

‘True Crime’ comes to the Portrait Gallery

Bushrangers, oddities, true crime and scandal come together in this modern day cabinet of curiosities.

Sideshow Alley: Infamy, the macabre and the portrait explores the exploitation of convicts, criminals and the disreputable for public entertainment in Australia during the nineteenth century.

Curator, Joanna Gilmour, is intrigued by this time in history and has created an exhibition that will simultaneously captivate, repulse and amuse the inquisitive minds of visitors.

‘Featuring a spooky and sometimes disquieting selection of portraits, *Sideshow Alley* will map the various ways in which artists, photographers and entrepreneurs used portraits of Australian convicts and criminals: the canny publishers trading in salacious prints and penny dreadfuls; the studios doing a brisk trade in portraits of heroes and villains; and the waxworks proprietors who, with their ‘Chambers of Horrors’, turned violence, scandal and misfortune unto a lucrative art form,’ said Joanna.

‘The range of works in the exhibition will be rich and fascinating, ranging from the satirical images of Botany-Bay bound convicts from the eighteenth century to examples of death masks, such as Ned Kelly’s, displayed to ghoulish and sensational effect in waxworks until the early twentieth century.

‘In addition to the visual spectacle, visitors can delve into the dark, mysterious and often strange circumstances behind each portraits’ creation.’

Drawing extensively from the underbelly of the Portrait Gallery’s own collection, *Sideshow Alley* will also include fascinating, rarely seen objects from major public collections in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, as well as from those of the Old Melbourne Gaol, the University of Melbourne, the Victoria Police Museum, and the Justice & Police Museum, Sydney.

Sideshow Alley will be on display to the public from Saturday 5 December 2015 until Sunday 28 February 2016.

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