

# HIDDEN TREASURES

**INSIDE THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA  
WITH BETTY CHURCHER**

Betty Churcher presents an insider's guide to the 'hidden' art treasures in the National Library of Australia.



Photo by Marcus Fillingim. © Film Australia.

**PREMIERES TUESDAY 3 JUNE 2008, 6:50PM ON ABC1**



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# HIDDEN TREASURES

## INSIDE THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA WITH BETTY CHURCHER

### KEY CREDITS

*Hidden Treasures – inside the National Library of Australia* is a Film Australia National Interest Program in association with Early Works. Produced in association with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. With special thanks to the National Library of Australia. © Film Australia 2008.

Producer/Writer/Presenter – **Betty Churcher**

Producer/Director – **John Hughes**

Producer - **Philippa Campey**

Editor – **Uri Mizrahi**

Line Producers - **Philippa Campey, Andrea Foxworthy**

Cinematographer - **Joel Peterson**

Sound Recordists – **Mark Tarpey, Steve Best**

Composer – **Paul Grabowsky**

Executive Producer – **Anna Grieve**

Duration – **10 x 5 mins 30 secs**

An Australian Government owned company, Film Australia is a leading producer and distributor of television documentaries and educational programs. [www.filmaust.com.au](http://www.filmaust.com.au)



*Producer/Director John Hughes directs a scene of Hidden Treasures with Director of Photography Joel Peterson (right) and Betty Churcher (left) in the National Library of Australia Map Room. Photo by Marcus Fillinger. © Film Australia.*

# HIDDEN TREASURES

## INSIDE THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

### WITH BETTY CHURCHER

#### SERIES SYNOPSES

##### One line

Betty Churcher presents an insider's guide to the 'hidden' art treasures in the National Library of Australia.

##### One paragraph

The National Library of Australia is the country's largest reference library with over nine million items in its collection, including a surprising number of art works. In a new series of Hidden Treasures, Betty Churcher presents an insider's guide to some of the little known and rarely displayed art treasures held by the National Library. From her unique vantage point, Churcher makes intriguing historical connections between paintings and engravings, photography, manuscripts and artefacts, illustrated journals and diaries. These are fascinating tales about the creative process and the works themselves that offer a tantalising insight into Australia's culture and heritage.



Exterior of the National Library of Australia in Canberra. Photo by John Hughes.

##### One page

The National Library of Australia is the country's largest reference library with over nine million items in its collection, including a surprising number of art works. Yet visitors to the library glimpse only a fraction of the collection with many fragile items unable to be placed on permanent display.

Former director of the National Gallery of Australia Betty Churcher presents an insider's guide to some of the library's art treasures, which are rarely on public display. From her unique vantage point, Churcher makes intriguing historical connections between paintings and engravings, photography, manuscripts and artefacts, illustrated journals and diaries.

This series of short documentaries tells the story of Omai, the first South Sea Islander to visit London; investigates the mystery surrounding the death of Captain James Cook in Hawaii; reveals the exquisite paintings of 18-year-old colonial painter George Raper and Victorian flower hunter Ellis Rowan; and speaks with artist John Olsen about his struggle to paint the biggest commission of his career, the Sydney Opera House mural.

These are fascinating tales about the creative process and the works themselves that offer a tantalising insight into Australia's culture and heritage.



Betty Churcher in the National Library of Australia's map room. Photo by Marcus Fillinger. © Film Australia.

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## INSIDE THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

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#### EPISODE SYNOPSES

#### EPISODE 1 – AUGUSTUS EARLE AND HIS DOG, JEMMY

Tuesday 3 June 2008, 6:50pm on ABC1

##### One line

Misadventure turned to good fortune when young English artist Augustus Earle was rescued after being marooned on a remote island and accidentally became the colony's first trained artist.

##### One paragraph

Misadventure turned to good fortune when young English artist Augustus Earle was rescued after being marooned on a remote island and accidentally became the colony's first trained artist.

Earle, who was stranded for nine months with his dog Jemmy on an island in the South Atlantic Ocean, when his ship sailed without him in March 1824, filled his time recording life on the island until his art supplies ran out. The artist and his dog appear in many of his island paintings. Earle was eventually picked up by a ship bound for Sydney and during the few years he lived in the colony he became its foremost painter. Included in the National Library's collection is a 1826 oil portrait of Bungaree, the first Aborigine to circumnavigate Australia.



Augustus Earle's 1824 watercolour painting *Solitude*, watching the horizon at sun set, in the hopes of seeing a vessel, Tristan de Acunha [i.e. da Cunha] in the South Atlantic. From the Rex Nan Kivell Collection. Image courtesy of National Library of Australia.

#### EPISODE 2 – THE FLOWER HUNTER

Tuesday 10 June 2008, 6:50pm on ABC1

##### One line

Petite Victorian flower painter Ellis Rowan rocked the Australian art establishment when she won the Centennial Art Prize in 1888.

##### One paragraph

Petite Victorian flower painter Ellis Rowan rocked the Australian art establishment when she won the Centennial Art Prize in 1888, defeating established male artists including Tom Roberts and Frederick McCubbin and prompting a complaint by the Victorian Art Society. A feisty and tenacious adventurer, Rowan travelled Australia searching for rare and exotic species to paint before venturing into the jungles of New Guinea to find inspiration for her exquisite flower paintings. Using watercolours and gouache on coloured paper, she painted many unique varieties, on one occasion claiming to have dangled by a rope over a precipice, hundreds of metres above the rainforest below, to paint a tree orchid. The bitterness of her male rivals lasted until well after her death in 1922. Some 900 of her watercolours are now in the National Library collection.



Ellis Rowan's 1880s watercolour *Banksia Serrata*. From the Ellis Rowan Australian Collection. Image courtesy of National Library of Australia

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#### EPISODE 3 – THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND THE PAINTER

Tuesday 17 June 2008, 6:50pm on ABC1

##### One line

Artists working in different media have created a visual time capsule showing Melbourne in the late 1800s.

##### One paragraph

Artists working in different media have created a visual time capsule showing Melbourne in the late 1800s. The first, an album of photographs by the city's official photographer Charles Nettleton, features Bourke Street, Melbourne, Looking East, an 1878 photograph showing men chatting in the middle of sleepy Bourke Street, while the second, a painting by Tom Roberts circa 1886, shows the same street bustling with pre-Christmas trade. The painting, originally named *Allegro con brio*, was altered in 1890 when the artist added three figures to the foreground.

Aerial maps of the city in the National Library collection show the massive transformation that took place in Melbourne over the 50 years from 1838.

The photograph, the painting and the aerial map provide snapshots of early Melbourne, each one supplying information particular to the medium.



Tom Roberts' 1886 oil painting *Bourke Street, Melbourne* (aka *Allegro con brio*). Image courtesy of National Library of Australia.

#### EPISODE 4 – A PASSIONATE COLLECTOR

Tuesday 24 June 2008, 6:50pm on ABC1

##### One line

Through his passion for collecting, New Zealander Rex Nan Kivell invented a new aristocratic identity.

##### One paragraph

New Zealander Rex Nan Kivell was an avid collector of anything to do with 18th century exploration and the early settlement of Australia and New Zealand. His fine collection of 12,000 items ranges across a third of the globe and spans three centuries. Among its priceless treasures are one of the earliest maritime atlases of the world, *Dell'Arcano del Mare* (*Secrets of the Sea*), compiled in Italy in 1643; a catalogue of sea monsters; the first map of the coastline of Australia and even a handsome silver kettle with built-in spirit lamp given by Queen Charlotte to Sir Joseph Banks. But Sir Rex de Charambec Nan Kivell, as he became, concealed a secret from the world—he was born Reginald Nankivell, the illegitimate son of a New Zealander.



James Mortimer's 1950s photograph *Portrait of Rex Nan Kivell*. Image courtesy of National Library of Australia.

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#### EPISODE 5 – CAPTAIN COOK IN HAWAII

Tuesday 1 July 2008, 6:50pm on ABC1

##### One line

The story of Captain James Cook's ill-fated final voyage to the Pacific is one of tragic cultural misunderstanding.

##### One paragraph

The story of Captain James Cook's ill-fated final voyage to the Pacific is one of tragic cultural misunderstanding. As told through the journals of Lieutenant James King and Captain Cook in *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, printed in 1784, the explorers received a heroes' welcome when Cook's ship, *Resolution*, first landed in Hawaii's Kealahou Bay. The story of what unfolded over the next few weeks—as seen through the eyes of 18th century Englishmen—is revealed in numerous illustrations in the journals, including "A canoe of the Sandwich Islands, the rowers masked", "A Masked Priest" and "An offering before Capt. Cook in the Sandwich Islands". But Cook's welcome was short-lived once the islanders realised that the *Resolution* did not represent, as they first imagined, an earthly visitation of their god Orono—and this cost Cook his life in 1779.



George Carter's 1781 oil on canvas painting *Death of Captain Cook*. Image courtesy of National Library of Australia.

#### EPISODE 6 – CAPTAIN COOK'S TRAGIC DEATH

Tuesday 8 July 2008, 6:50pm on ABC1

##### One line

Captain James Cook's untimely return to Hawaii ended with his violent death, the details of which are portrayed in numerous conflicting illustrations.



George Carter's 1781 oil on canvas painting *Death of Captain Cook*. Image courtesy of National Library of Australia.

##### One paragraph

Captain James Cook's untimely return to Hawaii in 1779, 10 days after he had left, ended with his violent death, the details of which are portrayed in numerous illustrations in the National Library collection. Many artists, including the official artist for the voyage John Webber, recreated the scene in the years following Cook's death. Each artist portrayed a different view: Cook the white knight, Cook the peacemaker, Cook the leader of a military offensive. But we know that Webber didn't witness the death so it seems likely that an engraving made from the drawings of D.P. Dodd and other witnesses are more likely to represent what really happened.

# HIDDEN TREASURES

## INSIDE THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

### WITH BETTY CHURCHER

#### EPISODE 7 – SOUTH SEA ISLANDER IN LONDON

Tuesday 15 July 2008, 6:50pm on ABC1

##### One line

Omai, a young Tahitian warrior who joined Captain James Cook's second voyage, had his portrait painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds and inspired a spectacular pantomime at Covent Garden.

##### One paragraph

A young Tahitian warrior named Omai enlisted as a crew member during Captain James Cook's second circumnavigation of the world. On his arrival in London in 1774 he was welcomed into the highest social circles. England's most sought-after 18th century painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, painted his portrait in 1774, for which a rare sketch is held in the National Library collection. While Omai eventually returned to the islands, his story inspired a spectacular pantomime at Theatre Royal in Covent Garden, with costumes designed by Philippe Jacques de Louthembourg, which brought ethnographic realism to a somewhat farcical plot.



Plate mark engraving print Omai drawn from nature by W. Hodges; engraved by J. Caldwell. Image courtesy of National Library of Australia.

#### EPISODE 8 – FIRST FLEET SKETCHES

Tuesday 22 July 2008, 6:50pm on ABC1

##### One line

First Fleet captain John Hunter's sketchbook showing life in Botany Bay was copied from the work of his talented young midshipman, George Raper.

##### One paragraph

First Fleet captain John Hunter copied the work of young First Fleet midshipman George Raper to produce his famous sketchbook showing life in Botany Bay. Raper's own First Fleet paintings, begun in 1788, show his skill and fine eye for detail in capturing the birds and flowers of NSW. They were acquired by the National Library of Australia in 2004 after lying undiscovered and undisturbed for more than 200 years in an English manor. While Hunter, who became the second Governor of NSW, didn't share Raper's talents with a paintbrush, both men shared equally an excitement and enthusiasm for recording what they found in Sydney Cove in 1788.



George Raper's 1789 watercolour drawing Laughing kookaburra (*Dacelo novaeguineae*). Image courtesy of National Library of Australia.

# HIDDEN TREASURES

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#### EPISODE 9 – FIGURE IN THE LANDSCAPE

Tuesday 29 July 2008, 6:50pm on ABC1

##### One line

John Glover revolutionised his art to become one of Australia's finest landscape artists.

##### One paragraph

John Glover revolutionised his art and became one of Australia's finest landscape artists after arriving in Tasmania at the age of 64 in 1831. A good English landscape painter, Glover became an outstanding Australian landscape painter when he turned his eye to an unfamiliar environment to produce the best works of his career. Glover's private sketchbooks show he was appalled by the atrocities he saw committed against the Aboriginal people and was eager to portray them in the idyllic world he imagined they had once enjoyed. What he saw transformed him from a purely landscape painter into a figure in the landscape – a considerable departure for a man in late career.



Thomas Phillips' c1823 Portrait of John Glover. Image courtesy of Tasmanian Aboriginal Gallery, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

#### EPISODE 10 – JOHN OLSEN'S OPERA HOUSE MURAL

Tuesday 5 August 2008, 6:50pm on ABC1

##### One line

John Olsen's visual diary reveals the inspiration behind the biggest commission of his career, the Sydney Opera House mural.



Betty Churcher talking with artist John Olsen in the Sydney Opera House during filming. Photo by Ross Coffey. © Film Australia.

##### One paragraph

John Olsen's visual diary documents his progress on the biggest commission of his career, the Sydney Opera House mural. Spanning 10 years from 1972, Olsen's diary follows the evolution of his famous mural, which was inspired by Kenneth Slessor's epic poem *Five Bells*, a tribute to a friend who drowned in Sydney Harbour. Slessor's own 1937 notebook sits alongside Olsen's diary, detailing the gradual process of constructing an epic poem. Olsen guides Churcher through the creation of his mural, and the marine world of Sydney Harbour, to reveal another treasure—a hidden corner of the painting rarely seen by the public.

# HIDDEN TREASURES

## INSIDE THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

### WITH BETTY CHURCHER

#### PRODUCTION STORY

With over nine million items in its collection, the National Library of Australia is the country's largest reference library. Yet visitors to the library see only a fraction of the collection—many items, including rare and valuable art and artefacts, are too fragile to be placed on permanent display.

In *Hidden Treasures - inside the National Library of Australia*, Betty Churcher takes viewers inside the vaults of the library, drawing on her wealth of knowledge to search out and explain the library's hidden art treasures.

"It is to do with uncovering things of interest and wonder in a library collection," Churcher says. "People think of libraries as books and yet you've also got a very rare and wonderful Sir Joshua Reynolds drawing."

Churcher combines her interest in filmmaking with a passion for arousing people's curiosity about art in this rich series of five-minute documentaries.

By examining valuable artworks and artefacts, she brings to life moments in Australia's history. Fascinating tales behind the works offer a tantalising insight into Australia's culture and heritage.

"I wanted to make the whole story of Australian history more real," she says. "I wanted to give a reality to events such as Captain Cook's death and the story of Omai, all of those things; I just wanted to give it a perspective so people could sit Australian events into what was happening elsewhere in the world."

As the stories unfold she reveals how the truth of history is not simply what happened, but what was recorded and why.

*Hidden Treasures - inside the National Library of Australia* is the second *Hidden Treasures* series – the first series examined the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, of which Betty Churcher was once director.

Since leaving the gallery, she has written and presented several television series, including *The Art of War*, which won the television scriptwriting prize at the 2005 NSW Premier's Literary Awards.

Director John Hughes, who worked with Churcher on *The Art of War* and the first series of *Hidden Treasures*, says she delivers with clarity the stories behind the treasures, bringing to life Australia's history and memory, as well as the art.

Churcher makes intriguing connections between paintings and engravings, photography, manuscripts and artefacts, illustrated journals and artist's diaries. The series includes the story behind the first South Sea Islander to visit London, the death of Captain James Cook in Hawaii, the bird paintings of 18-year-old colonial painter George Raper, Victorian flower hunter Ellis Rowan and John Olsen's struggles to paint the biggest commission of his career – the Sydney Opera House mural.

"Betty has been determined throughout her career—whether as a director of a major cultural institution such as the Art Gallery of Western Australia or the National Gallery of Australia, or as a producer, writer and presenter for television—to make art accessible to broad audiences," Hughes says.

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“On this series most of our work was with the vast collections of the National Library. With Betty’s truly expert guidance, we grew to appreciate the depth and breadth of the library’s extraordinary collection.”

The Director-General of the National Library of Australia, Jan Fullerton, says the library’s collection encompasses countless stories about Australian life and includes millions of items such as maps, books, photographs, oral histories, diaries, digital resources and paintings, each providing a perspective on Australia’s culture and history.

“It is a wonderful opportunity for the National Library to show some of our special treasures,” she says. “Collecting is at the heart of the library, so to be involved in this television series also allows people who aren’t normally able to visit the library or who may not know what the library holds, to see some of our treasures.”

Hughes hopes viewers will take three things from the new series: “Number one, curiosity; number two, wonder at the skill available in works of art; and three, the idea that artefacts of the past, and evidence in history, is uncertain and contestable.”

Should Churcher be interested in producing further Hidden Treasures series, he believes the sky is the limit.

“I dare say Betty Churcher’s agile intelligence could distil and display ‘hidden treasures’ nearly anywhere! It is the insight and erudition she brings to things that really leads us to appreciate their value and significance.”

The pair is now working together on a half-hour documentary for Film Australia and the ABC taking viewers inside the studio of artist John Olsen.



*Producer/Director John Hughes and Betty Churcher (Producer/Writer/Presenter) look through the Dell'Arcano del Mare (Secrets of the sea) - one of the earliest maritime atlases of the world. Photo by Marcus Fillinger. © Film Australia.*

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### WITH BETTY CHURCHER

#### INTERVIEW WITH BETTY CHURCHER

From her early days as a high school teacher, Betty Churcher has devoted her life to trying to arouse people's curiosity about art.

Later, as the high-profile director of the Australian National Gallery, Churcher became famous for her blockbuster international art exhibitions, shows that drew huge crowds of people who may not otherwise have seen the masterpieces on display.

"It makes a huge difference looking at a picture in a book to looking at a picture hanging on a wall. It all contributes to your understanding of a work of art," she explains.

Churcher's latest television series, *Hidden Treasures - inside the National Library of Australia*, extends the concept further, taking viewers into the vaults of the National Library as she unearths and explains the treasures held within.

"It is to do with uncovering things of interest and wonder in our library collection," she says. "I knew that there were wonderful things there that can be very seldom brought out on display and I thought it would be interesting to let people peek behind the scenes."

Over nine months, Churcher immersed herself in researching the series, first making the most of the extraordinary access offered by the National Library online, then visiting the library to inspect the treasures in person.

During her research, which began with the extensive collection of New Zealander Rex Nan Kivell, Churcher discovered there were numerous illustrations depicting the violent death of Captain James Cook on a beach in Hawaii. Each told a very different story.

"I thought, oh that's interesting, I wonder which is most correct? I looked at the dates and they were all made within six or seven years of Captain Cook's death, so they were all within living memory.

"That's the story that got me really excited. I enjoy the research, particularly once I get caught up with something. In this case it was the conundrum of the death of Captain Cook: what was the truth and is all history inflected in this way? That becomes my bone, if you like, that I gnaw on."

Churcher studied the journals kept by the men aboard Cook's ship—also held in the National Library's collection—before settling on the accounts of the ship's well-educated surgeon and of two eyewitnesses to Cook's death as those most likely to be accurate.

"I think history as we understand it is actually not necessarily the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It is in fact what someone has decided to record. And you can get 12 or 15 different versions, each of them are true but from a different perspective.

"What we are seeing when we are looking at history is what someone has considered important or where someone has put an emphasis for whatever reason."



Betty Churcher in the National Library of Australia Council Room. Photo by Marcus Fillinger. © Film Australia.

# HIDDEN TREASURES

## INSIDE THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

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#### ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

##### Betty Churcher – Writer/presenter/producer

Betty Churcher, Adjunct Professor at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, Australian National University, was awarded Member of the Order of Australia in 1990 and Officer of the Order of Australia in 1996. In 1997 she was The Australian newspaper's Australian of the Year.

Betty was educated in London, first at the Royal College of Art and then at the Courtauld Institute of Fine Arts, University of London.

Betty began her career as a lecturer at Kelvin Grove CAE, Brisbane. She then became a senior lecturer at Preston Institute of Technology. Following this she was principal lecturer, and then Dean, School of Art at the Phillips Institute of Technology, Victoria. Betty then moved from teaching into the world of galleries and was from 1987-90 the Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Art Gallery of Western Australia and from 1990-97, the Director and Chief Executive Officer of the National Gallery of Australia.

Betty Churcher's art programs, *The Proud Possessors*, which she wrote and presented, were shown on ABC TV. She also wrote and presented two series of micro-docs – *Take 5* and *Eye to Eye with Betty Churcher* – for the ABC as well as the four part half-hour series *The Art of War with Early Works and Film Australia* for SBS, which won the scriptwriting prize at the 2005 NSW Premier's Literary Awards.

The first series of *Hidden Treasures*, broadcast on ABC TV in 2007 was highly successful and has been acclaimed around Australia. Betty Churcher was the subject of an *Australian Biography* program for Film Australia, first broadcast on SBS in January 2004.

##### John Hughes — Producer/director

John Hughes, writer, director and producer of documentary and drama for film, television and online has been recognised for recent work with a number of industry awards: NSW Premier's History Prize (audio-visual) 2007, Film Critics Circle of Australia Award (Best Feature Documentary) 2006, Australian Teachers of Media Award (best tertiary resource) 2006, the inaugural 'Joan Long Award for achievement in Australian film history', Australasian Film and History Conference, 2006. Also in 2006 Hughes was awarded the 'Stanley Hawes Award for lifelong commitment to Australian documentary'. An online work made in collaboration with ABC Online for Film Australia, 'Moving History' presents a curated history of 60 years of Film Australia and can be accessed at: [www.abc.net.au/aplacetothink/#watch/](http://www.abc.net.au/aplacetothink/#watch/)



Producer/Director John Hughes talks to Betty Churcher in front of John Olsen's *Five Bells Mural* in the Sydney Opera House. Photo by Ross Coffey. © Film Australia.

Works for film and television include *Hidden Treasures* and *The Art of War with Betty Churcher*, *The Archive Project*, *Howard's History* and *Howard's Blemish*, *River of Dreams*, *After Mabo* and *What I Have Written*.

John was commissioning editor for documentary at SBS Independent from 1998 to 2001.

# HIDDEN TREASURES

## INSIDE THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA WITH BETTY CHURCHER

### Links and References

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3. Greg Denning, *Beach Crossings: Voyaging across times, cultures and self*, MUP 2004
4. John McPhee, *The Art of John Glover*, Melbourne, McMillan, 1980
5. Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific in the wake of the Cook Voyages*, MUP, 1992
6. Film Australia [www.filmaust.com.au/](http://www.filmaust.com.au/)
7. Betty Churcher, Australian Biography [www.australianbiography.gov.au/churcher/index.html](http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/churcher/index.html)
8. National Library of Australia [www.nla.gov.au/](http://www.nla.gov.au/)



Betty Churcher searches for documents on shelves of the National Library of Australia. Photo by Marcus Fillinger. © Film Australia.