 1939?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Mm.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You were brave, that's all I can say.

**TREANIA SMITH:** But on the other hand, you know, sometimes the roundabouts paid for the swings. You know, you just have to be prepared.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, could we just look at the shows you had in 1939, which was the first year you and Lucy were directors of the gallery?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Daryl Lindsay, you started with. Was that the first of the shows or was the Lionel Lindsay one just prior?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, the Lionel Lindsay was always at Christmas. We took over after the end of the year.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** So we started in January or February or whenever.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I remember the shows of five you used to have.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, that was something that Lucy and I—wait a minute and I'll see. I didn't realise we'd thought up a show of five so early in the piece. Actually, the first year that we were there I thought we had a mixed show to begin with; a show of things that could be labelled collector's pieces. But I would have thought that was the first show, but it seems to be Daryl Lindsay.

**JAMES GLEESON:** There were several mixed shows. Paintings and drawings by Australian English artists. English and Australian artists here, collection of pictures representing—

**TREANIA SMITH:** I wonder if these are in their order? That's what I wonder now.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. You think the first show could have been later in '39?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, we wanted it in the February when there was nothing doing. Most of the schools were still on holiday, and we thought that we'd ask the artists for something that they would let go for a five and we'd take a lower commission, and we could perhaps move things along a bit at that time which was the doldrums.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was it at that time that people began to queue up for the fives or did that come later? I know it was an annual event.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh, not until much later. A little bit later anyway, much later. The long queues started very much later.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. I know at one stage people used to begin queuing the night before.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, that was Roddy Maher that first started that. He was a young student and he queued overnight and of course that gave everybody the idea. From then on that's what happened.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, let's go back to 1939.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Can I go upstairs for a minute?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, of course. Now, Treania, in the published catalogues which are celebrating the 50 years of Macquarie Galleries, the second decade, there is a discrepancy about when you and Lucy came in as directors. In this list it appears that you came in at the very end of 1938 after a Lionel Lindsay exhibition. But, in fact, that isn't correct.

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, it wasn't. It was in September of 1938.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. There seems to be also a discrepancy in the sequence here, in the printed sequence. Your first exhibition was a mixed exhibition of Australian watercolours?

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**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, it was, because it was partly organised for us by John Young before he went out and gave us a chance to have some collectors pieces that he probably owned and was selling, and it gave us a sort of prestigious show.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I gather it was a success.

**TREANIA SMITH:** It was quite a success. It gave us a little hope and something to go on.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. Then followed J. Muir or Lloyd Rees, Harold Abbott, Thea Proctor and Lionel Lindsay covering the rest of that first—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, that was right. We finished, as we always did, have a Lionel Lindsay show at Christmas and he continued to support the new management and gave us a show of his woodcuts, etchings and things at Christmas.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. So the first show after that was Darryl Lindsay in '39 and then your first show of fives?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, we had been in partnership then for a few months, and we realised that February was a bad time unless you had a big name, which Daryl was at the time. It must have been booked before we took over, I should think. But at any rate it was there and I remember it, I think it was ballet things.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah yes, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** There may have been a ballet on in Sydney at the time or something.

**JAMES GLEESON:** There was.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. That's right.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, there was.

**TREANIA SMITH:** So it was something that tied in with something. That was the reason for him having it at that time, because nobody would have a show at that time of the year. It was a dull, dead time to have a show. Therefore we thought of having a sort of bargain sale and getting from the artists any scraps they had lying around their studio floors, anything at all that they'd like to give us. They were thrilled with the idea, and really the most extraordinary collection came in; very good paintings some times. We had Dobell's and everything, you know. I don't know whether we had them at the first show because I don't know that Bill was back then, was he?

**JAMES GLEESON:** You had Roy de Maistre.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, he was.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, he was. Drysdale.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh yes, Drysdale, Dobell, and all that, you know.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Lloyd Rees I think, did we?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Roland Wakelin, Lloyd Rees, Grace Cossington-Smith.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh, I know some of the young collectors, you know, went mad about it because they were able to start their collections and it really did a lot of good at that time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I'm sure many people started their collections by those shows of fives and then went on to—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, I think they did. That was the general idea of it actually. It was only later on, very much later on when we'd already had the sixes and the eights, when it became rather a bad influence, we felt, because pictures were selling by that time. Although the artists—we had several meetings, Lucy and I did, to ask them if they really wanted to go on or they didn't want to go on. They said yes, oh, they were absolutely certain they wanted to go on, they loved the fives and sixes and the eights. They loved them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So it became an institution?

**TREANIA SMITH:** But then, you see, when people were buying them and sending their chauffeurs in to queue up, I felt it wasn't fair to the artists.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No.

**TREANIA SMITH:** So we really discontinued because of the slightly—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Fault sort of situation that developed.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. It was meant for the younger crowd to start a collection, and that's really what it did at first.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, I notice in that first year you had a show by Rupert Bunny.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, was that his South of France landscapes?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. When Lucy came over from Melbourne one of the first things that I said to her and we discussed at length was that we would both like to show Rupert Bunny, who had never really had a show except one that he'd had at Anthony Horderns. So as Lucy went to Melbourne quite a lot—her people lived there—I asked her to see if she could see him and ask him about a show. He said that we were mad as the previous show that he'd had there at Horderns was an absolute flop. He was disillusioned about Sydney and he didn't want to have

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any part in it, but he'd give us the pictures and we could charge a higher commission and just take all the responsibility. So we did.

**JAMES GLEESON:** And was it successful?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well—

**JAMES GLEESON:** I know critically it was.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Critically it was and, you know, it was moderately successful. People were inclined to be frightened of them because they were too pretty. One man came to the first show, I remember, and we had a lot of the blossom pictures. John MacDonnell bought a number of them. That really carried that show because he bought some of the loveliest Bunny's as they appeared, you see. He happened to be in Sydney or he came down specially, I don't know, but he did buy. That was where he got what he used to call his greater and his lesser froth, two absolutely superb blossom pictures.

**JAMES GLEESON:** And that was the beginning of—

**TREANIA SMITH:** That was the beginning. A man came who was quite a collector, stood at the door and said, 'I don't like this, it's too pretty'. I said to him, 'You have no right to say that when you haven't even been inside the gallery'. I said. 'Until you've been there for half an hour, you can't very well say'.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No.

**TREANIA SMITH:** He did come in for half an hour and he did buy. His name was F.J. Wallace and he had some superb Bunny's in the end. He bought again and again after that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Really? Well, that became an established thing in Sydney, the Bunny shows at the Macquarie.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. Well, they were beautiful paintings. We didn't have that sort of painting going on at that time, I don't think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Very finished paintings.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That same year you showed Roland Wakelin, and he has a sort of longstanding connection with the Macquarie.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh yes, he had the very first show there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes. And didn't he have his last show there?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, he would have his last show and we've even had one since he died.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Jean Bellette I noticed showed that year, and Paul Haefliger. They must have just come back from Europe surely at that time.

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**TREANIA SMITH:** I don't know that they'd even gone.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, I think they had.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Had they, in 1938? No, I remember a show—

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, this was 1939.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Thirty-nine. Well, actually in 1937 or eight, while I was with John Young anyway—it might have been earlier, might have been '36—there was a group show of Adelaide Perry's pupils in which were pictures by Jean Bellette and Paul Haefliger and Kath Jones and all the small group that were quite a clever group really. But I don't know that they had. Perhaps they had been away and back, but I don't think they had at that stage.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, I seem to remember we acquired a painting of Paul's painted in France in '38.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Very like a Derain landscape?

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, it was like a Juan Gris. It was a still life with a violin, I think.

**TREANIA SMITH:** He gave me a little landscape when he was in his Derain mood.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh yes. Well, could we just switch off for a moment?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, Treania, it would take days to go through, year by year—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, it would, all those exhibitions.

**JAMES GLEESON:** All those exhibitions.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I don't know how many thousands there were.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Apart from Bunny and people like De Maistre and Roland Wakelin, Grace Cossington-Smith—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Thea Proctor.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Thea Proctor, one of the names that is irrevocably associated with Macquarie is Ian Fairweather.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, well, that was I think that much later, wasn't it?

**JAMES GLEESON:** It was. Yes. Was it in the fifties?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Can you find out just when the first—



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**TREANIA SMITH:** I'll just try and find out.

**JAMES GLEESON:** We'll switch off. Treania, how did you first come in contact with Fairweather? When was it?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, I didn't come in personal contact with him, although I saw him, when I went to have lunch with Lina Bryans and Jock Frater at their house in Heidelberg. Or it wasn't quite Heidleberg, somewhere near there. Ian Fairweather was living in the house. I had very much wanted to see some of his paintings and they said they'd see what they could do about it, because sometimes he got very exclusive and shut the door or wouldn't show them to anybody. Anyway, we had lunch and they told me at one stage that he'd gone up the passage to the kitchen. But as I was brought up on the bible stories, I didn't want to be like Lot's wife and turn into a pillar of salt and I didn't look. But immediately after that Lina Bryans said he'd put some paintings in her studio or one of the other studios opposite his room. So we walked down the passage and I'm quite sure that he walked down at the back of us. But he went into his room leaving the door ajar. I looked through these fabulous—they were all the Chinese ones you know. They were beautiful. Piles and piles. I wish to goodness I knew where they were now.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I would say there must have been hundreds of that beautiful period.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Goodness me. This was in 1947 when you were down there, was it?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Forty-six or '47. Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Forty-six it must have been.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Forty-six.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. You were arranging a show of Jock Frater's?

**TREANIA SMITH:** That's right, and Lina Bryans was to have a show shortly afterwards, I think. Anyway, I wanted to see both their work. Frater's I was cataloguing for his show which was coming on in '46.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's right.

**TREANIA SMITH:** So it was very thrilling to see all these things. I was just hoping that I was saying the right things and not going to finish a beautiful friendship with Mr Fairweather if I ever got the chance. Finally we went right through them and they were really superb. There were so many of them. I didn't see why he couldn't have a show. So when I came back to Sydney I wrote and said that Lucy Swanton and I would be very happy if he could give us a show. Well, we didn't hear anything, which wasn't surprising. But this was just about the time when Laurie Thomas was going over with those pictures to the Leicester.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh yes, yes.

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**TREANIA SMITH:** Fairweather himself, I think, went over to England at that time, because subsequently many years later I met his cousin, Mrs Griffiths.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh yes. She was the lady who was eventually murdered.

**TREANIA SMITH:** She was, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I remember that story. Ella Griffiths.

**TREANIA SMITH:** So she told me about it. Yes. I did see two were still there at the Leicester, I think, or something.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. This was the late forties sometime?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, this was when I was in England.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** The show was in the late forties, but I didn't go for 20 years after this.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, I see, and they still had two.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I just wanted to know about this. They still had two there. Then when Lucy was in England, or abroad anyway, I suppose it must have been in the very late forties, either '48 or '49, a letter came from Queensland, from North Queensland, from Ian Fairweather telling me that the wolf was howling at the door and he was sending down four or five paintings. We'd heard nothing from him before that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No.

**TREANIA SMITH:** So I rang Hal Missingham up, as I had no partner to chat to about it, you see. He said, well, he would have one and Dr Crookson would have one he was sure. But in the meantime I sent 10 pounds, which was all I could afford anyway at that time, up to keep the wolf from howling, and eventually all those pictures were sold and the money sent to him. From that time on we were in communication occasionally.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. Did you show those as an exhibition?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, I didn't.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You sold those privately.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I just wanted to sell them for him because he seemed to be needing money very urgently.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So I notice his name appears obvious in a list here, first show in 1950.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, well it might have been even 1949 when all this happened. But at least we were in communication from then on. I think we asked again for a show and got it, you see.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** So that that one in 1950 would be probably his first one-man show in Sydney?

**TREANIA SMITH:** First one-man show in Sydney, because he never really showed much even in Melbourne. I think he liked to show in London only.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Showed at the Leicester.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** And Sydney probably are the only two venues that he really did show.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, yes, he never showed in Australia at all, I don't think. I might be wrong in this because I don't know what happened in Melbourne. I really don't know prior to this. But I think we might have had the first Australian show.

**JAMES GLEESON:** From then on all his shows were at the Macquarie?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, they were, because you know he was a person who, if he trusted you, he never saw any reason to move.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Change, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I know other people propositioned him quite a lot. He was propositioned. But he never really felt that he wanted a change. He was quite happy. He didn't want any bother and he just didn't feel that it was necessary to change because we were handling the works reasonably well.

**JAMES GLEESON:** All your early dealings with him were by letter?

**TREANIA SMITH:** By letter. We never gave his address to anyone. We never went to see him ourselves, although Lucy came very near to it because when she was in Townsville once she wrote to him and she was going to meet him. But for some reason or other, I think perhaps a rainstorm or something that prevented it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did you never actually meet him?

**TREANIA SMITH:** I did, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh yes, I thought you did.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Eventually.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes. But that was years later, I suppose.

**TREANIA SMITH:** When everybody else was going up to see him I thought, well, why not me? You know. I mean, after all, every other gallery director in the whole of Australia had been up there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

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**TREANIA SMITH:** I never like to intrude.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No. Well, of course he valued his privacy.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, that's right. So I wrote and, well, I often went to Brisbane. I had a very great friend up there, who's now dead. I used to go up and see her. So I wrote to him and said I was coming up to Brisbane and, you know, if he'd like to see me, you know, I'd get him to write me a letter to this address.

**JAMES GLEESON:** And did he?

**TREANIA SMITH:** He did. The funny part, in another letter prior to that he said he'd been along and had a look. He'd evidently gone and cased out the joint where I was staying.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Really?

**TREANIA SMITH:** But I didn't see him. I didn't know at that time whether he was outside the gate or anywhere.

**JAMES GLEESON:** He never came down to Sydney when his exhibitions were on?

**TREANIA SMITH:** He did, but he didn't let us know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Now, he didn't come. Only once was he passing through Sydney, I think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Apparently it might have been a Saturday when we weren't in there. He saw one which he told us about.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh.

**TREANIA SMITH:** He never came down for the exhibitions.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no. It was probably by chance that he happened to be passing.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, and he was very anonymous. He never let them know who he was when he was in there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** How did you find him to deal with, an easy person?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, I think that this new book sort of gives a very good picture of the man. Some of the things are very inaccurate in that too.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Are they? I haven't read the book yet.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Haven't you?

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**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no.

**TREANIA SMITH:** But they're not bad. I mean, it merely is a couple of things that she writes about him with somebody who he was very fond of. Well, that was Ella Griffiths.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ah yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Nobody else. She got two women mixed up as though they were two women and there was only one woman.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Because she was the one who got murdered.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's right, yes. Ella Griffiths was his cousin, wasn't she?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, she was, and I think he had—they used to have awful rows, I think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did they? But he used to stay with her when he was in town.

**TREANIA SMITH:** He used to stay with her, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** A fantastic story, isn't it?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Treania, apart from the shows of fives which turned to sixes and eights, there were several other constant features running through the Macquarie years, like the Easter Show and the Christmas Show.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Christmas Show. Also we had a fifteen guineas. I think that might have been after Mary came in, I'm not sure.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So these were sort of annual features?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** As I remember it, those Easter shows and Christmas shows tended to be rather important shows.

**TREANIA SMITH:** They were a special, yes. They were, you know, the best work that anyone had at that particular moment. So they were sort of rather special shows. Particularly the Easter one, I think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. I seem to remember that as being, you know, very much a show case for all—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. Well, even the Christmas Show was never a bargain show.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No.

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**TREANIA SMITH:** It was always the best works. But the Easter one I think just had the slight edge on the Christmas one sometimes, because some very beautiful work came in around about that time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** There's just so much to talk about. I notice that in 1951 you had an exhibition of abstract compositions by Balson, Crowley, Hinder, Klippel, Lewers, Morris, Salisbury. This must have been the first of its kind.

**TREANIA SMITH:** The very first I think of any abstract. Klippel's were sculptures.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** They were the first abstract. If I remember them rightly they were long sort of knitting needles with balls on them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's right. Wooden construction, very delicate and fragile and I think most of them are destroyed now.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Are they? What a pity.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Because they were all so fragile.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Then again I think in 1954 you had another show.

**TREANIA SMITH:** We had regular shows of Balson, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes, I remember that.

**TREANIA SMITH:** His little grand-daughter used to come in with a bunch of flowers but nobody paid any attention to Balson.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, he had to die before people began to take an interest in him.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** They were beautiful shows, really beautiful.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You were the first to give John Olsen a show, I think, if I remember correctly.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. The *Bicycle boys* was in that, wasn't it?

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's right; now in our collection in Canberra.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Very famous, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. It made something of a sensation, didn't it?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** The following year, '56 I think was, was it then Direction One?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. Now, that was organised by Paul, I think, wasn't it? Paul Haefliger didn't he (inaudible) Direction One.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, I thought it was John Olsen.

**TREANIA SMITH:** It was Olsen and Passmore and—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, Passmore was in it. Klippel, Eric Smith. Bill Rose?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Bill Rose, yes; about seven of them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, which is considered to be a landmark now.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I had an idea at the back of this grouping, it wasn't that Paul had any work in there, but I think that he might have discussed it with them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I thought he had something to do with the formation of that little group.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, he may very well because he was very close to Balson.

**TREANIA SMITH:** And also to Passmore.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's right. Yes, yes. They were close friends.

**TREANIA SMITH:** A funny story about that show. One day when we were just getting ready to put it up, you see—I mean, it wasn't very long before it was going to be on—there was a delegation waiting. What year was it?

**JAMES GLEESON:** I can check. I think it was 1957 or '56.

**TREANIA SMITH:** It was after Lucy went out and Mary was a partner then. Is that right?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Fifty-six. Yes. Mary came in in 1956.

**TREANIA SMITH:** At the beginning or the end?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, it just says here, 1956 at the beginning, Treania Smith and Mary Killen Turner.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, I have an idea it was Mary who was there. Anyway, the delegation waited upon us, and said that Passmore was doing a large picture that wouldn't go in our door.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh.

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**TREANIA SMITH:** So they'd have to have the show somewhere else or something. You know, or they couldn't have it; I don't know what it was all about. But anyway there was a great drama going on. So I said, 'Well, this is a fairly large door. Where is he painting the picture?'. It was a bigger than ordinary door, the gallery door there. 'Oh, he's painting it in is flat'. Well I said, 'How's he going to get it out of the flat then?'. They hadn't thought of that. Anyway, it did all come to the gallery. The big picture probably had to be removed in sections—I wouldn't know—to get it out of the flat and into us.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I remember that very big one, his first completely abstract painting.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. Well, they were all abstract at that time. It was what led up to the ones that became known as the Helena Rubenstein ones, wasn't it?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes. That's right.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Because they were quite abstract compositions.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That was in '56.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Klippel, Olsen, Passmore, Rose and Eric Smith.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Mm. Because Eric Smith had his first exhibitions with us and some of those lovely blue kitchen things, kitchen still lifes, that I remember very much, and others. The fish.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, I remember that very well.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So Lucy retired from the partnership in the end of 1956, was it? No, '55, because here we have Mary coming in—

**TREANIA SMITH:** I expect that's right. We had to check the other. I suppose I should check it. But I think the going out and the coming in was Christmas time at that time. So probably that's accurate.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Good.

**TREANIA SMITH:** But the previous one, you see, was not at Christmas. Mary may have thought it was at Christmas because that's why she put it in. She came in at that time. But Lucy and I evidently went in in September when you check the records.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Good.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Mary and I painted out the entire Macquarie Galleries.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This was when it was still in Bligh Street?



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**TREANIA SMITH:** While it was in Bligh Street. Between Christmas and opening in January, or whenever it was.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You had a backroom show as a first show?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** When was it that you moved to King Street? What year? We can look it up.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Can we look it up? I think that that was after our 40th anniversary, so we've been there about 12 or 13 years now.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's the move to the new premises.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. It took us three months in order to get permission from the council, was the main thing that we had to get there to alter the place.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, the old site had been under threat for some time, I remember.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, it had. But only just vaguely under threat, and then we were really we got the definite notice because they were going to build that huge insurance office that's there now.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. Did it take you long to find new premises?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, yes, it took far too long really I think to get the idea, but we considered various places. One up in Kings Cross and others, but I was always hoping that we might settle in the city because we'd been known as a city gallery.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, of course.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I know a lot of people think we should all be up in Paddington so that they can move freely between one and the other. But Macquarie was known as a Sydney gallery for so long.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** This had been an old warehouse and I think it was some friend of Mary's who knew it was going to be rented. We went and had a look at it. It's double the size of the old Macquarie, 2,000 square feet, with endless possibilities and it had those lovely windows which are now shown since we've got rid of the curtains and have the blinds instead. They were beautiful, like studio windows. That was a feature that I thought we should be thrilled about.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It gave you much more storage space, if I remember.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh yes, oh yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The old Macquarie was terribly cramped.

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**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, old Macquarie was really frightening. If you wanted to get anything out of a cupboard, you needed about three weeks notice, so that you could move everything else.

**JAMES GLEESON:** You had to pull the whole thing out. So it must have been like moving—

**TREANIA SMITH:** You remember the elephant house, do you?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Everybody called it that. We had to put an enormous cupboard because people were painting so much bigger, you see.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** None of the pictures would go into the cupboards, and they were all leaning against them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, by that the sixties the trend for huge scale—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh, I know, and we tried very hard to get other storage space in that building. We couldn't get it. It was only a small building. It was the first block of flats in Sydney, you know, Strathkyle.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was it? I didn't know that it was a block of flats.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I think that MacGregor had a flat there. I'm not sure.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did you find that there was a different clientele when you moved to King Street? Because the old Macquarie was in the heart of the sort of —

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, we missed the club land, you see.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Because we used to be opposite the Union Club.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The Sydney Club was around the corner.

**TREANIA SMITH:** The Australian was just around the corner. But they've all been rebuilt now. But the New South Wales was next to us and it's never been rebuilt. But it's not a club any more, I don't think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Isn't it?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, because they joined with the Australian.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** But the Union Club, we were opposite there with that lovely garden and the Union Club steps and everything looking very elegant.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Of course, a beautiful old building.

**TREANIA SMITH:** All the people going to lunch and coming out from lunch used to patter across and see us. It was very good. All the club men were in and out of the place.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's the Wentworth Hotel now, is it?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. It was a car park for a long time, if you remember.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, I remember that. A very beautiful old building.

**TREANIA SMITH:** It was just a car park for a long time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, that's right.

**TREANIA SMITH:** After they pulled it down.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So it would be a different clientele now I suppose from the—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, I don't suppose we get the club men. I don't know what the club men are doing these days. But at least the same people appear in the books and the records all through the years, but of course also a lot of different ones.

**JAMES GLEESON:** When did you finally decide to leave the gallery at least as a full time partner?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, I think I was coming up for my 70th birthday. That was one thing. Never talked about age until after I got to 70, then I started boasting about it. So people wondered why I'd left and I said, 'Well, you know, after all I am 70' and they'd all fall about in heaps while I said it. That was one reason, and also because Eileen Chanin had come in to the gallery. She'd worked with us for a while. She's very good and we both thought that she would make a very good partner material. Penny Meagher was already there and Penny wanted to leave. Eileen then had a period when she was trying to earn more money at doing something else. We were just coasting along. But she missed it and wanted to be a part of it again and came in again. It was then that Mary decided that she would like to have Eileen as a partner and sold me the idea of getting out over a period of five years, which I did.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now you're a consultant?

**TREANIA SMITH:** I've been a consultant ever since I really got properly out. I don't partake of the profits now, but I am there to give advice.

**JAMES GLEESON:** There to give advice.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Now, one of the things the Macquarie did I remember was to organise shows to go to other cities.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh yes, we did. That was Lucy and myself.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** That goes back quite a while.

**TREANIA SMITH:** It goes back a long time because there weren't many galleries in Queensland or South Australia. It's hard to imagine that there weren't, but there weren't.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No. Well, I remember in the fifties—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Even in Melbourne they were dying to see Sydney work. So Lucy and I formed the habit of taking an exhibition to one of these places every so often.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. Well, it was the first beginnings I think of this interchange between the cities in Australia, because it had been very parochial up till that time.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, Melbourne people were always moaning on that they never got a chance at the Sydney pictures because they were never shown in Melbourne. Brisbane people at that time didn't even get shown anything, you know. But when they came down on holidays they would come into the Macquarie. I think because I'm a Queenslander born, I took the Brisbane ones; Lucy took the Melbourne ones and we shared the South Australian ones, the Adelaide ones together.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. Of course, you've always been bringing art and artists from other states into the Macquarie.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, that's right.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Like Nolan and Fairweather and Frater.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. Well, I'll tell you that really they began to all congregate in Sydney because Sydney was—the art capital, I think, changes with generations.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** It had been Melbourne.

**JAMES GLEESON:** This was, what, the forties?

**TREANIA SMITH:** After the war it began to be Sydney because everybody was here. There was Dobell and Drysdale. Nolan came after the others, he came to live here. It was a very lively place, and that's why all the artists wanted to get here. I remember Jeff Smart came to Sydney when he was having his 30th birthday, took me out to lunch. Can I tell you this story?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, please.

**TREANIA SMITH:** We'd evidently had a show down in Adelaide which Lucy had taken down there. Jeff, after this, came up to Sydney and rang me up and said would I come to lunch. I said, 'Oh, I think you must mean my partner because she's the one that you met in Adelaide'. He said, 'No, you wrote me the kind letter'. So I said, 'Oh well, you know, if it's me you want, okay'. So he came down

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to the gallery, picked me up and we walked down the street and he said, 'Now, I asked Nora Heysen where to take you for lunch because I very much want to show at the Macquarie Galleries'. So I said, 'Jeff, before we go another step further, it won't make the least difference where we have lunch. It's the paintings that will matter'.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Of course.

**TREANIA SMITH:** 'Do you want me to go back?' and he said 'No'. We've been friends ever since.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Another star (inaudible).

**TREANIA SMITH:** He didn't have a show, I might say, for three years. He wasn't ready then. I told him so. He wasn't really, he hadn't finished developing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Three years later he did. Not in Lucy's time, but in Mary's.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Mary's time..

**TREANIA SMITH:** So it was probably just before Lucy got out and Mary came in that this episode took place.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I know another name that's always been, you know, closely associated with the Macquarie is Justin O'Brien.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. Oh, Justin, that was a fascinating story. That was Lucy and myself. After the war finished in Europe and a year before it finished out here, VE Day had happened and the prisoners were coming back. Justin had been a prisoner in Poland.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's right.

**TREANIA SMITH:** He walked in with his friend Jesse Martin, J-E-S-S-E.

**JAMES GLEESON:** He'd also been a prisoner in the same—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's right.

**TREANIA SMITH:** He was a man who'd read a lot. Although he was not a natural painter, I don't think—

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no, I would agree. I remember his work.

**TREANIA SMITH:** And he had very good work. But at that time I was sure that Justin was the natural painter of the two.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

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**TREANIA SMITH:** Anyway, we saw all this and it was exciting. I know that we rustled up some frames from the back room, Lucy and myself, and we had a space and we put it on within a few weeks of them coming in.

**JAMES GLEESON:** So was this while the Japanese war was still on?

**TREANIA SMITH:** The Japanese war was still on because Justin, he was still in the army and he went down to Victoria where he was attached to some hospital or something down there, I think.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I remember all Donald Friend's early exhibitions were at the Macquarie.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh well, that was earlier again, because all through the war we really looked after his affairs for him. More or less.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I mean, if we sold anything we had to just make our own arrangements and pay it to whoever he told us to pay it to and that sort of thing. So we were busy with these artists who were away.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Justin had been a constant exhibitor?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Justin, I'd never seen his work until he came back from the war. I don't really think that he'd done very much. He was teaching. But the meeting with Jesse Martin, who was a different kind of person, gave him a new slant on everything. The fact that he was incarcerated there and there was only his own face to paint, he'd put on hats, he'd done all sorts of variations on a theme. That was Justin O'Brien's face. The whole show was that except for one or two of the other prisoners, rather more factual paintings. They were very factual those, but the ones of O'Brien were as fancy as anything and they were the beginning of his Byzantium period.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes, I remember that. Treania, apart from the shows you took to other cities, you opened the branch in Canberra of Macquarie Galleries.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. Well, we used to take exhibitions up to Canberra.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Before you actually—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Before we ever got there. Then when Anna went to live in Canberra—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Anna Simons.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Anna Simons, yes. She thought she'd like to run more regular exhibitions. So we thought about premises, Mary and I. I think it was Mary at that time. Yes, Mary and I went up and looked at premises, but it's very hard to rent a premise in Canberra and we didn't have the money to buy then. So it started off with we rented for three days or four days or five days, I've forgotten which, that new complex that they built up there with the art gallery.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** The theatre.

**TREANIA SMITH:** The Theatre Centre Art Gallery.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's right.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Our first show was there. Anna then ran the back room from her house.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** But she really didn't enjoy it as much because she had a small house and it meant that it was never private.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No.

**TREANIA SMITH:** So when she got the chance of buying a bigger one, we gave her some bridging finance and things like that. By that time we'd sort of got more of a chance of doing it. She then turned the front of that place into a gallery and lived in the other part. It was big enough to do that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was that the first fully professional gallery in Canberra?

**TREANIA SMITH:** I think it might have been. Gallery A or somebody also had—we had an exhibition in a hotel or something, or they had. I've forgotten. We used to have exhibitions up there, and this other gallery did have some of them, and I think it was Gallery A. But they didn't really—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Carry it on.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Carry it on. Because I thought it was dangerous; they were having them in completely open foyers in hotels and things, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** You should be able to shut an art gallery up.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Certainly need to nowadays, anyway. Even in those days I felt you should be able to lock the door.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** That's why we wanted the premises and we couldn't afford to take this for more than four days, four or five days. So people had to rush in and look at shows while they were on, yes. But Anna had the pictures later and, you know, if they missed out they could go and see her. She was a permanent manager, but the shows had to be fleeting. Once we had Mary, Mary took it up. I went with her. We both went for the beginning of it, I think. We had one of those Nissan Huts that the Art Society had and we had a show in there once before Anna ever went to Canberra.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. Was that the first show you ever had there?

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**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. I think we might have even had two of those, I'm not sure about that. They were like the interstate ones, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** They were just here today and gone tomorrow. No permanent thing about it.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no. But then the Macquarie in Canberra became quite a feature.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh, it did, yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Was it Anna's ill health that brought—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh, partly that, I think, but probably partly a disagreement on the part of the management, I suppose. Anna wanted out and wanted to do it herself.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see. So she continued a gallery for a while, but Macquarie moved to another site?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. Well, we felt that because it was our jubilee year, we didn't want to lose the name of Macquarie in Canberra. So the reason for that was because Eileen by that time was pushing me to see why would we get out in jubilee year, you see.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** So I thought really fair enough. I was really getting to the stage when I thought, oh well, you know, it doesn't matter. You know, I'm getting too old. However, when I move I move even if I'm old. So then Mary and I had to rush up there and try and find premises, which we did. She and I had to buy it. We managed to do that and we had an architect alter it, and it's a very nice gallery.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It is, it is.

**TREANIA SMITH:** That's the one that Mary has now taken over. Even my share, I think she's taken over my share this month of the money that I had in the building.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I see.

**TREANIA SMITH:** It's better that way because I'm a consultant down here and it's better that I just have a clean break there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** The Macquarie name isn't going to continue with it?

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, it can't really. It belonged to the gallery itself that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, I see, yes.



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**TREANIA SMITH:** It's something that you've always got to retain. You might want it. I mean, who knows how long the Macquarie's going to last. It's lasted a fair time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** It has.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Somebody might want to start it up there again some time.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Jean Campbell?

**TREANIA SMITH:** She became the first manager.

**JAMES GLEESON:** That's right.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I rang Jean because I knew she was going into a house down here in Sydney, and I thought she's got a daughter in Canberra that somebody might have an idea of who would like to manage. Because Jean used to go up there a lot and knew Canberra fairly well. She said, 'I wish I'd known before I moved because I would have done it'. 'Well' I said, 'For heaven's sake, you'd be ideal'.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, it's a long association with the Macquarie.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. I said, 'Think about it', which she did. She stayed there until her daughter was posted, her daughter's husband was posted abroad again and I don't think she wanted to be there by herself really. She also had some writing she wanted to be doing. She stayed for two years, I think, and gave us a good start.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, Treania, looking back over that 54 years now at the Macquarie, I think there's hardly an important artist that hasn't shown at the Macquarie or been introduced to the public through the Macquarie.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. Well, even John Young, you know, he used to have Gruners and Streetons or Hilders.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I know. Yes, and Bertram MacKenna.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, all these things yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** She had a fascinating first five years there because they were doing very well, I think. She had all the big shots of the time. Not that I ever thought of doing that period at all.

**JAMES GLEESON:** But then the Depression came and knocked the bottom out of the art world.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Treania, are there any artists that you feel very largely responsible for introducing to the art world. Any particular ones that you feel—

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**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, there are some very big names who had their first shows with us. I regret that they felt they had to move anywhere else. But I'm very proud that we had their first shows, and their second shows sometimes. In fact, until they became successful, because that's been the policy of the gallery. John Young gave me shows when nobody had heard of me and so I really feel that is one of the things that the gallery had to do. We are still hoping to go on doing that.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, you still do. You do a show every year.

**TREANIA SMITH:** But it's not so necessary now. In those days there was nowhere; nobody else that would take them. Not a soul would have a bet on some unknown one, you know, so that the Macquarie really got the lot.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** And very grateful really, in a way, although sometimes it didn't bring in any money. That was beside the point. I mean, you had to pick up on the roundabouts.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Some were good sellers and others were not.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Some were difficult. What always amazes me—

**TREANIA SMITH:** Some people didn't sell for years, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I know. What always astonishes me looking back is how successful Fairweather was when his pictures are not really easy pictures.

**TREANIA SMITH:** No, he had only a small following, you know, but they were very keen.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Of course, in the early days they weren't very expensive either.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, that's true.

**TREANIA SMITH:** But the people who bought Fairweather were really in the vanguard. There weren't that many of them, but at least they were very keen and even Melbourne used to come over for his shows. You know, people from Melbourne and all that sort of thing because they never saw them there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no.

**TREANIA SMITH:** So we had a number of people to draw on from other states.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Do you feel that criticism over all that period has been helpful?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, I think that Paul Haefliger did a marvellous job.

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**JAMES GLEESON:** He introduced an absolute new note with his continental background.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, he did. But earlier than that again, I must give tribute to Wilkinson.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, Ken Wilkinson.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Ken Wilkinson was marvellous really for Wakelin and Grace Cossington-Smith and people like that, that people were inclined to very quickly shuffle out of their minds.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I always found him to have a very open mind about art.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. He wasn't a strong man but he was a very forthright critic and would really battle for people.

**JAMES GLEESON:** He had an open mind because way back—

**TREANIA SMITH:** He opened my first show.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Did he?

**TREANIA SMITH:** Everyone thought I'd been very clever. I didn't realise, because I was quite naive about it, you know, I didn't realise that it was a good idea or a bad idea, but still.

**JAMES GLEESON:** I know in 1939 when surrealism was hardly heard of, he asked me to write an article for *Art in Australia* which he was then directing.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes, that's right. Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Which showed that he really did have an open mind.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh yes, he was. He was the only person at that time, because otherwise other painters we had—Howard, Howard—

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ashton.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Ashton. Heavens, you know, he'd wipe the floor with most of the people that Ken Wilkinson liked.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** So they would have had a hard job. J.S. MacDonald and Howard Ashton were all rather sort of dyspeptic critics, not very helpful.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Do you see over that long period of time any outstanding changes? Obviously the biggest one probably is the spread of interest in art. When I remember the Macquarie at the beginning, there were perhaps only two other galleries in the cities. The Grosvenor, that used to operate.

**TREANIA SMITH:** The Grosvenor and the Macquarie. Then, of course, David Jones had a gallery open permanently for a while, didn't it?

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**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, but there wasn't the interest.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Hordern Brothers had a gallery but never used it as such. You know, only occasional exhibitions there.

**JAMES GLEESON:** But now there are truly dozens of galleries.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, you see, it was when money came into it, which of course doesn't please me much. That's not the sort of thing I really—

**JAMES GLEESON:** No.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I think it's awfully nice for the artists that they're getting so much money, but on the other hand it has made a sort of difficult dog eat dog atmosphere now.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes. It always seems to me that one of the turning points was that Norman Schureck sale of Dobell's. You remember up to that time Dobell's pictures had sold for 15, 20 guineas, I think.

**TREANIA SMITH:** You know why? That man from Queensland, what was his name?

**JAMES GLEESON:** Ruben, Major Reuben.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Major Reuben. I was going to say he was a colonel but he was a Major Ruben. No, he bid for everything. He was just absolutely with limitless money, was bidding for everything, and the only time that anyone else got in was when he went to the lavatory. Or so I understand.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, I would believe that.

**TREANIA SMITH:** If he had to leave the room for a minute, it made everybody chirp up and see if they could get a picture.

**JAMES GLEESON:** But that auction, I think, for the first time made people realise that art was a financial—

**TREANIA SMITH:** It was Major Reuben that did it, I think, rather than the Schureck pictures because, after all, the Schureck pictures, it was a huge collection.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Oh, it was, and very varied.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Mary and I had to do the valuations. We were so far out after Major Reuben got going that it's just not funny. But, on the other hand, it was full of Turner's that I felt very questionable.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, I dare say.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I said to Hal Missingham once, you know, 'To me they're not right ones but how do you value those when they're not right ones?'. You know, it's very difficult, isn't it?

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**JAMES GLEESON:** It was the Australian market that really leapt ahead after that sale, so that now the market is comparatively buoyant compared to the old days.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh yes, it is. Even in the middle of the sort of hard times or something. They were investing, you see.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Well, we had a sort of buoyant time during the war when people were also investing, I think. Or they had money and they wanted to put it into something. The other things weren't available. It was very good for us. We began to sort of boom then. Of course, what really got the Drysdale paintings up was the time when he did that work for one of the newspapers. Was it *The Sydney Morning Herald*?

**JAMES GLEESON:** The drought series.

**TREANIA SMITH:** The drought series. Every newspaper man in the whole of Australia was up here buying, and vying with one another to get them, and the prices went rocketing. Lucy just would think of a number and, you know, double it and that would be it. It seemed to me I was frightened because I'd never seen such prices. I let her do all that because, you know, I just didn't have any idea of pricing.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, it's very difficult to put value on (inaudible).

**TREANIA SMITH:** I've never been able to do that. That's the awful part. You know, I think, how do you put value on a thing?

**JAMES GLEESON:** I know. Well, the way works of art change hands—

**TREANIA SMITH:** It's only what somebody will give you for it, you know.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Think of Fairweather's *Monastery* and the price that we paid for it compared to the price you sold it for originally.

**TREANIA SMITH:** That's right. Look at my little eight guinea—well, it's not in this room, it's up in my bedroom—my little eight guinea Lloyd Rees which is the most lovely picture of red geraniums in a green ginger jar. It's a rare one because he never painted red much.

**JAMES GLEESON:** No, no, and not many still lives.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I know when we were hanging it, I said to John Young, 'I'm absolutely mad about this, you see, I've never seen him paint red before'. He said, 'Well, people who like pictures ought to have them'. So he wrote on the back of it, 'Sold'. I said, 'Oh, I couldn't afford it', you know, and he said, 'Rubbish. Pay it off'. So I paid it off at five bob a week.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, Treania, I think that's covered it very well, but one thing I would like to ask you. If your book on Macquarie is available, if we could borrow it to have a photocopy made of it for our—

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**TREANIA SMITH:** I see no reason why not, except that it's rather horrifying. The nearer it got to the present the more tra-la it got. That was why I couldn't write it, you see. You know, I was terrified and there were millions and millions of stories that should have gone into it but I'm terrified to say them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, because of the people still living.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes.

**TREANIA SMITH:** So it's a pity that I don't record some of those sometime so that they can be kept on ice.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, certainly we should have a record of what is in that book because it is very important for us to have as broad and as detailed an archive as possible.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Yes. Well, I suppose the bare bones are all there, you know. But, as I say, the early part of it turned out reasonable, but the nearer it got to the present—

**JAMES GLEESON:** The more cautious you had to be.

**TREANIA SMITH:** Oh, dear. I realised it myself. I couldn't stop myself from being just tra-la.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Well, what you should do is to put onto tape the stories you want to.

**TREANIA SMITH:** I should.

**JAMES GLEESON:** And put a moratorium on them that they can't be used for public for 25 years.

**TREANIA SMITH:** That is really what I'd like to do because there are hundreds of amusing stories and very intimate stories that should be spoken of, I think, because they would make an interesting book. But I can't tape myself because I always have to be talking to somebody before I even remember them.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Yes, yes. Well, we've got a date.

**TREANIA SMITH:** All right.

**JAMES GLEESON:** Thank you very much, Treania.