

ART AS THERAPY
28 Mar – 28 Sep 2014
NGV International
Free

Art as Therapy is a self-guided tour focusing on selected works currently displayed at NGV International in partnership with School of Life Australia. The tour re-contextualises these works from the NGV Collection with special captions that challenge visitors' assumptions about themselves, society and how we view art in galleries.

The tour has been developed in association with philosophers Alain de Botton and John Armstrong from The School of Life. At its heart is the idea that art can have a powerfully therapeutic effect and be enjoyed not only for where it came from or who made it, but also for what it can do for you – the ordinary visitor with concerns that trouble us all: work, love, status, mortality and sometimes tricky relationships.

The *Art as Therapy* tour is accompanied by a publication and a free smartphone App available for download for both iPhone and Android users.

* Please note that some works may not be on display for the duration of the *Art as Therapy* tour.

cover artwork: **DAVID HOCKNEY**
The second marriage (1963) (detail)
 oil, gouache and collage of torn wallpaper on canvas
 197.8 x 228.7 cm irreg.
 Presented by the Contemporary Art Society of London, 1965 (1525-5)
 © David Hockney

THE TOUR

Visitors will find two labels beside the works marked on the maps. The one on the left, written by a curator from the NGV, lists details of the work and its acquisition and discusses the work in an art-historical context. The label on the right, written by Alain de Botton and John Armstrong, is part of the *Art as Therapy* tour and re-examines the work in relation to some of the concerns and assumptions experienced in everyday life. Examples of *Art as Therapy* tour labels are overleaf.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

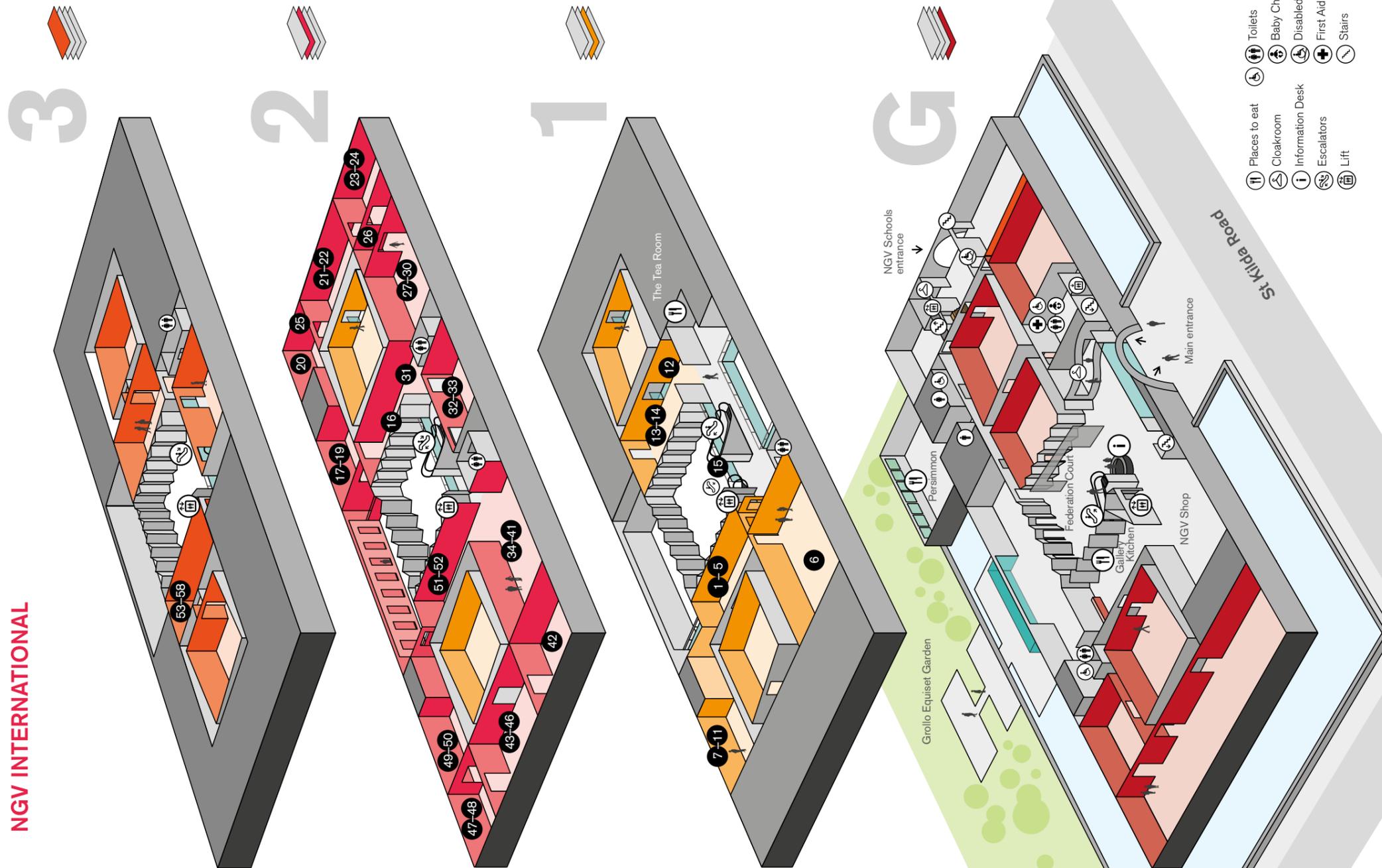
The School of Life is dedicated to exploring good ideas for everyday living. We use philosophy, culture and wisdom from through the ages to help us live wisely and well. By developing emotional intelligence through the help of culture, we address such issues as how to be more creative, how to master the art of relationships, how to make better decisions, how to achieve calm and how better to understand the world.

The School of Life Australia is based in Melbourne's CBD. The café, retail and classroom space is a place to sit with a book, take a class, drink a coffee, and meet other curious, sociable and open-minded people.

For guided tours run by The School of Life please visit theschooloflife.com.au



NGV INTERNATIONAL



KEY TO LOCATION OF WORKS

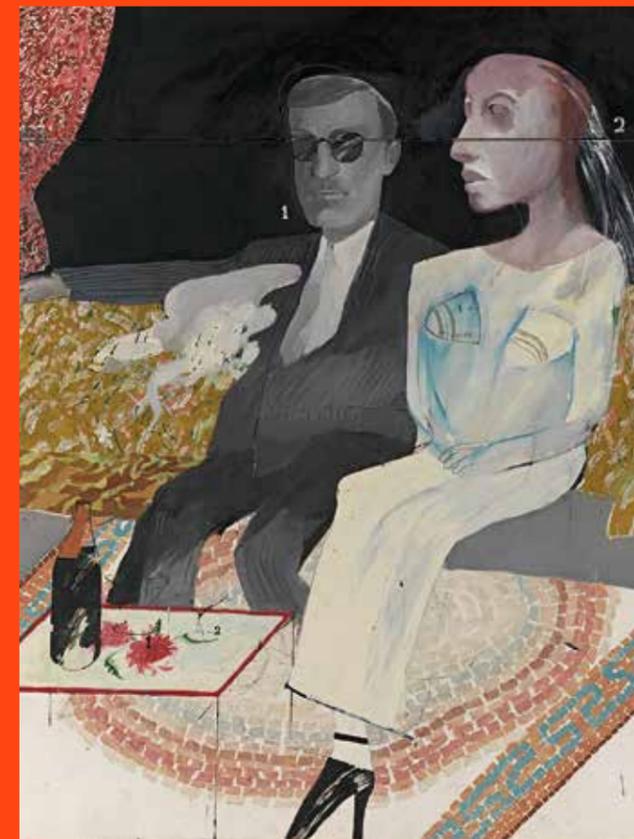
1. Chinese *Scholar's Rock*
2. Chinese *Guanyin*
3. Tibeto-Chinese *Avalokiteshvara*
4. Indian *Vishnu and his consorts Sri Lakshmi and Sarasvati*
5. Indian *Varuna*
6. Chinese *Eight lobed mirror*
7. Takahito Arisugawa *Calligraphy*
8. Kimura Morikazu *Tea bowl (Chawan) / Japanese Tenmoku Tea bowl stand (Tenmokudai)*
9. Japanese *Vase (Hanaire)*
10. Kitagawa Utamaro *Winter morning (Fuyu no asa)*
11. Japanese *Sweet container (Kashi-ki)*
12. (France) *The derision of Christ with infant St John the Baptist*
13. Correggio *Madonna and Child*
14. Flanders *St Jerome*
15. Gaston Lachaise *Torso*
16. Meissen Porcelain Factory *Dish from the Swan service, Pair of stand; Pair of plates, from the Brühlsche Allerlei service*
17. Wedgwood *Covered vase*
18. Joseph Highmore *Self-portrait*
19. Joseph Highmore *Susanna Highmore*
20. Giambattista Tiepolo *The Banquet of Cleopatra*
21. Joseph Wright of Derby *Lake Nemi, sunset*
22. Joseph Wright of Derby *Self-portrait*
23. Anthony van Dyck *Rachel de Ruvigny, Countess of Southampton*
24. Nicolas Poussin *The Crossing of the Red Sea*
25. Paolo Veronese *Nobleman between Active and Contemplative life*
26. Rembrandt Harmensz. Van Rijn *Two old men disputing*
27. Jan Davidsz. de Heem *Still life with fruit*
28. Franz Vischer *Standing cup and cover*
29. Johan Zoffany *David with the head of Goliath*
30. Jan Steen *Interior*
31. Egypt *Ushabti and overseer figures*
32. Egypt *Head covering of Padihorpasheraset*
33. Olmec, Las Bolcas, Central Mexico, *Crawling figure*
34. David Hockney *The second marriage*
35. Francis Bacon *Study from the human body*
36. Pablo Picasso *Weeping woman*
37. Auguste Rodin *The thinker*
38. Paul Signac *Gasometers at Clichy*
39. Renée Magritte *In praise of dialectics*
40. Gustave Caillebotte *The plain of Gennevilliers, yellow fields*
41. Pierre Bonnard *Siesta*
42. Edward Burne-Jones *The Wheel of Fortune*
43. Jules Bastien-Lepage *October*
44. Emmanuel Frémiet *Gorilla carrying off a woman*
45. August Friedrich Albrecht Schenck *Anguish*
46. William Quiller Orchardson *The first cloud*
47. John Constable *Clouds, sunset*
48. England *Dress*
49. Morris & Co. *Sussex armchair*
50. J. & J. Kohn *Vienna Cradle*
51. Alvar Aalto *Armchair 41*
52. Josef Hoffmann *Bookcase, from the Gallia apartment smoking room*
53. Ettore Sottsass *Carlton room divider*
54. Memphis *California carpet*
55. Michele De Lucchi *Chair*
56. Issey Miyake *Bustier*
57. Dale Chihuly *Untitled group, from the Macchia series*
58. Eero Aarnio *Globe chair*



National Gallery of Victoria

ART AS THERAPY

Works from the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria





Sickness: too busy to look at the sky.

Art is a way of preserving experiences, of which there are so many transient, beautiful examples, and which we need help in containing. Imagine being in a park on a blustery April day. We look up at the clouds and feel moved by their beauty and grace. They feel delightfully separate from the day-to-day bustle of our lives. We give our minds to the clouds and for a time are relieved of our preoccupations and placed in a wider context which stills the incessant complaints of our egos. Art edits down complexity and helps us to focus, for a brief period of time, on life's most meaningful aspects.

John Constable's cloud studies invite us to concentrate, much more than we would normally do, on the particular texture and shape of individual clouds; to look at their variations in colour and at the way they mass together. Constable didn't expect us to become deeply concerned with the expression of status. (It's meteorology: the precise nature of a cumulonimbus is not the issue. Rather, he wished to intensify the emotional meaning of the soundless drama that unfolds daily above our heads, making it more readily available to us and encouraging us to afford it the attention it deserves.

John CONSTABLE
Clouds 1822
Felton Bequest, 1938 (455-4)

Sickness: status anxiety.

The project of making art – paintings, sculpture, decorative arts – has throughout history been vulnerable to being coopted into a rather troublesome project: that of impressing other people. So much so that for some people art can seem synonymous with the expression of status. (It's worth restating that art can do many other things: it can help us re-appreciate the world, console us in our sorrows, guide our hopes and encourage tenderness.)

This cup is a particularly conspicuous example of the kidnapping of art by status.

It can be seen as yet one more example of greed and compulsive materialism. However, it may be better to consider the cup as a poignant example of vulnerability, intense fragility and anxiety that one's worth will be missed unless endorsed by precious materials and elaborate decoration.

If one is slightly repelled by the object, think of it as a homeopathic dose: seeing a particularly virulent instance of the desperation to impress strengthens our antibodies. There may be no better cure for the disease of status anxiety than to see this cup in its extreme throes.

Franz VISCHER
Standing cup and cover c. 1620
Felton Bequest, 1974 (D43.a-b-1974)

Sickness: I'm not very lucky in love.

Society's standard images of marriage portray it as a happy union. This one, by comparison, looks distinctly sinister. He doesn't look the sort of man to whom one would divulge an insecurity, or from whom one could expect a sympathetic hearing. She, younger, more vulnerable, looks lost and distanced. The painting puts us in a pessimistic (or just realistic) frame of mind about relationships.

By spending time with *The second marriage*, we do not seek to make ourselves gloomy but, rather, more appreciative of real life. The painting says to us: 'Tension and difficulty are par for

the course. This is how life tends to be: a couple sitting side by side, not much engaged by one another. The failure of a relationship, by the standards of romantic hope, is not an aberration'. This point of view changes the meaning of a broken heart. It moves from being a cruel blow aimed unjustly at you to a common experience. This may seem obvious, but when our heart is broken we generally harbour the secret belief that we are unusually unlucky individuals, unfairly deprived of the happiness which everyone else seems to enjoy. This can be a terrible addition to our sorrows.

David HOCKNEY
The second marriage 1963
Presented by the Contemporary Art Society of London, 1965 (1525-5)
© David Hockney

Sickness: I can't be sexy.

Being thought sexy by others and feeling sexy oneself are amongst the most coveted and most enjoyable of all experiences. These feelings, however, can be elusive, especially for thoughtful, serious people. It can feel as if they will never come one's way; that they are only for other people.

Although this bustier is hanging on the wall of an art gallery it is actually designed to be worn. And that means it can also be put aside. It proposes an identity to be tried on, without having to commit the whole of who you are.

The work doesn't say anything about the rest of what may be going on in a person's life: they might be holding down a highly responsible job, caring for a family, going to church, worrying about their debts or studying for a degree in archaeology. All of which are compatible with sometimes wanting (or needing) to see oneself as a sex-goddess.

ISSEY MIYAKE, Tokyo (fashion house)
Issey MIYAKE (designer)
Bustier 1980-81 autumn-winter
Purchased, 1996 (1996.102)
© Miyake Design Studio

Sickness: I like my art to be 'about' things.

These shapes do not mean one thing in particular, but our minds can make something of them nevertheless; that is one of the powers of abstract art, of which this is a modest early example. So what is it 'about'? Like music, it speaks in abstract ways, and yet can trigger our emotional chords. It seems to hit the mark exactly between our need for spontaneity and our need for coherence, for play and for logic. So often we tend to one extreme or the other: we vigorously pursue order, but

become clinical and impatient with the ordinary confusion of life. Or we abandon ourselves to chance and whim but end up lost and confused. This carpet seems to represent the vitality of life contained within the order of reason. It is a metaphor for so much: a good relationship, a great conversation, the dynamics of an orchestra, even a family. It induces a mood of serene pleasure in the interplay of complexity and order.

MEMPHIS, Milan (design house)
ELIO PALMISANO, Milan (manufacturer)
NATHALIE DU PASQUIER (designer)
California, carpet 1982
Purchased with the assistance of the National Gallery Women's Association, 1985 (CT125-1985)

Sickness: that's not art.

You might say this is not really a work of art at all. It's just a rock that happens to have been put on a base and exhibited in an art gallery. However, the rock invites us to reconsider what 'art' – a word that alludes to a heightened sensitivity to all aesthetic phenomena – really is. When you look at clouds across the horizon, or the way the light falls across your child's neck, or the texture of the dough in a loaf of bread and you see charm and

interest and beauty therein, this is art. It is not necessarily art with someone's name attached, but art in its primordial, essential form, the stuff from which the 'works of art' in museums have been made. The people who isolated the *Scholar's rock* and put it on an elegant base were trying to teach us a far deeper lesson than to appreciate objects in museums. They were trying to tell us that you must appreciate the world around you – as that is the true work of art.

CHINESE
Scholar's rock 17th century (base)
Purchased, NGV Supporters of Asian Art, 2012 (2012.129)