

# Biography

**1914** Max Rupert Angus born 30 October in Hobart. First of three sons (the other two being Donald Leslie and Trevor Brian) of William Hill Angus, a house painter/decorator and amateur musician and Violet Angus née McPherson. Max's first drawings were on remnants of wallpaper his father brought home from work and on the back of discarded sheets of music. The family lived at Battery Point.

Attended Albuera Street primary school. Then the junior school of the Hobart Technical College where, at about age 12, he was invited to join the senior student art class in carving and painting instead of doing carpentry and metalwork.

**1928** Began working for J Barry Laurance, a commercial artist, doing lettering, working on various display materials and newspaper illustrations.

**1929** Lost his job at Laurance's due to the Depression and was apprenticed as a sign writer to the firm of J J Harrington. There learned all about the grinding of paints and gilding and everything to do with large poster and sign work as well as with advertisement and brochure design. Showcard and other one-stroke work led him to invent new free-hand brush styles. These were partially inspired by the Chinese calligraphy he had first

observed in the markings done at the Chinese laundry where his father had his shirt collars starched. Oriental calligraphy was to remain a strong interest, and to influence his later watercolours.

**1931** Began studying at evening classes at the Hobart Technical College under Lucien Dechaineux, Mildred Lovett, Amie Kingston and Madge Walker, after the first term on a scholarship.

**1934** Finished his 5 year apprenticeship but remained with J J Harrington until 1938. By 1936 had also learned to play the cornet and, with his brother Don on trombone, was playing after work three to four times a week in a ten piece dance orchestra at the Belvedere in Hobart to raise money to go to Melbourne.

**1938** Moved to Melbourne and worked as a freelance graphic designer. Set up a commercial art studio with brother Don. When Don enlisted in 1939 Max continued to run the business until he was called up in 1942 (after Japan entered the war). Melbourne afforded him his first view of a collection of Chinese art, the Kent collection at the National Gallery of Victoria.

**1940** Married Thedda Belinda Corrigan in Hobart.

**1941** The couple's first and only child, Peter William Lawrence, was born in Melbourne.

**1942–1945** In the army. Worked as a draftsman in the intelligence section at Land Headquarters in Melbourne under the command of General Thomas Blamey. When Headquarters were moved to Brisbane, Max set up a drafting room at the commandeered University of Queensland. Provided daily maps and illustrated secret weekly intelligence reviews of Allied and enemy activities in the Southwest Pacific. After work drew pencil portraits of his colleagues and on his days off took daytrips with a friend, George Young, to Coolangatta in order to sketch the landscape in watercolour. Also participated in sketching sessions at the Brisbane studio of Melbourne artist Caroline Barker where he met many like-minded aspiring American artists.

**1943** Was transferred to Indooroopilly to the Far Eastern Liaison Office (a military propaganda section of the Allied Intelligence Bureau) where he produced illustrated propaganda leaflets for distribution within the whole South Pacific area. His colleagues were three Japanese prisoners and particularly one of them, Riichi Inagaki, became a good

friend. Their interactions may well have confirmed the artist's initial insights into an oriental way of looking at writing and painting.

**1946** Returned to Hobart shortly after his November 1945 discharge with the aim of concentrating on painting the Tasmanian landscape rather than working in commercial art.

**1946–1947** First one man watercolour exhibition at Sedon Galleries, Melbourne, followed the next year by a show at Shillidays Emporium, Mildura, and a further show at John Martin's Art Gallery, Adelaide. While there, Ivor Hele whom Max had met in Brisbane during the war, suggested he look into courses under the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Training Scheme for returned soldiers (CRTS).

**1948–1950** Studied under Jack Carington Smith for a Diploma of Fine Art at the Hobart Technical College under the CRTS. Alan McIntyre and Alan Frost were fellow students. All three were exempted from their first year of study due to their previous art experience. The course consisted of life drawing, painting in oils, art history, anatomy and mural painting.

**1948** Along with Alan McIntyre was asked by artist Tasman Fehlberg

(appointed by the ABC to take charge of radio broadcasts for primary schools in Tasmania) to write and/or present a series of radio talks for his 'Art for Schools' program. The program ran until 1957.

**1950–1958** and irregularly thereafter through the 1970s, did ABC radio art reviews, sometimes as brief as two minutes, on a program called 'Good, Bad and Indifferent'. Alan McIntyre and Leslie Greener were fellow reviewers.

**1950** Made a painting trip with Stephen Walker to Boat Harbour and Stanley. The artists had first met at an evening sketch class at Jo Lobascher's studio in Melbourne in 1946, and Walker had subsequently come to Tasmania to study under Carington Smith.

**1950** onward supported his family by a variety of commercial work designing labels, brochures, catalogues, letterheads, Christmas cards etc for a number of agencies such as the Health and Tourism Departments and private companies such as Robert Nettlefold and Motors Pty Ltd, Cadbury's, J Walch & Sons, and Cox Kay Pty Ltd.

**1951** With weekend assistance from his uncle, began building his own house and studio.

**1952** Elected President of the Art Society of Tasmania which he had first joined in 1948. He is a life member.

**1953** Elected for three years as representative for the 'pictorial and sculptural arts' to the Council of the National Theatre and Fine Arts Society.

**1953** Made his first visit to Lake Pedder flown in by Lloyd Jones, landscape photographer, flying instructor and manager of the Aeroclub of Southern Tasmania, who throughout the 1950s regularly took artists on scenery and painting trips to otherwise hard to access areas. Harry Buckie was also on the trip.

**1954** Had his first one man show in Hobart, in the foyer of the Adult Education Board's office (opposite the GPO), an exhibition of watercolours produced while camped at Lake Pedder. In the same year began painting stage sets for a number of the operas produced at the Theatre Royal by the National Theatre and Fine Arts Society. Produced sets for *Yeoman of the Guard* (1954); *The Bartered Bride* (1954); *Die Fledermaus* (1955); *La Boheme* (1955); *The Mikado* (1956); *Madam Butterfly* (1958 and 1965); and did publicity for others.

**1954** Appointed to the State Arts Advisory Board and, for the State Government's Technical Education Branch, as outside assessor of the annual examination of Certificate and Fine Art Diploma students at both the Hobart and Launceston Technical Colleges. At the time, the art departments were headed respectively by Jack Carington Smith and Vern Hodgman. Max remained an assessor until 1968.

**1955** Appointed a member of the Art Committee of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery charged with recommending art purchases for the collection. Max served until 1966. Also in 1955 received a mural commission, for Richardson's butcher shop (in the old Bidecove's lane), picturing the Meat Industries and measuring ca 52 x 5 feet, the largest mural Max was ever to produce. There were many subsequent mural commissions including A G Webster's Travel Department (1956); the Domino Restaurant (1956); the Marine Board (1957); the Children's Ward of St John's Hospital and the Queen Alexandra Hospital (both 1959). Most of them are now destroyed. Exceptions are the HEC mural at Tarraleah (1954);

the Gaslighter Restaurant mural (1969/70) and the 1976 commissioned mural for Tiagarra, the Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Museum in Devonport.

**1956–1972** Spent six months of each year working for the ABC designing and illustrating junior and senior primary school handbooks to accompany children's educational radio broadcasts on a multitude of subjects. Also did book illustration such as James Poynter's children's book *The Search in Summer* 1965 and Joan Woodberry's *Ash Tuesday* 1968. The colour work in these books, as well as the above-mentioned handbooks, arose from the modernist flat patterning colour techniques the artist, influenced by Matisse, had developed during the design of apple crate labels. The best example is the Henry Jones & Co 'Rooster' brand label of 1952, for the Cox Kay Pty Ltd printing company. What time remained after all this was spent painting, mostly watercolour landscapes.

**1959** Made a painting trip with Stephen Walker to the West Coast on commission from the Electrolytic Zinc Company.

**1959** With Roy Cox founded the Sunday Group of watercolour painters (had to

be on Sunday as otherwise people were working) soon joined by Harry Buckie and in 1961 by Patricia Giles. John Eldershaw, who had moved to Sydney, painted with them during summers. The group continues to this day and over the years has included Elspeth Vaughan, Greg Ramsay, Ray Barnes, occasionally the artist's brothers Don and Trevor Angus, and Graeme Salmon and Joan Buckie when visiting respectively from England and Canberra. Today the group is made up of Max Angus, Patricia Giles, John Traynor, Brian and Jenny Young, Elspeth Vaughan and Mollie Maxwell.

**1960** Again at the instigation of Tasman Fehlberg, designed a one-off experimental art program for ABC black-and-white TV in which he compared abstract and realist works.

**1962** Won the Minnie Crouch Prize for watercolour (Ballarat).

**1963** Worked on three television programs for the ABC on early Tasmanian painters Thomas Bock, Thomas Griffiths Wainwright and John Glover.

**1964** Exhibited his first paintings of bushfires, which would henceforth remain one of his recurring motifs.

**1965** Became a member of the Australian Watercolour Institute based in Sydney. Over time the Institute has published a number of Max's writings on watercolour in their broadsheets.

**Late 60s** Began to meet with Patricia Giles and Molly Stephens at each others' studios on Friday nights to paint mainly still-life. When Molly died in 1970 the artists continued to meet informally, sometimes joined by Greg Ramsay, now painting mostly portraits. Brian Young joined about 1975 and Jenny Young (at that time Jenny Boam) joined about 1977. Around 1977/78 this became the Thursday portrait group which met weekly at Max's for close to 20 years. There was a three to five year break, but in 2002 the Thursday group restarted at Brian and Jenny Young's and today consists of Max Angus, Patricia Giles, Jenny and Brian Young, and John Traynor.

**1967** Lake Pedder, despite its national park status, was in danger of being flooded as part of a government-supported Hydro-Electric development. Max was one of a group of Tasmanian artists and photographers who decided as a protest to record their impressions of the lake. Others included Patricia Giles, Harry Buckie, Ray Barnes, Frank Bolt,

Olegas Truchanas. Over the following two years they made individual visits as well as setting up artists' summer camps. They returned in 1971 to paint and photograph for an extended stretch of time together with a film crew. *Lake Pedder 1971* is the film of that event. Of the artists, Olegas Truchanas, close friend of Max, was, through the public showing of his photos of the area, perhaps its most impassioned defender. When Olegas died tragically in 1972, Max immediately formed a committee to publish a book about his work. At the same time Max remained in the forefront of the fight for the lake not only through his paintings, but in 1973 also presenting the 'Lake Pedder Committee of Enquiry', established by the Commonwealth Government, with a complex submission arguing on mainly aesthetic grounds why the lake should have been preserved. Like all others, the submission failed and the lake remained flooded. Max's book *The World of Olegas Truchanas*, in part a memorial to the Pedder fight, was published in 1975. The original edition of 6000 copies sold out within three weeks of publication. Seven further editions were published.

**1968/69** The watercolour group, guided by Max, also set up camp to paint at

Woolnorth (1968) and at Ansons Bay (1969), and when weather made Lake Pedder temporarily inaccessible, at the artist's property at Binnalong Bay (1968/69).

**1968** Produced a *Hobart Sketchbook* with Patsy Adam-Smith for which he did all the illustrations, followed in 1971 by *Tasmanian Sketchbook* with the same author.

**1974** Taught at the 'Easter School' run by Adult Education at The Grange, Campbell Town, and from 1975–1984 gave lectures and ran workshops at their annual December weekend schools.

**1977** With fellow artists Patricia Giles, Greg Ramsay, Elspeth Vaughan and Don Angus, made two painting trips to Bathurst Harbour.

**1978** Awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for services to art in the community.

**1980** Visited the travelling exhibition of Chinese Art from the Ming and Quing Dynasties at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, which reconfirmed his life-long fascination with oriental calligraphy.

**1981** In conjunction with his research on the colonial painter Simpkinson de Wesselow, based himself in London for a month, visited Paris and returned via a week in New York—his first and only trip abroad.

**1982/83** Made several trips to the West Coast to see Stephen Walker, based there for 13 months, and to revisit the scenes that had inspired the two artists in 1958.

**1984** Published *Simpkinson de Wesselow: Landscape Painter in Van Diemen's Land and the Port Phillip District 1844–48*. The book won two gold medals in the 1985 National Print Awards in the categories of 'limited editions' and 'excellence in craft'.

**1987** Elected a Fellow of the London based Royal Society of Arts.

**1987–present** Tutor for John Thorp's (since 1991 John Traynor's) Artventure tours for Tasmania, held at the Bay of Fires 1987–1992, Flinders Island 1993, and Tasmania's North East 'Suncoast' 1994–2006.

**1988** Won first City of Hobart Art Prize with an oil painting *View of Hobart* destined for and now hanging in the

reception room at Parliament House. Designed The Tasmanian Peace Trust Calendar for 1988 which received a gold award for printing. Presented with an Advance Australia Award by the Governor of Tasmania.

**1989** One of eight Tasmanians represented in a special exhibition of watercolours sent to Fuzhou, Fujian Province, China, organised by Bruce Johnson, president of the Tasmanian branch of the Australia China Friendship Society.

**1996** Published *A Salute to Watercolour*, a summation of his thoughts on the medium, having for years commented and written on the subject in private papers as well as various art publications such as *Australian Artist* (October 1986) and the self-published 1994 essay *Watercolour in Tasmania 1895–1995*.

**2003** Asked by the Pedder 2000 Committee, which was looking into the possible restoration of the lake, to write an account of his experiences and views on the loss of the lake. No action was taken and *Lake Pedder past, present and future* remains shelved. Received the Federal Government's Centenary Medal for his contribution to society.

## Individual and Joint Exhibitions

- 1946** The Sedon Galleries, Melbourne
- 1947** Shillidays Emporium, Mildura
- 1947** John Martin's Art Gallery, Adelaide
- 1950** The Book Club Gallery, Melbourne
- 1955** Adult Education Board Rooms, Hobart
- 1964** Exhibition with John Eldershaw, Art Lovers Gallery, Artarmon, NSW
- 1968** (twice), **1971, 73** Saddler's Court Gallery, Richmond
- 1972** (twice), **1974, 78, 80** Don Camillo, Hobart
- 1977** 'Max Angus and Barbara Cauvin', Coughton Galleries, Hobart
- 1977** La Perouse Gallery, Canberra
- 1979** 'Max Angus: the man and his art (forty years of painting)', Fine Arts Gallery, University Centre, Hobart; Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston; Burnie Art Gallery
- 1981, 85** Coughton Galleries, Hobart
- 1983** Devonport Gallery and Arts Centre
- 1983** 'Fire and Water', Salamanca Place Gallery, Hobart
- 1986** 'Wild Places', Salamanca Place Gallery, Hobart
- 1988–89** 'Max Angus: A Retrospective Exhibition', Devonport Gallery and Arts Centre; Burnie Art Gallery; Freeman Gallery, Sandy Bay
- 1990** 'Aspects of the Derwent from the Source to the Sea', Freeman Gallery, Sandy Bay
- 1991** 'Watercolour - yes again!', Art Society of Tasmania, Lady Franklin Gallery, Lenah Valley
- 1992** 'An Exhibition of New Work by Max Angus', Freeman Gallery, Sandy Bay
- 1994** "As I see it": Max Angus at Eighty', Freeman Gallery, Sandy Bay
- 1998** 'Two Lively Artists', Max Angus and Patricia Giles, Red Chapel Gallery, Sandy Bay
- 2004** 'Retrospective Exhibition: Max Angus 90th Birthday' Stephen Walker Gallery, Campania
- 2006** 'Max Angus: A Lifetime of Watercolour', Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart

## Selected Group Exhibitions

**1947–1990s** Art Society of Tasmania

**1947–68** Tasmanian Group of Painters

**1947,48,50,63–68,70–82,84** Australian Watercolour Institute, Sydney

**1954** 'Sesquicentennial Art Exhibition 1804–1954', Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart

**1957** Exhibition with Patricia Giles and Stephen Walker, Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau Gallery, Melbourne

**1957–62,67,68,74** Tasmanian Art Gallery Exhibitions, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart

**1960** Fitzgeralds Auditorium (five person), Hobart

**1962** Minnie Crouch Prize Exhibition, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery

**1962** 'Tasmanian Watercolours Today', Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston

**1962–67** Wynne Prize Exhibition, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

**1963** 'Australian Art Exhibition', National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

**1964** 'Tasmanian Painters', Bible House, Canberra

**1965** Exhibition with Patricia Giles and George Woodberry, Lloyd Jones Art Gallery, Hobart

**1966** 'Exhibition of Watercolours', Art Boutique, Hobart

**1966** 'Watercolours', City of Hamilton Art Gallery

**1967** 'Eleven Painters', Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston

**1967** 'Five Hobart Painters', Don Camillo, Hobart

**1968** Tasmanian Drawing Prize, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston

**1969,80** Saddlers Court Gallery, Richmond

**1969,70,72** Salamanca Place Gallery, Hobart

**1971** 'Lake Pedder 1971', Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart; Saddlers Court Gallery, Richmond

**1972** 'Festival Exhibition', Wilunga House, Adelaide

**1973** 'Tasmanian Artists Exhibition', Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart

**1973–75** 'Blue Gum Festival of Tasmania', Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart

**1974** Archibald Prize Exhibition, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

**1977** 'Four at One', Gallery One, Hobart

**1978** '50 Years of Watercolour Painting in Tasmania', University of Tasmania, Hobart

**1979** 'Contemporary Tasmanian Drawings', University of Tasmania, Hobart

**1980** 'Burnie Works on Paper', Burnie Art Gallery

**1987** Salamanca Place Gallery Exhibition at Evandale, Tasmania

**1987** Freeman Gallery opening exhibition, Sandy Bay

**1989** Miniature Painting Exhibition, Salamanca Place Gallery, Hobart

**1993** "'A Wealth of Watercolours" - Max Angus, Patricia Giles, Jenny Young', Freeman Gallery, Sandy Bay

**1994** "'Swansong" (for Jill)', Freeman Gallery, Sandy Bay

**1994** With Freeman Gallery artists at the Australian Contemporary Art Fair, Melbourne

**1995** 'Life Mirrors Art: Angus, Frost & McIntyre', Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston

**1999** 'The Art Society of Tasmania 1884–2000', Lady Franklin Gallery, Lenah Valley

**1998,99,2000,05** 'Images of Tasmania', Long Gallery, Salamanca Place, Hobart

**2001** 'The Old Timers', Don Camillo, Sandy Bay

**2001** 'Encore', Art Society of Tasmania, Lady Franklin Gallery, Lenah Valley

**2004** 'Interpreting 2004', exhibition organised by the art guides, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart

**2005** 'artaid@tmag', Tsunami aid exhibition organised by the art guides, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart