

Tuesday 4 December 2012

Melbourne's favourite transport icon takes centre stage



One of Melbourne's most famous icons, the tram, will take centre stage in a new exhibition opening this December, exploring the history and style of our favourite mode of transport.

Trams: Moving Pictures will feature historic photographs and footage including a documentary of a cable tram rattling through Melbourne in 1910, alongside memorabilia such as conductors' bags and uniforms.

Curator, Kate Luciano said the exhibition provided a fascinating insight into Melbourne's tram history, dating back to the 1880s.

"Visitors will be taken on a journey from horse drawn and cable trams, through to the W-class electric trams introduced in the 1920s, to more current developments of this iconic mode of transport."

A highlight of the exhibition will be a series of images of trams that were painted between 1978 and 1993 by a range of contemporary artists such as Howard Arkley, Mirka Mora, Michael Leunig, Reg Mombassa and others. The *Transporting Art Project* was funded by the Victorian Ministry for the Arts and a number of sponsors and featured 36 painted W-class trams.

"What ensued was an unprecedented experience in Australian contemporary art which generated world-wide interest. The art trams changed the way the city saw its public transport. If people weren't rattling along inside the artwork of the W-class trams, they were driving beside it or admiring the vibrant moving artistic works on Melbourne's streets," said Ms Luciano.

Premier and Minister for the Arts Ted Baillieu said the widely lauded *Transporting Art Project* was one of the early initiatives of the Victorian Ministry for the Arts - now known as Arts Victoria - which celebrates its 40th anniversary this month.

"*Transporting Art* commissioned some of the state's best-known artists to transform the iconic Melbourne trams into mobile art works – brightening up the city and bringing contemporary art to a wide new audience," Mr Baillieu said.

"It was a key, and hugely popular, program of the fledgling Arts Ministry, one that promoted art and creativity as part of the fabric of everyday life in this state.

"It is wonderful that this exhibition will showcase and celebrate this landmark project during Arts Victoria's 40th anniversary year," Mr Baillieu said.

The majority of works on display are from the collection of Public Record Office Victoria along with a number of loaned items.

Director and Keeper of Public Records, Justine Heazlewood, said it was a great coup to showcase such an array of tram-related records from Public Record Office Victoria's collection in an exhibition for everyone to enjoy.

"By presenting the historic images alongside the more contemporary documentation of the art trams, we can see the growth of Melbourne's favourite icon and understand why our trams have become such a hit for international and interstate visitors," said Ms Heazlewood.

Trams: Moving Pictures is on display at the Old Treasury Building from Monday 17 December 2012 to August 2013. Open Sunday to Friday, 10–4pm. Free entry. Visit www.oldtreasurybuilding.org.au.

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