

# LUMINOUS AUSTRALIAN WATERCOLOURS 1900–2000

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## ***Luminous: Australian Watercolours 1900–2000***

*Luminous* showcases the National Gallery of Victoria's outstanding collection of Australian watercolours and gouaches. Watercolours have been acquired for the Gallery's collection throughout the twentieth century, with the generous help of our patrons and benefactors, and significant recent acquisitions are exhibited here for the first time.

The exhibition celebrates the important contribution watercolour has made to the development of Australian art in the twentieth century. The works have been selected to show the versatility of the medium – from traditional watercolours that capture the distinctive light and atmosphere of the Australian landscape, to experimental combinations of various media and techniques in modernist and contemporary art.

Watercolour is portable and quick-drying; its potential for fine nuances as well as spontaneous expression makes it suitable for landscapes, portraiture, still lifes, abstract compositions and direct, expressionistic modes of painting. Because it can be mixed with other water-based substances and used with a wide range of drawing media, watercolour has the potential to create novel effects in the hand of each artist. Drawing on a long history of tradition and experimentation, contemporary artists explore the malleability of the medium, producing new and unexpected results.

# Hans Heysen

born Germany 1877, arrived Australia 1884, died 1968

## Midsummer morning

1908

watercolour over pencil

Felton Bequest, 1908

377-2

South Australian artist Hans Heysen forged a distinctive and highly influential vision of the Australian landscape with his watercolours and oil paintings of majestic gum trees from the early 1900s. Capturing the effects of light and atmosphere was one of the artist's major concerns in these years, and his watercolours of the period are distinguished by their translucent washes and high-key palette. In *Midsummer morning*, Heysen masterfully evokes the brilliant hues of an early summer morning and gives expression to those intangible qualities of light and atmosphere he felt to be the essence of Australian landscape.

# Arthur Streeton

Australia 1867–1943, lived in England 1897–1919

## Valley, from Bent's Lookout

c. 1913–14

watercolour over pencil

Purchased, 1959

312-5

This watercolour painting of Bent's Lookout on Mount Buffalo embodies Arthur Streeton's vision of Australia as a land of blue and gold. Streeton uses the translucency of watercolour to suggest the effects of light and atmosphere on the dramatic landscape. In comparison to his earlier highly worked watercolours, Streeton's handling has here become broad and fluent, demonstrating a skill and confidence born of long practice. His attention to detail can be seen in the pencil lines of the underdrawing, which are deliberately retained to imitate the texture of a rock face.

# William Blamire Young

born England 1862, arrived Australia 1885, died Australia 1935

## When the horse teams came to Walhalla

1910

watercolour over pencil

Gift of Sir Harry Wunderly, 1971

A6-1971

Blamire Young was an inventive and prolific watercolourist who painted diverse subjects, including landscapes and historical, theatrical and city scenes. Although he exhibited watercolours regularly from the early 1900s, it was not until 1910, when he was nearly fifty years old, that Young's art gained critical acclaim. His watercolours of Mount Buffalo in Victoria in his 1910 exhibition were highly praised for their rich colour and decorative effects. The artist later described in his manuscript *Adventures in Paint* (1924), exhibited nearby, how Mount Buffalo provided him with a motif offering the 'alluring gradations of colour' he so loved to paint.

## For Kids

More than 100 years ago the artist William Blamire Young loved painting Walhalla, a tiny gold-mining town about 180 kilometres from Melbourne. At that time, the only way to get there was by horse and wagon.

In this painting Blamire Young used some unusual effects. How is the trees' foliage different to how it would look in real life? Do the shadows cast by the horses look realistic to you, or not?

# J. J. Hilder

Australia 1881–1916

## The pool

1909

watercolour over charcoal

Gift of Ralph Ward-Ambler AM and Barbara Ward-Ambler through  
the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2010      2010.498

Hilder's watercolours of small corners of nature were simply composed and highly prized for their subjective vision and sophisticated colour harmonies. His handling of broad washes on textured papers and atmospheric effects of light, haze and mist proved so influential on other watercolourists (amateurs in particular) that in the 1920s George Lambert scathingly described such work as belonging to the 'blotting-paper school'. Hilder's work sold extraordinarily well during his lifetime and his popularity and influence was reinforced by a tribute exhibition held in 1916 and the publication of a major monograph on his work in the same year.

# J. J. Hilder

Australia 1881–1916

## A country road

1914

watercolour

Felton Bequest, 1925

1774-3

J. J. Hilder had a brief yet highly influential career and produced an important body of watercolours between 1907 and his death, from tuberculosis, in 1916. While Hilder's earlier work featured gem-like colour, his later style was characterised by a simplicity and refined tonalism. These qualities are evident in *A country road* which also displays the artist's use of delicate, misty washes to create subtly modulated form. This was one of two J. J. Hilder watercolours acquired for the NGV Collection in 1925.



# **R. W. Sturgess**

Australia 1892–1932

## **The lane moonrise**

1909

watercolour

Gift of Ralph Ward-Ambler AM and Barbara Ward-Ambler through  
the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2010      2010.499

R. W. Sturgess enrolled at the National Gallery School in 1907, when he was fifteen, and was taught by artists including Frederick McCubbin and Bernard Hall during his five years of study. The reclusive Sturgess painted atmospheric watercolours in subtle tones while sitting outdoors for hours on end in his favourite locations, including the Malmesbury district and his native Williamstown. His career was short-lived – he was finally able to dedicate himself to painting full-time in the mid 1920s, but had to give up his career in 1929 when injuries sustained in a motorbike accident made it impossible for him to paint.

# David Davies

born Australia 1864, lived in Europe 1897–1939,  
died England 1939

## Autumn afternoon

early 1920s – mid 1920s  
watercolour over charcoal

Felton Bequest, 1926

1977-3

David Davies became known as the ‘painter of evening effects’ for his impressionistic images of landscapes illuminated by atmospheric afternoon and evening light. After studying at the National Gallery School, Davies travelled to Paris and permanently relocated to Europe in 1897, moving between southern England and northern France over the next twenty years. In 1926 he had his only solo exhibition in Australia, featuring twenty-one oil paintings and fifty-two watercolours, at Gill’s Fine Art Society Gallery in Melbourne. Most of these works were paintings of French landscapes, including *Autumn afternoon*, which was acquired by the NGV from the exhibition.

# John Russell

Australia 1858–1930, lived in Europe 1881–1921

## Paraggio

1912

watercolour and gouache over black chalk

Purchased with the assistance of a special grant from  
the Government of Victoria, 1979

A68-1980

John Russell used watercolour in the 1870s and early 1880s and turned to it again after the death of his first wife in 1908. Russell left Belle Île, his home off the coast of Brittany for twenty years, and travelled with his daughter Jeanne, whose singing career took them to southern France and Italy. Russell's choice of watercolour during this period was dictated by the medium's simplicity of technique and portability. *Paraggio* exemplifies his method: Russell lightly sketched in the compositional elements in pencil or black chalk, then lay in the colour washes on dampened paper which were finally heightened with gouache.

# Lionel Lindsay

Australia 1874–1961

## A door, Palazzo Grimani, Venice

c. 1929–35

watercolour over pencil

Felton Bequest, 1935

238-4

Lionel Lindsay is best remembered for his monochromatic etchings and meticulous wood-engravings, yet he was also an accomplished and dedicated watercolourist. Upon his return from lengthy travels in India, Spain and Italy, he held an exhibition in Sydney in 1935, which included seventy watercolours. A reviewer commented that: 'Only in hot climates, like those of the three countries mentioned, does shadow glow with a warm reflected light ... Everything shines forth refulgent. This clarity is beautifully expressed in Mr Lindsay's broad washes'. His ability to capture the shimmer of reflections and the diversely coloured shadows is evident here.

# Thea Proctor

Australia 1879–1966, lived in England 1903–12, 1914–21

## In Hyde Park

1911

watercolour, gouache and pencil

Purchased with the assistance of a special grant  
from the Government of Victoria, 1979

A66-1980

*In Hyde Park* was executed in Proctor's first stay in London between 1903 and 1912 and is an early example of her use of watercolour, a medium she continued to use throughout her life. The work was exhibited in London in 1911, where it was singled out from her fan paintings and praised for its power and boldness. The work's fluent, broad handling and colouristic effects reveal the influence of her cousin John Russell, whom she visited in France in 1910, and her knowledge of French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art.

# Napier Waller

Australia 1893–1972

## Virgil

1922

watercolour over pencil

Felton Bequest, 1922

1257-3

Although in his later career Napier Waller focused on murals, mosaics and stained glass, in the 1920s he concentrated on watercolours and linocut prints. His watercolours were unusual at the time for their literary subjects and classicising style. This watercolour presents Virgil, the Roman poet of the Augustan period, as a powerful youth wearing a dagger and escorting a winged horse. This unusual depiction is explained by the use of the winged horse in later Roman literature as a symbol of genius. The apocalyptic scene in the background illustrates the sacking of Troy related in Virgil's epic poem, the *Aeneid*.

# Norman Lindsay

Australia 1879–1969

## The fountain

1916

watercolour and gouache over pencil

Felton Bequest, 1917

802-3

*The fountain* is an early watercolour by Lindsay that bears the traits of his working method, learned from Blamire Young, and outlined in his *Norman Lindsay Water Colour Book* (1939). A binding under wash was first applied, onto which the colour 'pattern' was dropped while still wet. This was achieved in no more than two washes; a third, Lindsay believed, would put the picture at risk of 'deadness and muddiness'. Because the wash dried quickly, the composition had to be completely thought out in advance to maintain the appearance of spontaneity.

# William Blamire Young

born England 1862, arrived Australia 1885, died Australia 1935

## In the days of Governor Macquarie

c. 1924

watercolour and gouache over pencil

Felton Bequest, 1925

1511-3

Blamire Young had a keen interest in Melbourne's early history, creating a number of works in the early 1900s that fictionalise events such as the first christening held in the new settlement, or the first printed newspaper. In the 1920s he returned to such historical imagery. In this large and highly theatrical watercolour, the figures (in costumes later than Macquarie's era) are arranged as though upon a stage. Young employed various painterly effects, ranging from the distant soft foliage to detailed elements such as the green jacket and embroidered dress of the sole figure illuminated by the sun.



Book:

## **William Blamire Young**

born England 1862, arrived Australia 1885, died Australia 1935

### **The Blue Waggon**

plate 23 in *Adventures in paint*

1924

watercolour and pen and black and red ink

Felton Bequest, 1939

627-4

Blamire Young produced this unique manuscript as a sumptuous *objet d'art* in 1924, replete with hand-lettering, gold-tooled binding and twenty-seven tipped-in watercolour illustrations. The artist's text at the front of the volume gives biographical details, information on his watercolour technique and details of his theory of the relationship between an artist's sexuality and use of colour. The volume had been praised in reviews when it was exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Society in Melbourne in 1924, and was acquired for the NGV Collection fifteen years later, bringing the Gallery's holdings of the artist's work to eight items.

# Thea Proctor

Australia 1879–1966, lived in England 1903–12,  
1914–21

## The swing

c. 1923

watercolour on silk

Felton Bequest, 1924

1332-3

Thea Proctor played a major role in the inter-war period in promoting modernism in art, design and everyday life in Australia. In her own practice, Proctor produced fan-shaped paintings in watercolour on silk, drawings, watercolours and prints. She had taken up fan painting in London in the early 1900s, inspired by Charles Conder's work in this medium. *The swing* shows Proctor's application of modernist principles of design to the fan format. This idyllic scene, which shows stylishly dressed women at leisure, achieves a highly decorative effect through its simplified forms, clear bright colours and use of repetitive patterning.

For a generation of young Australian painters coming to artistic maturity in the late 1930s and 1940s, the traditional use of watercolour in atmospheric landscape painting was seen as outdated. In a period when the wide-ranging effects of the Depression were felt everywhere, this generation of artists searched for new forms of expression to describe the essence of modern life, and the social realities and political turmoil of the times. These painters produced numerous works on paper and mixed watercolour with gouache, ink and other drawing media to create powerful effects. While some explored formalism and abstraction, others looked towards expressionism and surrealism to develop their own visual language.

Writing in the *Argus* in 1939, Albert Tucker stated that art must be about the relationship between the artist and his times. This key characteristic sets the art of the late 1930s and 1940s apart from that of the previous generation: the images present a vision of reality filtered through an individual's experience. The self – that is, the artist – stands at the centre of this art. The works shown here represent some of the diverse approaches to painting in aqueous media, and the range of effects that can be achieved in the medium.

# **Thea Proctor**

Australia 1879–1966, lived in England 1903–12,  
1914–21

## **1875, fan design**

c. 1923

watercolour and gouache over pencil on paper on  
cardboard

Gift of Sam Masters, 2008

2008.34

# Frank Hinder

Australia 1906–92, lived in United States 1927–34

## Banksia

1938

tempera over pencil

The Warren Clark Bequest, 2013

2013.557

Sydney artist Frank Hinder made abstract drawings and watercolours from as early as 1931. His process was to start with a drawing from life and subject it to rigorous formal analysis, resulting in a tightly compressed composition based on a series of interlocking and overlapping ovals and rectangles. In *Banksia*, Hinder used tempera, a water-based paint containing egg yolk, to build up layers of colour in varying degrees of opacity, and then painted over some areas with a delicate brush to add tonal gradation and texture.

## For Kids

This picture was painted by the artist Frank Hinder. It shows five people riding their bikes through Canberra, with trees and hills in the background. The painter has used a few 'tricks' to give the picture a sense of movement and speed. How has he done this?

Can you see dynamic lines and geometric shapes in this picture? Are there other paintings nearby that are made in the same way?

# Frank Hinder

Australia 1906–92, lived in United States 1927–34

## Cyclists, Canberra

1945

watercolour and tempera on paper on card

Purchased, 1947

1797-4

When Frank Hinder studied in the United States in the late 1920s and early 1930s, he became familiar with the theory of dynamic symmetry developed by American artist Jay Hambidge. From the 1930s onwards, Hinder applied these principles in his paintings and works on paper, creating a sense of movement and, in the case of *Cyclists, Canberra*, investing a scene of everyday life with a Futurist dynamic.

# Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack

born Germany 1893, arrived Australia 1940, died 1965

## Story of a shell

1940

watercolour over pencil

Gift of Mrs Olive Hirschfeld, 1971

P75-1971

Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack was trained at the Bauhaus, Germany's avant-garde school of architecture and design in Weimar, where he studied under Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Lyonel Feininger. Being part-Jewish, he fled to England in 1936 and, after the outbreak of war, was classed as an 'enemy alien' and deported to Australia on the military transport ship *Dunera*. Hirschfeld Mack spent two years in internment camps, where he made a number of prints and drawings, including *Story of a shell*. The dynamic play of colour and form in this work is based on the colour theory he learnt at the Bauhaus.



# Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack

born Germany 1893, arrived Australia 1940, died 1965

## Composition

1941

watercolour

Gift of Mrs Olive Hirschfeld, 1971

P76-1971

# Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack

born Germany 1893, arrived Australia 1940, died 1965

## Fairy tale

1940s

watercolour

Gift of Mrs Olive Hirschfeld, 1971

P79-1971

# Erwin Fabian

born Germany 1915, arrived Australia 1940

## Sleep

1942

gouache

Purchased, 1997

1997.60

German-born artist Erwin Fabian arrived in Australia in 1940 as an 'enemy alien' and spent two years in internment camps. After his release in 1942 Fabian joined the army and was engaged in service at Tocomwal, New South Wales, for four years. There he painted *Sleep*, a gouache depicting five figures in a surreal, feature-less landscape with dead, ringbarked trees. It is unclear what brought the five men to this uninhabited land; their 'sleep' is also ambiguous – they seem to lie in a dark hollow, and their open mouths and sunken eyes suggest that they could be dead.

# Sidney Nolan

born Australia 1917, lived in England  
1953–92, died England 1992

## Wimmera Landscape

1942

oil and turpentine wash

Gift of the artist, 1982

P20-1982

Sidney Nolan was the most experimental of the Angry Penguin artists working in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and he developed a highly distinctive style while painting in the Wimmera District of Victoria, where he was stationed as a guard during the war. Nolan had uninterrupted views of the surrounding landscape and observed the distinctive light in the outback. Working from direct sensory experience, he painted in patches of highly diluted oils, applying the paint like a wash. These images represent an entirely new view of the Australian interior, far removed from the heroic landscapes painted by traditional watercolourists.

# **Sidney Nolan**

born Australia 1917, lived in England  
1953–92, died England 1992

## **Dimboola**

1942

oil and turpentine wash and coloured pencil

Gift of the artist, 1982

P22-1982

# Albert Tucker

Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States  
1947–60

## Clown

1943

watercolour, pen and ink and gouache

Purchased, 1978

A35-1978

*Clown* is part of Albert Tucker's series of paintings and drawings collectively titled *Images of Modern Evil* 1943–47. In these works Tucker depicts the dark streets of Melbourne inhabited by leering clowns, predatory men and sexualised women to represent what he considered as the degradation of social and moral values in war-time. Painting quickly in watercolour and gouache over a pen-and-ink underdrawing, Tucker used the medium with expressive force to portray a nightmarish world.

# **Albert Tucker**

Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States  
1947–60

## **Self-portrait**

1945

charcoal, brush and ink and wash

Purchased, 1980

P3-1980

# Russell Drysdale

born England 1912, arrived Australia 1923, died 1981

## Airport at night

1944

pen and ink, brush and ink, watercolour

Allan R. Henderson Donation, 1944

1405-4

Rejected for military service in 1940 because of poor eyesight, Russell Drysdale turned to recording wartime scenes on the Australian home front in the early 1940s. This work depicts the airbase at Sydney's Rose Bay and evokes the unsettling atmosphere of the war years through a Surrealist-inspired handling of form and complex technique. The moody colour scheme and theatrical play of light is created by mixing watercolour washes with coloured and black inks applied with both pen and brush. The extensive use of black ink in the lowering sky and the deep night shadows contributes to the work's mysterious and unsettling atmosphere.



# Danila Vassilieff

born Russia 1897, arrived Australia 1923, lived in South America and West Indies 1929–34, died 1958

## Watching the parade II

1941

gouache on brown paper

Purchased, 1983

P8-1983

Russian émigré Danila Vassilieff was an outstanding figure in the Melbourne art world during the late 1930s and 1940s. His outspoken belief in the need to liberate art from the restrictions imposed by formal training and theories, his interest in children's art and his bohemian personality made a great impact on young artists. From the 1940s onwards he made hundreds of watercolours and gouaches, which suited his impulsive approach. In *Watching the parade II*, Vassilieff applied thick gouache in a gestural way to capture the action, movement and colour of life.

# Eric Thake

Australia 1904–82

## The distant fields

1957

watercolour and gouache over pencil

Presented through the NGV Foundation from the  
Bequest of Mrs Elizabeth Summons MBE, Founder Benefactor, 2003 2006.26

Eric Thake had a long association with the NGV, from briefly studying at the art school in the early 1920s to friendships with staff in his later years. With his typically quiet sense of humour, he made a number of paintings and works on paper relating to the building and its collection. This watercolour depicts Professor A. D. Trendall, a leading expert on Attic red-figure ware, closely inspecting two Greek vessels on display at the NGV's former location on Swanston Street. Thake's refined use of colour and linear brushstrokes direct our eyes to the art being examined, and Trendall's intent pose.

# Arthur Boyd

Australia 1920–99, lived in England 1959–68

## Two lovers, a bird and a coffin

c. 1942–43

watercolour

The Warren Clark Bequest, 2016

This powerful watercolour was made during the Second World War when Arthur Boyd was serving in the army's Cartographic Unit based in South Melbourne. Boyd's response to the war, his knowledge of expressionist art and interest in writers such as Dostoyevsky and Kafka fuelled the emotional intensity of his work during these years. He developed a personal symbolism that presented a disturbing vision of a world of human suffering. Images of tormented lovers was a potent theme explored in drawings, paintings and in this rare watercolour. Here, accompanied by a corpse and threatened by a black bird, the lovers are presented as victims.

**New acquisition**

# **Danila Vassilieff**

born Russia 1897, arrived Australia 1923, lived in South America and West Indies 1929–34, died 1958

## **Local celebrity**

1956

gouache and watercolour on buff paper

Purchased, 1957

3682-4

# Joy Hester

Australia 1920–60

## Man and woman in bed

c. 1952–55

brush and chinese ink, ink wash and pastel

Purchased, 1976

P123-1976

Joy Hester is the only artist in the Angry Penguins group who painted almost exclusively in ink on paper. She had a raw expressive style, using broad quick brushstrokes and a very limited colour palette. Her drawings are intensely personal statements about joy and pain, based on experience and observations of the people around her. Hester's images of lovers are often ambiguous, suggesting that the most intimate moments can make us vulnerable to humiliation and aggression.

**Joy Hester**

Australia 1920–60

**Head of a woman with hat**

1955

gouache, ink wash and crayon on paper on cardboard

Purchased, 1965

1529-5

# Harold Herbert

Australia 1891–1945

## Blue hills

1930

watercolour over pencil

Felton Bequest, 1930

4386-3

Harold Herbert's watercolours were prized for their spontaneous technique and unembellished representation of the landscape. His directly observed scenes show a clarity of light and atmosphere informed by the landscapes of Heysen and other watercolourists. The pale, even light in this picture unites the distinctly rendered foreground trees with the hazy distant hills, binding the elements into a unified whole. This tranquil scene, in which the signs of rural production – felled trees, fences and dirt road – are discreetly subsumed within the natural landscape, reflects the ubiquitous pastoral landscape tradition which promoted ideas of national identity in the inter-war years.

# Hans Heysen

born Germany 1877, arrived Australia 1884, died 1968

## Guardian of the Brachina Gorge

1937

watercolour over charcoal

Felton Bequest, 1937

419-4

Heysen first visited the Flinders Ranges in November 1926 in search of new subject matter and was transfixed by the austere beauty of the landscape and its ancient geological forms. This region, which he visited regularly over many years, inspired him to radically rethink his style and technique. His Flinders Ranges watercolours show a new emphasis on structure, simplification of form and clarity of colour with which he sought to capture the scale, spatial ambiguities and harsh light of the region. Heysen's interest in the desert landscape influenced many artists such as Sidney Nolan, Russell Drysdale and others in the 1940s.



# Kenneth Macqueen

Australia 1897–1960

## Lagoon by the sea

c. 1950

watercolour over pencil

Purchased, 1951

2911-4

Kenneth Macqueen's modernist watercolours were acclaimed by his contemporaries for their distinctive representation of rural and seascape scenery. His works are characterised by an emphasis on rhythmic structure and strong colours, and an intensity of feeling for the landscape – the latter was informed by the artist's lifelong work as a farmer. Macqueen's technique was traditional and relied upon the use of transparent washes of colour and the white of the paper, rather than gouache, for compositional highlights. However, his vision – one that minimised detail, emphasised structure and used flat bands of colour – was in keeping with modernist precepts.

# Len Annois

Australia 1906–66

## Werribee Vale, Bacchus Marsh

1946

watercolour over pencil

Purchased, 1946

1600-4

Len Annois had a deep affinity with the Bacchus Marsh landscape, which he painted regularly from 1933 until the 1960s. Initially Annois struggled to achieve the right atmospheric effect, and then studied the work of British watercolourists such as Thomas Girtin, which taught him to simplify the design and apply washes more effectively. Annois developed an approach that enabled him to see and represent landscape in terms of tonal areas, giving his watercolours a distinctly modern appearance, while the influence of the British tradition is still clearly visible. By the 1950s Annois had become a highly successful artist in Melbourne.

# **Benjamin Landara**

Arrernte 1921–85

## **Untitled**

late 1950s

watercolour on cardboard

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by  
Robert Gould and Dita Gould, Member, 1993

O.3-1993

# Albert Namatjira

Arrernte 1902–59

## Mereenie Bluff Range, Western MacDonnell Ranges

c. 1937

watercolour over pencil

Gift of Helen Carnegie, 1995

1995.652

Albert Namatjira was born and raised on the Hermannsburg Mission in the Northern Territory. He learnt to paint in watercolour from Rex Battarbee and was the leader of the Hermannsburg School. Namatjira's notion of truth to Country as identity and spirit set him apart from many Australian landscape artists. This early group of works from around 1937 show an Arrernte landscape rendered crystalline and austere in its majesty, based on the artist's spiritual affinity with the land. Namatjira achieved legendary success and widespread popular acclaim as an artist in his own lifetime.

**Albert Namatjira**

Arrernte 1902–59

**Central Mount Wedge from MacDonnell  
Ranges**

c. 1937

watercolour over black chalk

Gift of Helen Carnegie, 1995

1995.653

**Albert Namatjira**

Arrernte 1902–59

**Ajantzi waterhole, south of Mt Liebig,  
Western MacDonnell Ranges**

c. 1937

watercolour over pencil

Gift of Helen Carnegie, 1995

1995.654

**Albert Namatjira**

Arrernte 1902–59

**Ghost Gum, MacDonnell Ranges,  
Central Australia**

c. 1945

watercolour over black chalk

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria  
in memory of Emmanuel and Kamilla Mandl by Mrs Lisl Singer,  
Member, 1999

1999.196

The 1950s and 1960s were exciting decades of growth and new public and institutional support for art in Australia. One important development in this period was the rise of abstraction. Greater exposure to international developments, through touring exhibitions and overseas travel, inspired artists to experiment with non-figurative modes of expression.

In Sydney abstract expressionism emerged as a major new impetus in the 1950s. Watercolour, ink, gouache and other water-based media appealed to many artists for the direct expression and spontaneous effects they facilitated. Robert Klippel and Tony Tuckson produced important bodies of abstract works on paper in the 1950s and Yvonne Audette and Henry Salkauskas continued to exhibit abstract expressionist works in the 1960s.

By the early 1960s a new generation of young Australian artists began engaging with the international styles of hard-edge and colour field abstraction. In Sydney the artist-run space Central Street Gallery became the focus of these avant-garde developments and in Melbourne the National Gallery of Victoria's groundbreaking exhibition in 1968, *The Field*, featured this new work. The purely formal qualities of watercolour were used in reductive compositions by artists such as Robert Jacks, Gunther Christmann and Guy Warren in their explorations of colour, figure and ground relationships and seriality.



# Ian Fairweather

born Scotland 1891, lived in China 1929–36, throughout Asia 1933–43, arrived Australia 1934, died 1974

## Bike

1950

gouache, brush and brown ink and watercolour on buff paper

Gift of Pollie Pyke, 1994

P95-1994

The reclusive Ian Fairweather was an influential figure whose increasingly abstract works in gouache and mixed media were regularly exhibited in Sydney in the 1950s and 1960s, and inspired younger artists to experiment with non-figuration. This painting was made in Darwin in the period prior to Fairweather's notorious and nearly fatal solo raft journey from Darwin to Timor in early 1952. It is one of a series of works the artist made from memory of his earlier travels in Asia and combines a complex painterly surface of freely brushed gouache, watercolour and ink.

# Tony Tuckson

born Ismailia, Egypt (of English parents) 1921, arrived Australia 1942, died 1973

## Untitled

c. 1955

gouache

The Joseph Brown Collection.

Presented through the NGV Foundation by

Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2004 2004.302

The painter Tony Tuckson is today considered one of Australia's finest twentieth-century abstract artists. The art of Ian Fairweather, European and American abstraction, as well as his own deep knowledge of Indigenous art inspired Tuckson's development of a non-figurative style in the late 1950s. His position as deputy director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales left him limited studio time and his oeuvre is accordingly strongly weighted in favour of works on paper. He produced more than 10,000 drawings in various media and different formats, and some 450 paintings.

# Robert Klippel

Australia 1920–2001, lived in United States 1958–63

## Untitled

1953

watercolour, ink and collage of  
cut and torn colour paper and printed paper

Gift of James Mollison, 1981

P53-1981

In 1950 the sculptor Robert Klippel returned to Sydney after three years in London and Paris where he had developed strong interests in Surrealism and European and American gestural abstraction. He produced an inventive and diverse body of drawings in Paris, some of which used automatic processes to create spontaneous, abstract compositions executed in ink, wash, watercolour and collage. Klippel continued this independent drawing practice following his return to Sydney and his works on paper from this period are some of the earliest examples of abstract expressionism in Australia.

# Yvonne Audette

born Australia 1930, lived in United States 1952–55, Italy 1955–66

## The jugglers

1966

gouache, brush and pen and coloured inks and collage of cut newspaper

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria from the Bequest of Violet Dulieu, Founder Benefactor, 1998

1998.320

Yvonne Audette lived and worked in New York and then Italy between 1952 and 1966, where her artistic evolution was informed by international styles of gestural abstraction. From a close analysis of American and European abstract painting she developed a lyrical, abstract style in her paintings and works on paper. She relished the quick-drying, water-based media of gouache and acrylic for the spontaneity and freedom they allowed, which facilitated her intuitive process of working. Audette layered her surfaces, scraping them back and overworking the different media. This approach led commentators to compare her works to graffitied, urban walls.

# Robert Jacks

Australia 1943–2014, lived in Canada and United States  
1968–78

**Untitled**

**Untitled**

**Untitled**

**Untitled**

1968

watercolour and pencil

Gift of Julienne Jacks through the  
Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2015

2015.324 – 2015.327

Robert Jacks's first solo exhibition in 1966 was a sell-out success, and two years later he left Melbourne to go to Toronto, and then to New York where he would live for nine years. While in Toronto, Jacks set up a studio and made contacts in the art world. This was a very productive year in which he made around seventy paintings and 200 watercolours, including these four works, which are part of a larger series and characteristic of Jacks's exploration of grids, variations and modular compositions of the late 1960s and 1970s.

# Guy Warren

born Australia 1921

## Slow drift

1974

watercolour and gouache

Purchased, 1976

A27-1976

Guy Warren worked consistently in watercolour in the 1960s and tried to align the medium with avant-garde developments in art. In 1963 the lakes and misty mountain scenery of the tropical Mungo Brush landscape north of Newcastle, New South Wales, inspired the artist to switch from painting to watercolour. He produced new series of works characterised by spreading blooms of watercolour dropped onto dampened sheets of paper. The unique vision presented in these refined, abstract works gained immediate acclaim and he produced further series using staining techniques to explore the interaction between figure and ground in his art.

# Gunter Christmann

born Germany 1936, arrived Australia 1959, died 2013

## Untitled

1974

watercolour

Gift of the artist, 1996

1996.620

Gunter Christmann came to prominence in the mid 1960s as one of the group of young artists showing at Central Street Gallery, Sydney, who were pursuing the new internationally inspired styles of hard-edge abstraction and colour field painting. Within two years of his first solo show in 1966, Christmann's work was included in *The Field*, the National Gallery of Victoria's groundbreaking exhibition which presented these new directions in Australian art. He consistently worked in drawing media throughout his career, often exhibiting his watercolours, gouaches and drawings together with his oil paintings.

# Gunter Christmann

born Germany 1936, arrived Australia 1959, died 2013

## Untitled

1974

watercolour

Gift of the artist, 1996

1996.622

Christmann began making spatter paintings in 1969, laying his canvases on the ground and flicking liquid paint from paintbrushes to achieve an all-over surface patternation. He adapted this technique for his watercolours, using sable brushes or his fingers as tools, and produced a large body of works while on a residency in Berlin in 1973–74. He sometimes worked on partly dampened sheets, as in this example from 1974 where the blue border and larger blue droplets bleed into the paper. Smaller multicoloured dots are sprayed across the surface, creating a shimmering field of colour that is intense yet diaphanous.



# John Brack

Australia 1920–99

## Beginning

1984

pen and black and brown ink and watercolour

Purchased, 1986

P11-1986

*Beginning* is an imposing work painted on a scale usually reserved for oil paintings – a format appropriate for John Brack's series of metaphorical *Battle* pictures, in which pens and pencils are engaged in conflict. In this meticulous ink-and-watercolour painting, Brack constructs a distorted pictorial space, tilting the floor to bring the objects close to the foreground, which turns this domestic setting into a stage for the troops of pens on the table and the pencils marching forward on the floor.

## For Kids

John Brack painted many pictures of everyday household objects.

What do you think the pens and pencils in this work are doing? Why are they standing on a table and marching on the floor. Where are they going?

The title of the picture is *Beginning*. Can you guess what is happening in the rest of the room?

# Donald Friend

Australia 1915–89, lived in Nigeria 1938–40, Sri Lanka 1957–61, Indonesia 1968–79

## Autumn still life

1984

watercolour and pen and brush and blue ink

Gift of Ralph Ward-Ambler AM and Barbara Ward-Ambler  
through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2010

2010.496

Donald Friend's *Autumn still life* is executed in a free and painterly style, with watercolour washes flowing and blending on the paper. The work was made when the artist could no longer travel and turned to painting motifs in his immediate environment. Friend's ability to capture the essence of the objects, the room and the light in the house, are the result of his lifelong drawing practice. Friend said of his working method that he drew as he breathed, and the unforced nature of the process is captured beautifully in this work.

# Henry Salkauskas

born Lithuania 1925, arrived Australia 1949, died 1979

## Harbour 3

1964

watercolour, pastel and charcoal

Purchased, 1964

1417-5

Henry Salkauskas immigrated to Australia in 1949 and made an important contribution to the visual arts, particularly in the prints and drawings media. In 1963 he joined the Australian Watercolour Institute and set out to revitalise watercolour painting, which he felt had become outmoded. By the mid 1960s Salkauskas specialised in watercolours and gained considerable success with his large, powerful works that reflected his admiration for the gestural abstraction of European and American artists. Salkauskas worked freely and directly, using a variety of brushes, rags and sponges on large sheets of paper that he laid on the floor.

# Fred Williams

Australia 1927–82, lived in England 1951–56

## Horseman in the landscape

1967

gouache

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of the H. J. Heinz II Charitable and Family Trust, Governor, and the Utah Foundation, Fellow, 1980AC4-1980

Williams preferred gouache for outdoor sketching and produced an inventive and substantial body of work in the medium. This gouache prefigures the 1968 oil painting (also in the NGV Collection) and both works are from the artist's *Upwey* series. In this series, a new density of colour, vigorous mark-making and formal structure are added to the distinctive calligraphy and compositional devices that Williams had already developed. In this powerful gouache, the scrubby, informal nature of the Australian bush is brought alive through the nuanced complexity of Williams's mark-making and handling of the gouache medium.

# Fred Williams

Australia 1927–82, lived in England 1951–56

## Valley with trees

1960

watercolour and gouache

Purchased, 1961

822-5

Williams made the Australian landscape his subject following his return to Melbourne from London in 1956. In the late 1950s he explored the representation of eucalypt forests in series of works that became increasingly abstracted. *Valley with trees* is from an important group made between 1958 and 1962 in Melbourne's Dandenong Ranges; in it the view of the Olinda valley is transformed into free-floating dabs of colour. This formulation of the open-wooded expanse as a series of abstracted, informally arranged marks prefigures Williams's breakthrough *You Yangs* series in which he developed his unique vocabulary of painterly and graphic marks.

# Lloyd Rees

Australia 1895–1988

## Ancient tree, Bruny Island

1988

pastel, watercolour and grey wash

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with  
the assistance of Mr Robert Raynor, Honorary Life Benefactor  
and Mrs Dorys Raynor, Founder Benefactor, 1988 P112-1988

Lloyd Rees had been drawing for seventy years when he made *Ancient tree, Bruny Island* in 1988, the year in which he died. This evocative landscape, drawn with pastel and then worked over with wash, is imbued with a sense of mystery that seems to reflect Rees's statement: 'I have an overwhelming sense of worship of eternity. We're little creatures on this earth and around us stretches something that goes on forever'.

# Gareth Sansom

born Australia 1939

## Indian love

1989

watercolour

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 20082008.345

Indian love was made during Gareth Sansom's stay in New Dehli where he was preparing to represent Australia at the Seventh Triennial. Using a children's watercolour set that he had bought from the local supermarket, Sansom made several watercolours that reflect his impressions of India. Themes of sexuality, death and religion are constant currents in Sansom's work. He traverses the line between abstraction and figuration, chaos and control, depicting some recognisable objects and signs – a foot, a leaf, a cross – and joining them with abstracted shapes and patterns to form two hybrid figures.



# Peter Walsh

Australia 1958–2009

## A man, a woman

1989–90

watercolour

The Athol Hawke and Eric Harding Collection  
of Contemporary Prints and Drawings.

Gift of Athol Hawke and Eric Harding through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program,  
2013 2013.549

Melbourne artist Peter Walsh painted images of middle-class urban life, and his works frequently make reference to youth culture and music. In *A man, a woman*, male and female symbols, including heads, bodies and genitalia, are arranged in a graffiti-style composition alongside abstract shapes and images of a house and car. This work, and the watercolour by Gareth Sansom displayed alongside, show a particular way of painting in watercolour, which leaves much of the paper visible.

# Juan Davila

born Chile 1946, arrived Australia 1974

## Buckley's return

1999

watercolour, brush and ink, gouache, coloured wax crayon, pencil, chalk, synthetic polymer paint and red wool

Purchased, 1999

1999.350

Juan Davila's portrait depicts the convict William Buckley, who escaped from his prison ship in Port Phillip Bay and lived among the local Indigenous people for more than thirty years. In 1835 Buckley met members of John Batman's party, quickly becoming the subject of popular myth. Davila presents Buckley as a person of ambiguous gender; the transformation of his identity highlights his 'otherness' and displacement from his traditional social group. The dimensions of the work far surpass the conventional scale of drawings, and Davila incorporates a wide range of media in addition to watercolour, including ink, crayon and acrylic paint.

# Fiona McMonagle

born Ireland 1977, emigrated to Australia 1977

**Untitled**

**Untitled**

**Untitled**

**Untitled**

**Untitled**

**Untitled**

2001

gouache and red fibre-tipped pen

Purchased through the NGV Foundation

with the assistance of the Joan Clemenger Endowment,

Governor, 2003

DC2-2003 – DC7-2003

Fiona McMonagle's portraits are based on photographs of criminals and socialites taken from newspapers and magazines, and copied on a large scale in gouache over fibre-tipped pen. The series brings together the famous and the infamous, using a format of full-frontal portraiture that is reminiscent of Andy Warhol's filmed 'screen tests' and Thomas Ruff's photographic portraits. However, McMonagle treats her subjects in a very particular way: their faces are masked by a milky wash of gouache, altering their expressions. The result is a disconcerting set of images that seem to conceal more than they reveal.

# Ricky Swallow

born Australia 1974, lived in England  
2003–06, United States 2006–

## Death struggle

from the *Goya copies* suite  
2000  
watercolour

The Athol Hawke & Eric Harding Collection  
of Contemporary Prints and Drawings  
Promised gift

Ricky Swallow makes watercolours as studies for sculptural works, as well as finished works including portraits and thematic series, such as the *Goya copies*. Inspired by Francisco Goya's ink-and-wash drawings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Swallow painted 'copies' on a much larger scale, adding colour and interpreting the works in a contemporary context. Swallow exploits the fluidity of watercolour, applying the washes in such a way that they pool and merge on the surface of the paper.

# Ricky Swallow

born Australia 1974, lived in England  
2003–06, United States 2006–

## Pygmalion and Galatea

from the *Goya copies* suite

2000

watercolour

The Athol Hawke & Eric Harding Collection  
of Contemporary Prints and Drawings  
Promised gift

*Pygmalion and Galatea* depicts a classical Greek myth – a story of artistic creation in which the sculptor Pygmalion carved a statue of his ideal woman and fell in love with her. After Pygmalion prayed to Aphrodite, the statue of Galatea was brought to life. While Swallow's watercolour is modelled very closely on the wash drawing by Francisco Goya, he has altered some details and given the sculptor the features of a chimpanzee. This is a continuation of a theme Swallow explored in earlier watercolours featuring monkeys that literally 'ape' human behaviour.

# **Ricky Swallow**

born Australia 1974, lived in England  
2003–06, United States 2006–

## **Likewise**

from the *Goya copies* suite  
2000  
watercolour

The Athol Hawke & Eric Harding Collection  
of Contemporary Prints and Drawings  
Promised gift

# John Wolseley

born England 1938, arrived Australia 1976

## The colonising of lichens in Tasmania and Valdivia

1994–96, dated 1994/95

watercolour, pencil, charcoal, black and brown chalk,  
collage of cut photocopied paper on 6 sheets

Purchased with funds from the

Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2004

2004.615

John Wolseley's works offer a poetic reimagining of the land that combines minutely observed natural details with formal elements describing the larger systems of the natural world. *The colonising of lichens in Tasmania and Valdivia* features the primitive plant form lichen depicted variously in meticulous drawings, collage photocopies and nature prints taken directly from the plant. These images are surrounded by an abstract field of watercolour stains, pencil drawings, notations and a superimposed tracery of charcoal lines suggestive of the tectonic plates of Gondwana, the ancient supercontinent that once linked Tasmania and South America, where the lichen plant grows.

# Jon Cattapan

born Australia 1956

## Life forms (Seoul)

1997

watercolour, gouache, chalk and blue pencil on 8 sheets

Purchased with funds from the  
Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2006

2006.166

During his extensive travels in Asia, Jon Cattapan observed urban life abroad, and in 1996–97 he made portraits of several cities. *Life forms (Seoul)* was made when Cattapan was artist-in-residence and visiting professor at Hongik University in South Korea. In these eight watercolours Cattapan applied wash after wash to build up various tones of blue that convey the sense of cool detachment he felt while he was in Seoul. The figures and objects are unanchored in space with no background coordinates to provide a location or a sense of scale, evoking the strange quality of a dream.



# Lesley Dumbrell

born Australia 1941, lived in Thailand and Australia 1990–

## Study for Hanoi red

1998

watercolour and gouache over pencil

Gerstl Bequest, 2000

2000.67

Since the 1990s abstract artist Lesley Dumbrell has spent extended periods in Thailand and South-East Asia, and much of her art of this period was inspired by the bright colours of shrines, street decorations and textiles. This watercolour study for the painting *Hanoi red* (also in the NGV Collection) is based on the linear grid systems found on tropical palm leaves. The work is composed of eight vertical panels painted in shades of red, crimson and magenta, and a lattice of lines ranging from yellow to blue that crisscross at varying degrees to create a sense of vibrating colour.

# **Mona Napaljarri Rockman**

Warlpiri born c. 1924

## **Warlja Jukurrpa (Men's secret Dreaming)**

1986 Lajamanu, Northern Territory  
gouache on cardboard

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria  
with the assistance of CRA Limited, Fellow, 1989

O.96-1989

The Warlpiri community of Lajamanu was established by the federal government in 1950 and is situated on the edge of the Tanami Desert, in country of the Gurindji people. In 1982, Lajamanu community school became bilingual and bicultural, and in 1986 a Traditional Painting Program for men and women was established in the local TAFE centre. As an offshoot of this program, senior women produced a collection of fifty-six gouache paintings on cardboard for the school in order to pass on their *Jukurpa* (Dreamings) to the children.

The women's paintings differ markedly from those produced solely for the commercial market. The spontaneous designs have the immediacy of body paintings and sand drawings, being transpositions of the markings applied to their bodies for *yawalyu* (women's ceremonies). These powerful works of art belie the previous misconception that Aboriginal art and ritual are for men only. They confirm that Aboriginal women across the desert manage their own rituals, which enshrine their role as nurturers of people, land and relationships. The emergence of Aboriginal women as artists serves to distinguish the 1980s from earlier decades in the twentieth century and has changed the face of Australian art.

# **Yulyurlu Lorna Napurrurla Fencer**

Warlpiri c. 1925–2006

## **Yarla Jukurrpa (Yam Dreaming)**

1986

gouache

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria  
with the assistance of  
CRA Limited, Fellow, 1989

O.133-1989

# **Pupiya Louisa Napaljarri Lawson**

Warlpiri c. 1926–2001

## **Ngalyipi Jukurrpa (Medicine vine Dreaming)**

1986

gouache on cardboard

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria  
with the assistance of CRA Limited, Fellow, 1989

O.112-1989

# **Pupiya Louisa Napaljarri Lawson**

Warlpiri c. 1926–2001

## **Mala Jukurrpa (Hare wallaby Dreaming)**

1986

gouache and earth pigments on cardboard

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria  
with the assistance of CRA Limited, Fellow, 1989

O.113-1989

# **Liddy Nampijinpa Miller**

Warlpiri born c. 1943

## **Ngapa Jukurrpa manu yujuku (Rain Dreaming with shelters)**

1986

gouache on cardboard

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria  
with the assistance of CRA Limited, Fellow, 1989

O.102-1989

# **Miyangula Lily Nangala Scobie**

Warlpiri born c. 1932

## **Ngapa Jukurrpa (Water Dreaming)**

1986

gouache and pencil

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria  
with the assistance of CRA Limited, Fellow, 1989

O.124-1989