1996

Guy Grey-Smith: Guy Grey-Smith's landscapes of Western Australia

Annette Davis
Edith Cowan University

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study.

The University does not authorize you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following:

- Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

- A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. Where the reproduction of such material is done without attribution of authorship, with false attribution of authorship or the authorship is treated in a derogatory manner, this may be a breach of the author’s moral rights contained in Part IX of the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).

- Courts have the power to impose a wide range of civil and criminal sanctions for infringement of copyright, infringement of moral rights and other offences under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth). Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
Guy Grey-Smith's Landscapes of Western Australia is proudly sponsored by Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia.

Edith Cowan University contributors to this sponsorship: Curatorial Services, Division of Facilities and Services; Kurongkurl Katitjin, School of Indigenous Australian Studies; The Vice-Chancellor; Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts; Alumni Association; Community Affairs Office.

Published by Edith Cowan University
Copyright 1996 Edith Cowan University and Annette Davis, Exhibition Curator

Guy Grey-Smith's Landscapes of Western Australia
ISBN 0 - 7298 - 0229 - 9
CONTENTS

ITINERARY 1996

Geraldton
Geraldton Art Gallery
February 2 - March 17
Telephone (099) 216 811

Kalgoorlie
Goldfields Arts Centre
March 29 - April 21
Telephone (090) 220 905

Esperance
Old Cannery Arts Centre
May 3 - 26
Telephone (090) 713 599

Albany
Vancouver Arts Centre
June 7 - 23
Telephone (098) 416 011

Perth
Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery
University of Western Australia
July 7 - August 25
Telephone (09) 380 3707

Bunbury
Bunbury Art Galleries
September 6 - October 20
Telephone (097) 219 656

Karratha
Karratha College Library
November 8 - 29
Telephone (091) 596 700

Foreword 1
Introduction 2
A Monumental Vision 3
Biographical Notes 10
List of Lenders 11
Selected Bibliography 12
Catalogue of Works 13
Plates 17
Left: Studio built by Guy Grey-Smith used as printmaking studio, July 1976.  
(Photograph courtesy of the Art Gallery of Western Australia)

Middle: Pottery studio, July 1976.  
(Photograph courtesy of the Art Gallery of Western Australia)

(Photograph: S. Kaplan)
FOREWORD

Edith Cowan University is proud to sponsor this important touring exhibition *Guy Grey-Smith's Landscapes of Western Australia*. The exhibition is a timely presentation of the work of one of Western Australia's most significant artists from the post-war period.

From the University's point of view, this exhibition represents an ideal avenue for the promotion of its own philosophy and aims. The University has identified the strong educational role of the exhibition, in presenting Guy Grey-Smith to generations who have not previously had the opportunity to view a comprehensive body of his art. The educational influence of Edith Cowan University extends beyond the Perth metropolitan area to regional centres throughout Western Australia. The tour of this exhibition clearly links with and supports this regional focus of the University's activities.

In addition the University prides itself on its commitment to the arts in Western Australia, through its extensive art collection and the Western Australian Academy of the Performing Arts. This exhibition is a further demonstration of the University's support of the State's visual culture.

The exhibition curator, Annette Davis, is to be congratulated on her achievements with this exhibition. Robert Vallis, Curator of Artworks, and Melanie Morgan, Assistant Curator, have provided the driving force behind the University's involvement in this exhibition and their energy and enthusiasm is much appreciated. Thank you also to ART ON THE MOVE for its support of the development and tour of this exhibition.

Professor Roy Lourens  
Vice Chancellor  
Edith Cowan University
INTRODUCTION

"The painter goes through the land and sees what nobody else has seen because landscape painting comes from inside and not out. It depends entirely on who he is. Nature is stronger than the strongest man and there is no going against it. It finds its way into his imagination via all his senses; it becomes part of his spirit, and then, with great care and sensitivity, it may be brought back again by hand into the visible world and somehow recognised".¹

This exhibition focuses on the landscapes of one of Western Australia's most significant artists, Guy Grey-Smith (1916-1981). Working in Western Australia for more than thirty years from 1948 to 1981, Grey-Smith offered audiences a fresh, new interpretation of the Western Australian environment.

Throughout his career Guy Grey-Smith painted still lifes, figures and portraits. However landscapes were his major focus and it is in these that he invested the most meaning. He had a lifelong fascination with the power of nature as manifest in the karri trees of the south-west, the rugged red expanse of the north-west, or the waves of the southern ocean crashing against coastal cliffs. He developed his own unique style, based on his emotional response to nature and his imagination, which gave him the freedom to express the monumentality of these natural features, resulting in powerful interpretations of the landscape.

Grey-Smith often interpreted a particular location in several media, starting with an ink drawing or watercolour done in situ, simplifying the image in woodcuts and screenprints, and using colour and paint texture to fully express the strength of the landscape in large oil paintings. This exhibition brings together forty six works in a range of media - drawings, woodcuts, screenprints, etchings, watercolours and oil paintings - from a thirty year period to show the development of Grey-Smith's style and to give insight to the artist's creative process.

Twenty years after the 1976 Guy Grey-Smith Retrospective presented by the Art Gallery of Western Australia, and fifteen years since the artist's death in 1981, it is timely to again look at a range of this artist's work. This exhibition will make the work better known to a younger generation and to regional audiences. Travelling to six regional venues, this exhibition will take some of the images back to the environment from which they emerged.
A MONUMENTAL VISION

The decades following the Second World War brought massive social, economic and cultural change to Australia. By the early 1970s Australia had a new sense of its identity; the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972 was the political sign of the nation's readiness for change, a mood that stirred at social, economic and cultural levels of society. It marked the emergence of a new maturity, bringing a climate of excitement and confidence in which Australia's own cultural identity was celebrated for its uniqueness. The shadow of Britain became increasingly indistinct as Australian culture developed on its own terms.

The emergence of a strong national cultural identity paralleled Guy Grey-Smith's artistic development. During the 1950s and 1960s he conscientiously applied what he learnt from studying the work of European artists. In the 1970s he combined the results of his efforts of the previous decades - the ability to distill the landscape to its true essence, an adventurous use of colour and a skilful manipulation of the medium - and spoke with a mature confidence in his art. This confidence brought a new freedom, enabling him to create his most powerful statements about nature.

Guy Grey-Smith was born in Wagin in the Western Australian wheatbelt in 1916 and spent much of his childhood in the south-west town of Boyup Brook. In 1953 he wrote, "The longer I paint Australia the more I realise that I am painting the experiences of my childhood in the forests of the south-west of Western Australia".

In 1936 he joined the Royal Australian Air Force and, in the following year, was sent to England to serve in the Royal Air Force. In 1940, as a Flight Lieutenant in the RAF, Grey-Smith was shot down over Germany and taken as a prisoner of war. He contracted tuberculosis and in 1944 was sent with other prisoners for exchange, first to Barcelona then to England. It was during these years that he first became seriously interested in art. His wife Helen, whom he had married in 1939, had studied interior design in London and she sent him art materials and books while he was in the POW camp. His attention was attracted to an image of a Henry Moore sculpture in Eric Newton's *European Sculpture and Painting*. The sculpture and the freedom of the artist to create this piece excited him to the possibilities of art. He concluded from the sculpture that "it was possible for every individual to say something on his own account".

Guy Grey-Smith in his painting studio.

(Photograph courtesy of the Art Gallery of Western Australia)
As a patient at a tuberculosis sanatorium in Sussex, he received art therapy as part of his treatment. This further opened the door to Guy on the possibilities of art and, when discharged from the sanatorium in 1945, he enrolled at the Chelsea School of Art, London, where his teachers included Ceri Richards, Robert Medley and Henry Moore, the artist who had initially inspired him.

In 1946 Guy and Helen went to France and visited the forest of Fontainebleau, near Paris. The trees and lush undergrowth reminded him of the forests in the south-west of Western Australia. Completing his training at the end of 1947, the couple moved to WA, principally for Guy's health, keen to start a new life in warm, sunny Australia.

Darlington, in the Darling Scarp just outside Perth, was a welcome and peaceful relief from battle-scarred London. Applying his practical skills, Guy built a house and set up a home pottery. Art therapy lessons by Guy at Wooroloo Hospital and sales of Helen's textiles supplemented a small RAF pension. Helen remembers this period as one of excitement and energy as they carved out their own lifestyle in the native bush. The rocks, trees and hills provided Guy with immediate material for his artistic exercises.

As a contemporary artist in Perth in the late 1940s and 1950s, Grey-Smith faced the challenge of the lack of acceptance of his art by the predominantly conservative art audiences. The main public art institution, the Art Gallery of Western Australia, had been dominated by extremely conservative administrations which had openly condemned any developments in modern art. The art school at Perth Technical College, which was the major source of art training in Perth, failed to offer any alternative to this conservatism. For artists such as Grey-Smith and Howard Taylor, both of whom arrived in Perth from England in the late 1940s straight from art schools and the European art scene, the resistance and, in some cases, open hostility to their work was a challenge to their art practice and their self-esteem.

Neither the lack of acceptance and understanding of his art nor the physical isolation of Western Australia from the rest of the world dampened Guy's steady output or commitment to his own approach. European art journals provided him with information on significant artists in Europe, and he found that the isolation of Western Australia provided him with freedom to pursue his own path: driven by his own determination and hardwork, he applied himself rigorously to the tasks he set himself.

In 1949, just over a year after returning to WA, he had his first exhibition in Perth at the Newspaper House Gallery. During the 1950s he and Helen organised their own joint exhibitions every one or two years, at which they sold Guy's paintings and pottery and Helen's textiles. They built a small following of loyal supporters, whose enthusiasm and patronage was important in encouraging Guy in his work.

Guy had very strong views on art and the role of an artist and was always prepared to speak his mind. As an art teacher he was uncompromising, demanding that his students learn his way. However his dogmatism was coupled with an appealing passion for life and a generous sense of humour. Possessing amazing drive, Guy was always ready to put in an effort to improve a situation, whether it be by organising the first Darlington Arts and Crafts Exhibition to raise funds for the local fire brigade, or, in the 1970s, protesting against the clear felling of his beloved karri forests. Definitely a man of his generation in many of his attitudes, Guy, through his integrity, became a role model for younger artists working in Perth.

In 1957, motivated to improve the situation for artists like himself who were interested in modern art, Guy formed The Perth Group, with Tom Gibbons, Brian McKay, Robert Juniper and Maurice Stubbs. In addition to promoting modernism the group aimed to avoid paying gallery commissions by organising their own exhibitions, however, Rose Skinner put an end to that after the group had organised one exhibition at the Skinner Gallery, Perth's first professional commercial gallery which opened in 1958. Guy, who was passionate about the importance of artists maintaining their independence, was fierce in his resistance to Rose Skinner's attempts to include him in her stable of artists.

His advocacy of artists' rights led to him becoming the inaugural president of the Western Australian branch of the Contemporary Art Society which was formed in 1966 at a meeting at the Grey-Smith's home. The aims of the CAS were to foster the development, appreciation and recognition of contemporary art and thought,
and to promote the role of the artist in society. The formation of a State branch of a national association was an important move for the local members, making them part of a wider movement to promote the recognition of contemporary art.

Within the contemporary art movement, the landscape was still an important means of expressing ideas and concepts. In the late 1950s and 1960s the Western Australian landscape was also capturing the inquiring focus of writers and poets. A new generation of Western Australian writers, including Randolph Stow, Dorothy Hewett and Peter Cowan, sought to convey the essence and spirituality of their environment in a way that gave the reader an insight to the unique qualities of the Western Australian landscape.9

EXPERIENCING THE LAND

Soon after his return to Western Australia, Guy began his yearly pilgrimages into the landscape which intrigued him.

Tree, Dongara and Dongara Flats (Cat. no. 2 and 3) originate from his 1950 trip to the area south of Geraldton. Every August he, Helen and their two children, Sue and Mark, would venture north, travelling a bit further each year. Their route would take them along the coastal road via Geraldton, Northampton, to the Gascoyne and Mt Augustus, or inland via Cue and Meekatharra towards Nullagine. During the 1950s and 1960s this country was generally considered to be a barren, alien and impenetrable interior. The mining boom of the mid sixties was yet to open up this vastness and roads and facilities were poor. The Grey-Smith family in their Holden stationwagon were grateful for the generosity of station owners, many of whom were surprised at their arrival through the red dust. Helen remembers how some of the station people seemed to look at their environment with fresh eyes once they learnt that they had travelled this far just for Guy to paint the landscape.10

These trips had an atmosphere of adventure: camping out, eating kangaroo shot by Guy, exploring what seemed to them to be a real paradise. Driving along, something - a feature or the flow of the land - would grab Guy’s eye. He would suddenly stop the car and set himself up with his sketch book, swiftly capturing
the landscape in ink or watercolour, and jotting down notes about colour and structure. His sketches would provide him with source material for his oil paintings done in the studio at home in Darlington during the subsequent years.

The Pilbara landscape had a particular attraction to Guy. He responded strongly to the deep redness of the earth against the vivid blue sky, and the overpowering sense of space humbling the individual within the vastness. His Christianity provided him with a spiritual context for the appreciation of the power of nature which he found in the vastness of the Pilbara. He absorbed the spirit of the place and distilled the landscape to its essence, and then, with colour and thick impasto, sought to convey his emotional and spiritual response.

The family's trips north every August were complemented by their holidays in the south-west every May school holidays. As a child Guy had been taken to Bunker Bay for holidays, and, in turn, this is where his family would camp. Guy enjoyed fishing, so these holidays included more relaxation than the northwest trips. However he still spent much of his time taking down images of the coast and bush. From here they would travel to the karri forests, which are a recurring image in his work.

In 1974 Guy and Helen bought a small cottage in Pemberton and moved there permanently in 1975. Living within the karri forests, they felt they had returned to the peace and close contact with nature which had attracted them to Darlington twenty five years earlier. Guy bought a light aircraft which opened up another point of view, an aerial perspective, on the landscape. His realisation of this view into an oil painting was, however, rarely fully successful as his style of broad planes of heavy impasto generally failed to capture the patterns and detail of the land which make an aerial view so interesting.

Painting the Landscape

During his training at Chelsea School of Art, Guy learnt of the European tradition of landscape painting and of the work of modern British landscape artists such as Paul Nash and Ben Nicholson. His interest had been sparked earlier by Henry Moore's fascination with monumentality and the way that he conveyed this in large flowing sculptural forms and, during the subsequent decades, Guy's own work became more and more an expression of the monumentality of the Western Australian landscape.

Moore taught his students to solve their problems themselves, to battle their way through the hurdles they would come up against in their work. In the European tradition of learning from masters, Guy conscientiously adopted the approach of learning from artists he admired and applying the knowledge he gained in his interpretation of the Western Australian landscape. This approach provided him with a secure context in which to work and compensated for the lack of a supportive cultural environment.

Speaking in 1965 he explained: "ten years ago I was very keen to be with nature itself, observing very carefully and recording, as it were, directly on to the canvas; often I used to rig up a kind of cover and work under that, day after day, on landscapes, watching and observing and putting down....I felt that through the European tradition of painting I had many exercises really to do before I could really come and say what I wanted to say quite freely. I felt they were kind of learning the language of painting...".

Red Rocks (c. 1951) (Cat. no. 5) illustrates Grey-Smith's application of the lessons he learnt from Cézanne: it is carefully resolved in its colour, brushstroke, and composition and the treatment of form, in a style similar to Cézanne, foreshadows the development of Grey-Smith's style of reduction and abstraction.

In 1953 the Grey-Smith family travelled to Europe for eighteen months, Helen to study textile design and Guy to study fresco painting. During a visit to Paris, Guy was inspired by the intense pure colour used by Matisse, Derain, and Rouault in an exhibition of the Fauves. The vivid colours and energy of these works motivated his explorations in colour which continued throughout his life. In his paintings such as Untitled Landscape (1954), Rottnest (1954-57), and Darling Ranges (1957) (Cat. no. 6,10,11), Guy exploited the capacity of colour to convey energy and emotion, still working within a relatively traditional and formal landscape composition.

During the late 1950s Guy developed his simplification of the shapes in the landscape. Karri Forest (1958) (Cat. no. 12) marks an important transitional point in the development of his style. The composition foreshortens the subject,
focussing on bare slender tree trunks. Thick vertical brush strokes and vertical blocks of colour foreshadow the palette knife application of colour in his paintings of subsequent years. Orange, yellow, fleshy pinks, deep blue and aqua have been carefully applied and, together with diagonal elements, balance and enliven the composition. This image, in its structure and colour, is a fascinating complement to *Karri Trees* (1979) (Cat. no. 44), painted over twenty years later, in which the flesh tones of the trunk spring from the aqua of the forest depths.

In 1960 Grey-Smith became aware of the drastically simplified and heavy impasto work of French painter Nicholas de Stael. In the same way that Cézanne's work guided Guy ten years earlier, de Stael's work inspired him to further develop his approach of simplification and abstraction, and to exploit the textural qualities of paint. In 1963 he wrote “today Nicholas de Stael is a great influence on me, because he is structurally interesting to a painter and basically we are structural engineers if you like - in paint, and that is what interests us about earlier painters...we look to see how paint has been constructed by those before us.”

*South of Roebourne* (1961) (Cat. no. 13) demonstrates this interest through the hard edged division of blocks of colour, giving it an architectural quality.

Applying the lessons he learnt from de Stael, Grey-Smith developed his ability to express the monumentality of the landscape, the solidity and vastness of the north-west landscape providing him with ideal subject matter for this kind of interpretation. He said “I found de Stael's painting gave me an avenue of freer individual development - the simplification of form and the simpler movement of action, the broader movement of physical action on a canvas...one of my greater wishes would have been for de Stael himself to have come up and worked in this country.”

One of the aspects of de Stael's work which so attracted Guy was his manipulation of the oil paint medium. Guy had long been motivated by the physical act of applying and manipulating paint. As a potter he enjoyed the physical contact with clay when shaping the substance into a form; fresco painting attracted him for its tactile and physical qualities. He spoke of his enjoyment of the physical action: “I think the pleasure of painting is the manipulation of this solid body - that it’s pushed around into a kind of structure - the thickness of paint or impasto, not for its own sake but the physical pleasure of having enough stuff to push around.”

He completed a small number of frescoes in Australia, but was disappointed at the lack of opportunities for this medium.

In 1965 he said “what I want to do is to make paint say what I have to say. If I am going to have any enjoyment of expression it has got to be in terms of the paint itself in a kind of physical way.” The vigorous application of paints using a palette knife to apply and score into the paint surface, enabled him to convey the strength and physicality of the subject matter.

Apart from the richly sculpted paint qualities of the works which resulted from this period, another legacy of de Stael's influence, though far less positive, was the perception by some art critics that Grey-Smith was too heavily imitative of him. Some critics, particularly those from outside Western Australia, dismissed Guy's work on this basis. Certainly the influence is strong, and some of his works from this period suffer from being very stilted, where excessive attention to the structure and paint has resulted in a sense of heaviness and immovability. However he succeeded in building on what he learnt from de Stael. *Sea Ledge and Above the Sea* (Cat. no. 19 and 20), both painted in 1968, mark the beginning of the return of a more fluid expression bringing more movement and life to the composition, the block forms in these images having been softened with a freer gestural application of paint. Paintings from the 1970s, such as *Lake Moore, Mt Singleton* (1979) (Cat. no. 45), which combine the qualities of dramatic simplification, vivid colour, and a rich textural surface applied in sweeping gestural actions are the most successful expression of his own creative style.

Curves and circles are important recurring elements in Guy's work. In early works such as *Blackboy Grove* (1950) and *Untitled Landscape* (1954) (Cat. no. 4 and 6) he used circles to provide formal shapes to natural bush forms. In the 1960s when his oil paintings were heavily structured with blocks of colour, the serigraph *Coastline* (1968) (Cat. no. 18) stands out as a welcome expression of movement and freedom, the circles suggesting bubbles of water or the froth of waves.

In his serigraphs and woodcuts of the north-west landscape, he used a circular movement to convey the shape of the land, and to suggest the bouncing light and heat haze across it. Energy exudes from the oil paintings *Sandstone Country* (1974) and *Northern Landscape* (1974) (Cat. no. 26 and 27) in which curves of colour have been slashed into the paint surface. Grey-Smith's challenging use of vivid
colour increases the impact and strength of the images and forces the viewer to examine this fresh interpretation of country which, for many, is an unending flatness of red earth.

Paring down the subject matter to its simplest forms and shapes was integral to the way Grey-Smith conveyed the strength of the landscape. His approach was to look for the basic element of an object or elements of a scene and to simplify the image in the process of translating it onto the canvas, screen or wood. In addition to the influence of European artists, a presence which was more constant and closer to home was the design work of his wife, Helen. In 1954 Helen introduced Guy to serigraph production, a process in which an artist simplifies and reduces an image and then rebuilds it through the careful placement of colour and shape. Helen's own textile designs were based on simplifying subject matter and rebuilding it into repeat design patterns. She said "Designing...is a very demanding and a very limited thing to work in. You can't express your emotions in the same way a painter does. I find in design it is a process of elimination the whole time, it is a simplification down to what is absolutely essential... you come out feeling as if you have been through a very strong discipline".  

Guy adopted a similar disciplined approach to his work. In his serigraphs and woodcuts he applied the process of breaking down an image to its basic elements. In his oil paintings, he abstracted these essential shapes and conveyed his own emotional response to the subject matter through the manipulation of the medium and the use of strong colour. He said "it is by a combination of learning, training, observing and thinking, and then being completely liberated from all these things, the imagination works quite freely, that one has got controlled emotion and yet one is emotional...you are drawing on the resources of what has all gone before and no doubt from the subconscious happenings that have gone on in your life".

In his responses to nature, in an approach that combined control and freedom, Grey-Smith sought to express the essence of nature and to express an aspect of truth for himself and the viewer. Such an ideal related to his personal spirituality, in which he was both humbled and exhilarated by the power of nature. He said "all my paintings are derived directly, really directly from nature, they are realistic in so far as they have a truth to me, if it is only a truth of feeling, not visual truth, but a truth of feeling".

Guy and Helen Grey-Smith.
CONCLUSION

During his life Grey-Smith was recognised, within Western Australia and nationally, for his powerful images. He won local and interstate art prizes and was included in international exhibitions of Australian art. This public acknowledgement of his talent was important in the growth of his confidence about his own creative freedom.

Guy Grey-Smith's significance stems not only from the lasting vitality of his images, but for his important contribution to shaping the visual arts in Western Australia. The strength of his commitment to his art practice, his hard work, and his strong conviction that artists can and should manage their own destiny, led to him becoming an important role model for younger artists. By pursuing his own creative freedom, Grey-Smith encouraged other artists to do the same and to not be locked into producing work to suit the tastes of others. He had a strong social conscience, stemming from his Christianity, and a straightforwardness which attracted much respect.

His success during his lifetime reflects his effectiveness in communicating through his art to an audience about the intrinsic power of nature. He was the first artist in Western Australia to successfully convey the monumentality of the landscape - a monumentality which exists both physically and spiritually.

In the same way that an image of a Henry Moore sculpture opened up Guy Grey-Smith's eyes to the possibilities of an individual's expression, his images of the Western Australian landscape encouraged contemporary audiences to look with fresh eyes at their environment, and to connect with both its physical and spiritual essence.

Annette Davis
Exhibition Curator

FOOTNOTES

2 Artist's statement, Art Gallery of Western Australia, July 4, 1953.
3 Laurie Thomas, "In search of a whole wall to plaster", The Australian, March 8, 1969.
4 Interview by author with Helen Grey-Smith, Pemberton, August 12, 1995.
5 J. Gooding, "A Gallery for All? The Art Gallery of Western Australia", in J. Gregory (ed), Western Australia Between the Wars 1919-1939, University of Western Australia Press 1990, p.104.
10 Interview with Helen Grey-Smith, op.cit.
11 Ibid. and telephone conversation with Mark Grey-Smith, October 16, 1995.
12 Interview with Helen Grey-Smith, ibid.
15 Laurie Thomas, ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 National Library Guy Grey-Smith interview, op.cit.
18 For example, in his review of the Capital Permanent Award at the Geelong Art Gallery, Jeffrey Makin described Guy Grey-Smith's work The Dry Land as a "rip off of de Stael", Melbourne Sun, 1 November 1978.
21 Ibid.
1916  Born 7 January, Wagin, Western Australia. Educated at Boyup Brook State School and Bunbury High School.
1936  After working on his father's farm he joined the Royal Australian Air Force as a cadet at Point Cook, Victoria.
1937  Seconded to the Royal Air Force for five years.
1939  Married Helen Stanes. On the outbreak of the Second World War, he was sent to France as a Flight Lieutenant with the 139 Squadron, stationed in Epernay, east of Paris.
1940  Shot down and severely wounded, captured and put in a prisoner of war camp. He began to sketch and paint using pencils and watercolours sent by his wife through the Red Cross.
1943  Contracted tuberculosis.
1944  Sent from hospital to Barcelona with other prisoners of war for exchange. He spent six months at a sanatorium in Sussex where art therapy was part of the treatment.
1945  He enrolled at Chelsea School of Art where he studied under Ceri Richards, Robert Medley and Henry Moore. He also studied pottery part-time at the Woolwich Polytechnic under Heber Matthews.
1946  Visited Paris. The forest of Fontainebleau reminded him of the Australian forests.
1947  Discharged from the RAF, Guy and Helen moved to Western Australia, arriving at the beginning of 1948.
1948  Birth of daughter Susanna.
1949  First solo exhibition, Newspaper House Gallery, Perth. In the 1950s exhibited solo or with Helen Grey-Smith annually except in 1952 and 1954. Held solo exhibitions almost annually in the 1960s and 1970s and took part in group and competition exhibitions.
1951  Set up a home pottery.
1952  Recurrence of tuberculosis, spent eight months in hospital. Met Laurie Thomas, director of Art Gallery 1952-56, who gave him much encouragement and support.
1953  Travelled to England and Europe, studied fresco painting at the Central School under Louis le Brocquy and Hans Tigdal. During a visit to Paris he saw an important exhibition of Fauve painters.
1954  Returned to WA. Worked part-time with the Adult Education Department and the Art Gallery, lecturing and taking prints to country areas. Helen introduced him to serigraph production.
1956  Studio completed in Darlington.
1957  Included in the exhibition of Contemporary Australian Painters touring Canada 1957-58. Formed The Perth Group with Robert Juniper, Brian McKay, Tom Gibbons and Maurice Stubbs, which exhibited three times and dissolved in 1961.
1958  Included in Australian Contemporary Paintings shown in all state galleries 1958-59.
1960  Travelled to the eastern states for the first time. Became interested in the work of Nicholas de Stael.
1961  Included in Recent Australian Painting, Whitechapel Gallery, London.
1963  Six weeks painting trip to Ceylon. Included in Tate Gallery exhibition of Australian Painting, London and Ottawa, 1963-64.
1964  Included in Australian Painting exhibition touring New Zealand.
1966  Guy Grey-Smith elected inaugural president of the Contemporary Art Society (WA Branch) at a meeting at the Grey-Smith home.
1967  Painting trip to Bali.
1969  Began teaching two days a week at the Western Australian Institute of Technology which he continued with some breaks until 1975.
1970  Brief visit to Tasmania.
1971  Appointed under Foreign Affairs Department to the University of Fine Art, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, as a lecturer in painting, drawing and ceramics 1971-72.
1972  Experimented with acrylics, mainly landscapes on paper.
1973  Awarded one of the three Special Distinguished Artist and Scholar Grants by the Visual Arts Board, Australia Council for the Arts.
1974 Bought a small house in Pemberton, to be near the karri forest. Lived there from 1975. Began a series of woodcuts and also made some etchings.

1975 Regained pilot's licence and bought a Cessna.

1976 Guy Grey-Smith Retrospective 1976-77 curated by Lou Klepac at the Art Gallery of Western Australia. Also shown at the Queensland Art Gallery.

1977 Appointed Western Australian representative on the Visual Arts Board.

1978 Included in Landscape and Image, an exhibition of contemporary art shown in Indonesia.

1981 Awarded the Order of Australia. Died 11 August of a recurrence of the tuberculosis contracted during the war.

Prizes
1955 Perth Prize (best WA entry)
1959 Murdoch Prize
1962 Robin Hood Art Prize
1963 Perth Prize (best WA entry)
1964 Perth Prize
1966 St George's Cathedral Prize
1967 St George's Cathedral Prize
1967 Walter Murdoch Prize
1968 Walter Murdoch Prize
1975 Gold Coast Art Prize
1978 George's Prize, Melbourne

The above information is largely based on the material provided in the Guy Grey-Smith Retrospective catalogue 1976 by Lou Klepac and in Guy Grey-Smith Paintings and Works on Paper 1948-81 A Selection from the Robert Holmes a Court Collection by Anne Brody, Curator, 1988.

LIST OF LENDERS

Art Gallery of Western Australia
BankWest Art Collection
Sue and Ian Bernadt Collection
Sir James and Lady Guthers
City of Fremantle Art Collection
Curtin University of Technology Art Collection
Edith Cowan University Art Collection
Liz and Robin Forbes
Mr and Mrs W. Grono
The Holmes a Court Collection Courtesy of Heytesbury
Dr and Mrs D. Letham
Price Waterhouse
Royal Perth Hospital Collection
SGIO Insurance Limited
Kerry Stokes' Collection
The University of Western Australia Art Collection and private collections

The Curator thanks the lenders of the works and the following people who assisted with research:

Barbara Chapman
Alan and Rosie Delaney
Helen, Mark and Sue Grey-Smith
Rie Heymans
Brian McKay
Jane Martin
Elizabeth Millett
Judy and Peter Moyes
Rod O'Brien
Philippa O'Brien
Ted Snell
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books
B. Hawthorne, Some Contemporary Western Australian Painters and Sculptors, Volume 1, Apollo Press, 1982.
J. Hetherington, Australian Painters Forty Profiles, Angus and Robertson, 1963.
L. Klepac, Guy Grey-Smith Retrospective, exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1976.
M. Mason (ed), Contemporary Western Australian Painters and Printmakers, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1979.

Articles
“Nature is Theme of Art Show”, The West Australian, 2 May, 1962.
“Guy Grey-Smith, Helen Grey-Smith at CBC” The Critic, 8 November, 1963.
M. Mason, “Above all, his art will remain”, The West Australian, 15 August, 1981.
L. Thomas, “In search of a whole wall to plaster”, The Australian, 8 March, 1969.
"I think that art is like life itself; it is full of uncertainties. One has to put a tremendous amount into it and be prepared to get lots of kicks from it. There is no kind of ideal, one has to work the whole time, putting into it, that makes it quite worthwhile."

Guy Grey-Smith, 1965

(Photo: Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Western Australia)
CATALOGUE OF WORKS

1. **Rocks** 1948  
mixed media  
24.5 x 36.4  
Kerry Stokes' Collection

2. **Tree, Dongara** 1950  
mixed media  
26.0 x 41.0  
Edith Cowan University Art Collection

3. **Dongara Flats** 1950  
oil on canvas  
40.0 x 51.0  
Edith Cowan University Art Collection

4. **Blackboy Grove** 1950  
oil on linen canvas  
56.0 x 77.5  
Gift of Dr and Mrs R K Constable  
The University of Western Australia Art Collection

5. **Red Rocks** c.1951  
oil on canvas  
41.5 x 50.8  
Collection of Dr and Mrs D Letham

6. **Untitled Landscape** 1954  
oil on canvas  
75.0 x 62.0  
Collection of Sir James and Lady Cruthers

7. **Longreach Bay, Rottnest** 1954  
oil on canvas  
41.5 x 56.5  
Collection: Art Gallery of Western Australia  
Presented by Mrs Margot Bunning and family, 1992

8. **Winter Trees** 1955  
pen and ink  
30.0 x 46.0  
City of Fremantle Art Collection

9. **Wandoo Trees** 1956  
oil on canvas  
52.0 x 68.0  
Private Collection

10. **Rottnest** 1954-57  
oil on linen canvas  
61.2 x 76.5  
The University of Western Australia Art Collection

11. **Darling Ranges** 1957  
oil on hardboard  
68.6 x 91.2  
Collection of Sir James and Lady Cruthers

12. **Karri Forest** 1958  
oil on gauze on masonite  
74.7 x 47.0  
Royal Perth Hospital Collection

13. **South of Rochbourne** 1961  
oil on hardboard  
102.0 x 76.0  
City of Fremantle Art Collection

14. **Plain Country** 1963-64  
oil on hardboard  
60.0 x 182.5  
Price Waterhouse

15. **Plain Country** 1964  
serigraph  
25.8 x 43.3  
The Holmes à Court Collection  
Courtesy of Heytesbury

16. **Western Desert** 1966  
oil and beeswax emulsion on hardboard  
71.0 x 120.0  
Private Collection

17. **Skull Springs Country** 1966  
oil and beeswax emulsion on hardboard  
122.0 x 183.0  
Collection: Art Gallery of Western Australia

18. **Coastline** 1968  
serigraph  
27.8 x 40.5  
Royal Perth Hospital Collection

19. **Sea Ledge** 1968  
oil on hardboard  
90.9 x 121.7  
Kerry Stokes' Collection

20. **Above the Sea** 1968  
oil on hardboard  
121.0 x 121.0  
Curtin University of Technology Art Collection

21. **Northern Landscape** 1972  
acrylic on paper  
46.0 x 61.0  
The Holmes à Court Collection  
Courtesy of Heytesbury

22. **Forest** 1972  
ink and wash  
33.0 x 25.8  
Mr and Mrs W Grono

23. **Northern Landscape** 1973  
serigraph  
26.5 x 62.0  
The Holmes à Court Collection  
Courtesy of Heytesbury

24. **Northern Country** 1973  
acrylic on paper  
50.5 x 65.0  
City of Fremantle Art Collection
25. **Karri Forest** 1973
   serigraph
   45.3 x 67.2
   The University of Western Australia Art Collection

26. **Sandstone Country** 1974
   oil on gauze on masonite
   90.0 x 121.0
   BankWest Art Collection

27. **Northern Landscape** 1974
   oil on gauze on masonite
   91.0 x 122.0
   Sue and Ian Bernadt Collection

28. **Karri Forest II** 1975
    woodcut
    29.8 x 20.3
    Edith Cowan University Art Collection
    Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith

29. **Karri Forest** 1975
    woodcut
    47.0 x 20.3
    Edith Cowan University Art Collection
    Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith

30. **Hill Form** 1975
    etching
    24.5 x 37.0
    The University of Western Australia Art Collection

31. **Sandstone Country** 1975
    etching
    25.0 x 36.8
    City of Fremantle Art Collection

32. **Mt Augustus** 1975
    pen and ink
    33.0 x 50.5
    The Holmes à Court Collection
    Courtesy of Heytesbury

33. **Mt Augustus** 1975
    woodcut
    29.0 x 38.5
    Edith Cowan University Art Collection
    Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith

34. **Mt Augustus** 1975
    woodcut
    29.2 x 49.5
    Edith Cowan University Art Collection
    Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith

35. **Silhouette (Towards Wiluna)** 1975
    woodcut
    19.8 x 36.5
    Edith Cowan University Art Collection
    Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith

36. **Nullagine Country** 1975
    woodcut
    20.5 x 46.0
    Edith Cowan University Art Collection
    Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith

37. **Ranges** 1975
    colour woodcut
    30.6 x 64.0
    The University of Western Australia Art Collection

38. **Dry North** 1975
    oil on hardboard
    80.0 x 92.5
    The Holmes à Court Collection
    Courtesy of Heytesbury

39. **Karri Forest** 1976
    woodcut
    26.0 x 31.5
    The Holmes à Court Collection
    Courtesy of Heytesbury

40. **Wyndham Country** 1976
    watercolour
    43.5 x 62.5
    Private Collection

41. **Malinup Headland** c. 1976
    oil on masonite
    53.5 x 69.0
    Liz and Robin Forbes

42. **Malinup Headland** 1976
    oil on hardboard
    122.0 x 168.0
    Edith Cowan University Art Collection

43. **Karri Forest** 1979
    pen and ink
    54.0 x 36.5
    BankWest Art Collection

44. **Karri Trees** 1979
    oil on hardboard
    122.3 x 111.5
    The Holmes à Court Collection
    Courtesy of Heytesbury

45. **Lake Moore, Mt Singleton** 1979
    oil on hardboard
    155.0 x 121.0
    Private Collection

46. **Mt Augustus** 1980
    oil on hardboard
    120.0 x 180.0
    SGIO Insurance Limited

Measurements in centimetres height x width.
* on display at selected venues only.
"Guy Grey-Smith asked me once, had I done any painting while I was away.
No, I said, but I had lots of ideas for painting. Guy replied
"Tom, paintings aren't made of ideas. They're made of paint."

Tom Gibbons, cited in L. Hanley (ed) Brian McKay: Painter,
Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1991, p.49.
(Photos Richard Woldendorp)
1. **Rocks** 1948
mixed media
24.5 x 26.4
Kerry Stokes' Collection

5. **Red Rocks** c.1951
oil on canvas
41.5 x 50.8
Collection of Dr and Mrs D Letham.
4. **Blackboy Grove** 1950  
   oil on linen canvas  
   56.0 x 77.5  
   Gift of Dr and Mrs R K Constable  
   The University of Western Australia Art Collection
2. **Tree, Dongara** 1950
   mixed media
   26.0 x 41.0
   Edith Cowan University Art Collection
3. Dongara Flats 1950
oil on canvas
40.0 x 51.0
Edith Cowan University Art Collection
6. **Untitled Landscape** 1954
   oil on canvas
   75.0 x 62.0
   Collection of Sir James and Lady Cruthers
7. **Longreach Bay, Rottnest 1954**

oil on canvas

41.5 x 56.5

Collection: Art Gallery of Western Australia

Presented by Mrs Margot Bunning and family, 1992
10. Rottnest 1954-57
oil on linen canvas
61.2 x 76.5
The University of Western Australia Art Collection
8. **Winter Trees** 1955
    pen and ink
    30.0 x 46.0
    City of Fremantle Art Collection
   oil on canvas
   52.0 x 68.0
   Private Collection
11. **Darling Ranges** 1957
   oil on hardboard
   68.6 x 91.2
   Collection of Sir James and Lady Cruthers
12. **Karri Forest** 1958
   oil on gauze on masonite
   74.7 x 47.0
   Royal Perth Hospital Collection
22. **Forest** 1972  
in ink and wash  
33.0 x 25.8  
Mr and Mrs W Grono

28. **Karri Forest II** 1975  
woodcut  
29.8 x 20.3  
Edith Cowan University Art Collection  
Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith
25. Karri Forest 1973
serigraph
45.3 x 67.2
The University of Western Australia Art Collection

29. Karri Forest 1975
woodcut
47.0 x 20.3
Edith Cowan University Art Collection
Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith
39. Karri Forest 1976
woodcut
26.0 x 21.5
The Holmes à Court Collection
Courtesy of Heytesbury

43. Karri Forest 1979
pen and ink
54.0 x 36.5
BankWest Art Collection
44. **Karri Trees** 1979
oil on hardboard
122.3 x 111.5
The Holmes à Court Collection
Courtesy of Heytesbury

Facing page: detail
18. **Coastline** 1968
serigraph
27.8 x 40.5
Royal Perth Hospital Collection
19. *Sea Ledge* 1968
oil on hardboard
90.9 x 121.7
Kerry Stokes' Collection
20. Above the Sea 1968
oil on hardboard
121.0 x 121.0
Curtin University of Technology Art Collection
13. **South of Roebourne** 1961
oil on hardboard
102.0 x 76.0
City of Fremantle Art Collection
14. **Plain Country** 1963-64

- oil on hardboard
- 66.0 x 182.5

Price Waterhouse

Facing page: detail
15. **Plain Country** 1964

serigraph

25.8 x 43.3

The Holmes à Court Collection

Courtesy of Heyesbury
16. **Western Desert** 1966
   oil and beeswax emulsion on hardboard
   71.0 x 120.0
   Private Collection
17. **Skull Springs Country** 1966
oil and beeswax emulsion on hardboard
122.0 x 183.0
Collection: Art Gallery of Western Australia
21. Northern Landscape 1972
    acrylic on paper
    46.0 x 61.0
    The Holmes à Court Collection
    Courtesy of Heytesbury

    acrylic on paper
    50.5 x 65.0
    City of Fremantle Art Collection
23. Northern Landscape 1973
serigraph
26.5 x 62.0
The Holmes à Court Collection
Courtesy of Heytesbury
27. *Northern Landscape* 1974
oil on gauze on masonite
91.0 x 122.0
Sue and Ian Bernadt Collection
oil on gauze on masonite
90.0 x 121.0
BankWest Art Collection
31. **Sandstone Country** 1975
etching
25.0 x 36.8
City of Fremantle Art Collection

35. **Silhouette (Towards Wiluna)** 1975
woodcut
19.8 x 36.5
Edith Cowan University Art Collection
Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith

30. **Nullagine Country** 1975
woodcut
20.5 x 46.0
Edith Cowan University Art Collection
Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith
37. **Ranges** 1975
   colour woodcut
   30.6 x 64.0
   The University of Western Australia Art Collection

40. **Wyndham Country** 1976
   watercolour
   43.5 x 62.5
   Private Collection
30. **Hill Form 1975**
etching
24.5 x 37.0
The University of Western Australia Art Collection
38. **Dry North** 1975
   oil on hardboard
   80.0 x 92.5
   The Holmes à Court Collection
   Courtesy of Heytesbury
45. Lake Moore, Mt Singleton 1979
oil on hardboard
155.0 x 121.0
Private Collection
41. **Malimup Headland** c. 1976
    
oil on masonite
53.5 x 69.0
Liz and Robin Forbes

42. **Malimup Headland** 1976
    
oil on hardboard
122.0 x 168.0
Edith Cowan University Art Collection
32. Mt Augustus 1975
pen and ink
33.0 x 50.5
The Holmes à Court Collection
Courtesy of Heytesbury
Mt Augustus 1980
oil on hardboard
120.0 x 180.0
SGIO Insurance Limited
33. Mt Augustus 1975
woodcut
29.0 x 38.5
Edith Cowan University Art Collection
Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith

34. Mt Augustus 1975
woodcut
29.2 x 49.5
Edith Cowan University Art Collection
Gift of Mark and Helen Grey-Smith