

Making the Australian Quilt: 1800-1950

The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia | 22 July – 6 November 2016 | Admission fees apply



19 JULY 2016: Australia's rich quilt heritage, resplendent with imagery of native flora and fauna, early coats of arms and motifs of daily colonial life, is revealed in *Making the Australian Quilt: 1800-1950*.

In an Australian exclusive, the exhibition brings together more than 80 stunning quilts, coverlets and patchwork fashion garments, as well as examples of intricate quilting techniques.

Tony Ellwood, Director, NGV, said, '*Making the Australian Quilt* uncovers remarkable personal stories of Australian character, ingenuity and thriftiness through the lens of our nation's quilting legacy. Showcasing important works from public and private collections across the country, the exhibition provides an insight into the skills and technical virtuosity of these women, and men, whose works chronicle the history of Australia, stitch by stitch.'

A highlight of the exhibition is the renowned *The Rajah Quilt*, 1841, on loan from the National Gallery of Australia and

considered one of Australia's most important textiles. The work is the only surviving example of a quilt made by convicts on the long and treacherous three-month sea voyage from London to Van Diemen's Land. Thought to have been hand stitched by more than 29 female convicts aboard the ship, *The Rajah Quilt* is decorated with bird and floral designs, and very rarely displayed due to its fragility and light-sensitivity. A second convict quilt, created in 1811 and only recently discovered, is also exhibited for the first time.

Co-curators of *Making the Australian Quilt*, quilt historian and collector Dr Annette Gero and Katie Somerville, Senior Curator, Fashion and Textiles, NGV, have included an astonishingly diverse array of materials which are telling of the creative resourcefulness of their makers; from taffeta, velvet, furnishing fabric and dressmaking scraps to flour bags, possum skins, suiting samples and flannelette, each transformed by the act of cutting, layering, piecing and stitching.

Many works in the exhibition were created within intimate, private settings, yet have the ability to convey much of their broader social and historical significance. Renowned local makers such as Mary Jane Hannaford, Marianne Gibson and Amelia Brown developed unique styles which reveal the rise of an Australian identity, demonstrating the emergence of early symbols of Australian nationhood, such as flags, coats of arms and patriotic phrases, and the shift away from prevailing British traditions and emblems of the British Empire.

The exhibition also encompasses quilts created as expressions of love and connection including treasured family heirlooms which have been carefully stored in Australian homes and attics for generations.

An elaborate ball gown worn to the Mayor of Melbourne's fancy dress ball in 1866, pieced together with custom printed silk satin images of pages from 14 different Melbourne newspapers, including *The Age*, *The Australasian*, *Herald* and *Punch*, is another highlight.

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MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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Primarily featuring works made in Australia or with a significant Australian provenance, the exhibition additionally includes key 19th century English quilts that were brought or sent to Australia, informing and influencing the early quilting practices of local makers.

Making the Australian Quilt also shows that quilting was not exclusive to women makers and offers examples made by a sailor and a prisoner of war.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated, 176-page hardcover publication, available at the NGV design store for \$39.95 and written by the exhibition co-curators.

A special opening weekend symposium exploring Australian quilt making leads the range of public programs offered for *Making the Australian Quilt*. Other programs include talks, practical workshops and activities that enable a deeper exploration of the art, history and ongoing legacy of quilting in Australia.

Making the Australian Quilt: 1800–1950 is on display at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia from 22 July – 6 November 2016. Open daily, 10am–5pm.

Tickets on sale from ngv.vic.gov.au. Adult \$15 | NGV Member \$11 | Concession \$12 | Child \$7 | Family \$41

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Unstitching Quilts Symposium

Sat 23 Jul, 10am-4pm

Speakers include Dr Annette Gero, exhibition co-curator and quilt historian; Dr Leslie Levy, Executive Director, Quilt Study Center and Museum, Nebraska, US; Margaret Rolfe, quiltmaker and author; Lucas Grogan, artist; Crystal McGann, Project48; Linden Vine, Project48; and, Katie Somerville, Senior Curator, Fashion and Textiles, NGV

Cost \$28 M / \$35 A / \$30 C, includes exhibition admission

Venue Clemenger BBDO Auditorium, NGV International

Sew What? Demonstration

Sun 24 Jul, 10am-12pm and Sat 22 Oct, 1pm – 3pm

Demonstrators Patchwork and Quilters Guild of Victoria, Melbourne Modern Quilt Guild and Victorian Quilters Inc.

Cost Free

Venue Foyer, Level 3, NGV Australia

Common Threads: Social Stitching

Sun 24 Jul, 1pm-3pm, Sat 22 Oct, 10am – 12pm and Sat 6 Nov, 1pm – 3pm

Celebrate opening weekend with a drop-by social stitching session with contemporary artist and maker Shuh Lee. Shuh Lee is a Melbourne based artist and maker behind the label 'shuh.' With a fashion background, Lee has a love for hand stitching techniques and this is at the core of her practice. Her work combines art and craft, and re-purposing material objects into something usable, wearable and fun.

Cost Free

Venue Foyer, Level 3, NGV Australia

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Curator's Perspective

Sun 24 Jul, 11am

Speaker Katie Somerville, Senior Curator, Fashion and Textiles, NGV

Cost Exhibition admission

Venue Exhibition space, NGV Australia

Collector's Perspective

Sun 24 Jul, 2pm

Speaker Dr Annette Gero, exhibition co-curator and quilt historian

Cost Exhibition admission

Venue Exhibition space, NGV Australia

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Media contacts:

National Gallery of Victoria

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Image caption:

Mary Jane Hannaford

born England 1840, arrived Australia 1842, died 1930

Wedding quilt 1922

cotton, wool, glass (beads), sequins (applique)

169.0 x 195.0 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Gift of Miss Swanson 1997