



ARTHUR JAMES MURCH

Class of 1919

Arthur James Murch was a painter, sculptor and teacher, born on 8 July 1902. After attending Croydon Public School, he attended Sydney Technical High School, at Ultimo, which he left to join John Heine & Son Ltd, manufacturers of sheet-metal- working machinery. His drawing skills were noticed and from 1920 he studied part time at the Royal Art Society of NSW.

Murch built a studio in his parent's backyard and devoted himself to full-time art, winning a NSW Society of Artists' travelling scholarship, which took him to Paris, London and Italy, where he fell in love with the Renaissance master. Upon his return to Sydney, he worked from 1927 with George Lambert and in that time sculpted an Unknown Soldier for St Mary's Cathedral.

In 1933 he travelled as a freelance artist to the Hermannsburg Mission in Central Australia, a place he was destined to visit many more times and stay over a lengthy period. Back in England in 1936, Murch finished painting *Leda* (1935-1939) mostly by candlelight because of his abject poverty and inability to afford electricity. After Japan entered World War II, Murch was seconded and appointed an official war artist (1942-1943).

Murch's greatest glory was his win in the 1949 Archibald Prize when he painted a portrait of Bonar Dunlop. His works are held mostly in the National Gallery of Australia and in most State Galleries. He devoted a lot of his later years to teaching at East Sydney Technical College and at Hermannsburg.

Arthur Murch died at Terry Hills in NSW in 1989, aged 87.