

# SIDNEY NOLAN'S STUDIO

This is Nolan's last studio although it was just one of three spaces he painted in while living at The Rodd. After first moving to The Rodd in 1983 he had a room in the house where Lady Nolan set him up with plastic on the floor and shelves to store his paints. Many of these are the paints we now see in this studio along with the shelves at left and the two tables of spray cans at right. There are over a 1000 items in this studio.

When the smell of the spray paint and his other materials became too much for the house Nolan was sent out to paint in the barns. An attempt was made to keep out the worst of the weather and draughts by covering the doors at either end of the barn with carpet and plastic. Some of this is retained at the back wall where over-spray is still present. Spray paint is also on the painting crate lid along the right wall and on the tables. One of his background boards, used to support smaller sheets of paper, is on the table.

The studio acted both as a storage space for a large collection of art materials accumulated over 50 years, as well as a working space. It is typically cramped and utilitarian. He used the larger gallery barn when working on big canvases.

The wooden box on the floor under the main table is a Vickers machine gun case dating from the Second World War and was used by Nolan to transport paints from Australia in the 1950s. It contains some handmade paints dating back to 1941 in elliptical screw top tins, a can of Ripolin enamel, rolls of film along with spare light bulbs for the Hillman car he and his wife Cynthia brought to Europe in 1950.

Two wooden crates at the front right contain materials purchased in the USA during his Harkness Scholarship trip in 1958-1960. They include a large stock of dry pigments purchased in New York.

Nolan's choice of painting materials was driven by a need for his paints to dry fast. Traditional artist's oil paint in tubes took weeks to harden allowing artists to slowly build up their paintings. Nolan preferred household and commercial paints which dried fast such as Ripolin, a stock of which is on the shelves at left. These paints were very fluid and needed to be painted flat on the table or floor. This continued to be Nolan's preferred method of working throughout his life. Viewing his paintings using binoculars the wrong way around, would have enabled him to get distance on the work, not possible otherwise with the work laid flat.



In the 1950s Nolan was amongst a small number of artists who started using the new 'white glue', polyvinyl acetate (PVA). Into this he mixed coloured pigments. There is a large stock of PVA on the shelves and floor at left and some coloured red and yellow dry pigments in jars on the shelves above. The PVA paints were applied with squeegees and foam applicators and there is a box of used and spare squeegees under the table at the rear of the studio.

In 1963 the artist's paint maker, Rowney, developed an additive for artists to add to oil paint to speed drying called alkyd gel medium. Nolan started painting with tube oil paints and mixing this new gel medium as soon as it was available. Nolan's affection for this material is seen in the large stock in the studio, both on the shelves at left in three generations of packaging, and two full boxes at the rear of the studio.

An oval shaped tin under the spray paint table contains large tubes of oil paint handmade by fellow expatriate artist, Arthur Boyd. They were probably a gift to his friend and brother-in-law, Nolan.

In 1981 Nolan started painting with a German spray paint made by Marabu in a range called Buntlac. These were made for artists and came in a wide variety of bright colours including a fluorescent colour range. They give very matt effects when used alone, but Nolan appears also to have used them in combination with a range of glossy clear sprays which are also abundant in the studio, sometime spraying both the coloured and clear glossy together. There are also automotive coloured spray paints which would have been inherently glossy. Boxes of coloured rags below the table at the rear of the studio were used as stencils on the large spray painting canvases hung in the gallery barn.

Paula Dredge 2017

Dr Paula Dredge's 2017 residency at The Rodd was funded by the Gordon Darling Foundation, Rowena Danziger AM, Ken Coles AM and the Sidney Nolan Trust.