



Swish

FASHIONABLE
MELBOURNE
OF THE 1950s

INTRODUCTION

Swish provides a glimpse of fashionable Melbourne during the 1950s, focusing on a number of key works by local fashion designers and milliners. This exhibition examines the fusion of international and national influences that generated the early development of a distinctly Australian approach to fashionable dress. High-profile Melbourne events, including the 1954 Royal Tour and 1956 Olympics, transformed the ways in which Melburnians perceived themselves, and provided new opportunities for international attention and profile alongside the continuing adoption of overseas styles.

Within the realm of fashion, Parisian design was still firmly established as the epitome of style and glamour. While the recent World War allowed for other influences, such as English and American design, to gain some of the spotlight, the instinct remained to look first to France. The late 1940s saw the first of several occasions where current collections from Paris fashion houses such as Dior were packaged up, complete with French mannequins, and sent out to strut the catwalks of Australian department stores, such as Myer, Melbourne. These parades continued into the 1950s and broadened to include masterpieces from the famed fashion houses of America, Italy, London and Berlin.

The hype was maintained in between such events by the seemingly relentless reports of up-to-the-minute fashion news via Australia's thriving women's and fashion magazines, including the *Australian Women's Weekly*, *Flair*, *Table Talk* and *Vogue*. The pages of local newspapers such as the *Age* and *Argus* also regularly featured stories on the latest 'look' or 'silhouette' for women to duly observe.

These fashionable reflections were not entirely one-way traffic. A shift in perspective, driven by the rising international profile of Melbourne as it hosted major world events, in turn created a platform for discussion of the merits of local talent and success on the fashion front. However, this praise was generally tempered with the obligatory self-conscious comparisons to the overseas benchmarks.

During the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, the *Age* ran a pictorial fashion feature:

To fashion conscious Victorian women, this is not just another spring – it is the long-awaited Olympic spring. It offers a challenge to them to show our international visitors that Australia can hold its own in the field of fashion as well as in the sports arena. Australian fashion designers and manufacturers are rising to the occasion. Collections seen in Melbourne during the last few weeks have well earned the classification of high fashion.¹

Acknowledgement of Australia's own emerging presence in the fashion market was gaining momentum alongside recognition of talent that was present in the local fashion-related industry. Events such as the Gown of the Year Award and the Australian Wool Bureau Fashion Awards were initiated in 1953 and 1954 respectively, with this specific goal in mind.

Regular fashion supplements were run in the papers to profile the work of Melbourne designers and related products, such as Australian wool. These were produced in an attempt to sway the local readership.² Some champions of Australian style

*Collections seen in Melbourne during the last few weeks
have well earned the classification of high fashion*

chose to take the message further afield, and in 1957 a tour of Australian fashion, modelled by Australian mannequins and entitled 'Operation Sunshine', toured London and Europe.³

Australian fashion models, or mannequins as they were then called, achieved star status during this decade in Melbourne. Identities in their own right, women such as Bambi Tuckwell (Shmith), and Diane Masters exerted significant influence as the embodiment of glamour through their work on the catwalk. Travelling extensively to promote the collections of local designers, and parading international fashion at home, mannequins were like local royalty. In 1953 Shmith and Masters established the first model-run modelling school in Melbourne.⁴

Photography also played a key role in generating the fashionable image of the 1950s. Major photographers of the era, such as Athol Shmith, Bruno Bernini and Helmut Newton, celebrated the ideal of a glamorous, well-dressed and sophisticated woman. Their cinematic studio portraits and illustrations for exclusive labels like Le Louvre and La Petite promoted and revered the 'high end' of fashion, appearing in the pages of *Vogue* and adored by the public.

Others, like Alec Murray, captured the style and lifestyles of the society set, documenting this for the influential pages of the *Australian Women's Weekly*. Increasingly, fashion was front-page news, reporting an endless succession of new seasonal silhouettes and shapes to be desired.

Dress codes were a powerful force during the 1950s. There were well-established rules outlining what, when and how different garments should be worn. An never-ending stream

of special events, such as balls, receptions and royal visits provided the range of occasions required to maintain a market for cocktail and evening wear.

At the other end of the spectrum from this preserve of the largely middle class and middle age was the emergence of a new delineated category - the youth or 'teen' market. The concept of a specific approach targeted at the mind of the fashion-conscious teenager was new territory and arose from the desire for alternative, more relaxed modes of dress. The *Australian Women's Weekly* produced its first separate pull-out section for teenagers in 1954.⁵

A number of Australian designers recognized the fashionable significance of the similarity in America's lifestyle and climate to our own. An article in *Fashion Trade News* on the topic of 'Design in Australia' gave the following advice:

The future success of Australian dress designers will lie in their ability to 'sift the wheat from the chaff' of overseas fashions and only adopt the more practical styles for introduction to the Australian market.⁶

This statement summarizes the dilemmas faced by many local designers in determining whether to look beyond imported taste or to maintain the direct connection with overseas precedents, to embrace change or to return to the past. The implied tension sits at the heart of any exploration of fashionable Melbourne during the 1950s.

Increasingly, fashion was front-page news, reporting an endless succession of new seasonal silhouettes and shapes

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Royalty, Hollywood and French fashion were three of the most significant influences for Melbourne women during the 1950s. In terms of the sheer quantity of press coverage they received, it would have been hard to remain isolated from these particular international influences. The proportion of magazine covers and content given over to covering the life of Queen Elizabeth II was significant, particularly in the lead-up to her Coronation on 2 June 1953 and the Royal Tour the following year.¹ The royal wardrobe was never spectacular for its daring, but admired for its careful conservatism which appealed to those who observed the predominantly restrictive dress codes of this period.

13. LINDA PATRICIA, Melbourne

Outfit; comprising blouse and skirt (c.1955) (detail)



Royal watching also translated into a keen interest in the works of English designers. The works of Norman Hartnell, Digby Morton and Hardy Amies were regularly featured in the Australian fashion press. As well as being reported, British fashion was also imported. In 1953, well-known London designer, Peter Russell, made a trip to Melbourne as a guest of Georges department store. He was to show his collection of 'Coronation' gowns in a series of grand parades, and to design twenty garments that were to be exclusive to Georges, and suitable for '... the races, balls and Coronation parties'.² One of these gowns is featured in this exhibition and was worn to a reception for Queen Elizabeth II at Government House, Melbourne in 1954.³

The focus on special occasion dress, such as ball gowns and cocktail dresses, in the pages of Australian magazines, reinforced the general obsession people of the time had with aristocracy, class and wealth. During the same period, American cinema stars such as Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly and Ava Gardner were proclaimed as the embodiment of style, their wardrobes and beauty regimes scrutinized at length in the pages of women's magazines. Hollywood's influence was also evident in a more general sense, in the language and design of magazine and newspaper advertisements for items such as brassieres and swimsuits, often targeted at the emerging 'teen' market.

From the late 1940s onwards, American style was also introduced to the local fashion market via a series of parades organized by Myer and Neiman Marcus.⁴ These parades included the work of Claire McCardell, Adrian, and Cole of California, and covered everything from the new focus on relaxed casual coordinates to designs by Hollywood costumiers and swimwear designed by many of the prominent Californian labels of the day.

14. LUCAS, Melbourne Evening dress 1950 (detail)



There was a growing recognition of the shared experience of American and Australian women in relation to lifestyle and climate, and its relevance to appropriate fashion design. Pioneering simplicity, practicality and informal comfort in the shadow of a predominantly restrictive European mode of dress, a small number of designers and commentators speculated on the possibilities of relaxed styles and semi-fitted comfort as the most appropriate ways for a distinctly Australian style to develop.

The *Fashion Trade News* reported that 'a direct copy does not always meet the requirements of the local market, and it is necessary to adapt overseas designs to suit Australian tastes and conditions'.⁵

15. LUCAS, Melbourne Day dress 1952 (summer) (detail)



The most potent influence in Melbourne during this decade was French, or more specifically Parisian, fashion. The collections produced by the major couture houses of the day, including Christian Dior, Jean Dessès and Balenciaga, were particularly powerful. So-called 'high fashion' from Paris was the most heavily represented in the fashion press and fashion parades, and many of Melbourne's more exclusive fashion boutiques and department store salons modelled their approach as much as their designs on these examples. For some, the relationship was direct, with licensing relationships established to enable the local creation of overseas designs.

For others, the influence was manifest in anything from their name, their exclusive client list, the decoration of their boutique and the typeface used on their label, to the European spirit of the photography used to advertise their garments. For those who were able to travel on a regular basis, there was the opportunity to bring back fashion from overseas, and also to return laden with fabrics and trimmings from Europe, for local designers to translate.

Cocktail dress (c. 1955) was made using lily-of-the-valley pattern fabric purchased overseas. It echoes many of the classic couture features, such as complex internal boning and hand-finished construction details.



THE LADIES' PARADISE

The celebration and consumption of high fashion in 1950s Melbourne encompassed two distinct shopping experiences: the larger department stores like Myer and Georges, and the Lucas showrooms; or the intimate and very exclusive dressmaking boutiques of Hall Ludlow, Le Louvre, Elvie Hill, La Petite, Raoul Couture and Magg. Both types of destination supported the development of Australia's postwar fashion industry, newly conscious of the pleasures of shopping in an era of economic prosperity.

As a place where 'fashion was displayed, watched, imitated and transformed',¹ the 1950s Melbourne department store endorsed a particular set of aesthetic and social values. From the magnificent arcade window displays to the mannequin parades of international couture collections, local women had

access to, and could participate in, an exciting and glamorous world of high-end fashion.

Georges, perhaps the most iconic store of the era, excelled in generating fashionable desires. Priding itself on service, quality and style, Georges had established a culture of exclusivity and specialization under the direction of Ms. Reta Findlay. The first store to hold in-house mannequin parades,² window displays were a city institution, often congesting traffic along Collins Street. Both instructive and influential, the displays celebrated a fashionable femininity while advising on the correct codes of dress.

Comparatively, Lucas manufacturers and showrooms gave local women direct access to the latest international styles by initiating licence deals that established ongoing relationships with major couture houses. From 1949, Lucas purchased original models from the collections of Christian Dior, Jean Dessès, Balenciaga and Nina Ricci, adapting them for the local market.³ Each range was promoted through beautifully printed catalogues, which featured detailed descriptions and sketches of the latest line, length or shade of fabric.

With the department store an important presence downtown, 1950s Melbourne also supported a growing number of exclusive boutiques located at the 'Paris', or top, end of Collins Street. Grandiose and opulent, the salons of Hall Ludlow, with its 'pearl grey, heavy satin drapes, lustrous mirrors, golden cherubs and sparkling chandeliers',⁴ or Le Louvre, with its 'antique furniture, gild mirrors, ocelot skins and sweeping staircase',⁵ sold luxury and the practice of custom-based couture to Melbourne's elite.

3. ELVIE HILL, *Melbourne Day dress* (c.1958) (detail)



With a wealthy, private clientele of socialites, models, titled women and celebrities of the day, these businesses were the favoured destinations for special occasion and quality evening wear. Catering for a world of social functions, galas and garden parties, the boutiques placed an emphasis on the exclusivity of their merchandise, and embraced the philosophy of couture. Salons like Le Louvre sold the latest French imports alongside their own designs, recreating beautiful styles based on the work of popular French couturiers. Hall Ludlow produced exquisite avant-garde garments, astonishing for their technical skill, drape and cut, and earning him the description of 'Australia's only true couturier'.⁶

Such institutions fostered the growth of a market for locally designed and tailored garments, while nurturing the talents of local dressmakers. La Petite specialized in exquisite hand-beading and lace,⁷ as illustrated by *Evening dress* (c.1955). The entire surface of the fabric has been painstakingly decorated with glass beads and sequins, and features a hand-embroidered sprig design.

Women's interest and investment in fashion during the 1950s was enormous. As an activity, shopping was a ladies' paradise, a pleasurable experience that brought one closer to sophistication and style. Yet it was also the reason for a proliferation of locally made and produced garments and a burgeoning consciousness of Australian talent.



9. LA PETITE, Melbourne Evening dress (c. 1955)

FINISHING TOUCHES

During the 1950s in Melbourne, clear and specific rules about the appropriate type of garment and accessory to be worn at any given moment throughout the day were documented, commented upon and enforced by general society and the fashion press alike. Coordinating hats, gloves, handbags, shoes and hosiery were a given, and the appropriate combinations were closely scrutinized. Seemingly endless lists of fashion dos and don'ts were printed in the pages of magazines: '... high heels with slacks, the hat-but-no-gloves, the gloves-but-no-stockings. The too-much jewellery [and] the dressy hat with the tailored suit.'¹

One of the most striking examples of this dress etiquette was the regulation concerning the wearing of hats. To be without a hat in public during the day was often equated with 'nakedness', and frequently cited in listings of fashion's most sacred taboos.

In this climate, Melbourne milliners were to thrive all year round. The inhouse millinery salons of department stores like Georges and Myer were very large and employed numerous staff to make and sell hats. Even the smaller, more exclusive, millinery salons, such as

Thomas Harrison and Ann Austin, who made one-off creations for the wardrobes of individual clients, required more than one workroom with employees.² Created with specific outfits and events in mind, many of their designs were based on popular styles from overseas, their form and scale a response to the need to balance the changing fashionable silhouettes and hairstyles from season to season. Emerging from the postwar restrictions of the late 1940s, many hats incorporated luxurious local and imported materials, such as fine silk and straw, feathers, velvet and fur. Their construction took many hours and numerous intricate and exacting steps to achieve the end result.

The fact that so many types of materials were now incorporated into the creation of fashionable accessories worked well in the Australian context. During the 1940s and 1950s, the universal popularity of materials such as woven and printed fabric, raffia and local lizard and fish skins meant that Australian women had access to a 'homegrown' range of materials in keeping with their European and American counterparts. Reptile skin handbags, gloves and shoes, became the corner-stones of a woman's wardrobe in the 1950s.



22. THOMAS HARRISON, *Melbourne Hat* (c.1955)



24. THOMAS HARRISON, Melbourne Hat (1957)

Women's shoes produced in Melbourne during the early 1950s reflected the impact of the glamorous fashions produced by Hollywood cinema. Designers imitated the wardrobes of key leading ladies, who were dressed by major film costume designers of the time. Fashion-conscious women were just as likely to be influenced by the appealing Hollywood role models, as by the rarefied catwalks of Paris. With a virtually non-existent tradition of Australian shoe design, and with limited development of local footwear manufacturing, the emphasis was placed on providing shoes that related directly to overseas trends. Local shoe manufacturers sought much of their inspiration from overseas, in keeping with other areas of fashion at the time.

Far less visible, but just as important in achieving and maintaining the right silhouette, was the wearing of a complex array of foundation and under-garments. Many garments of

this period incorporated their own internal stiffening, padding and boning to help achieve the critical shape. Brassieres, girdles, step-ins, pull-ons, petticoats and corsets were but a few of the undergarments that provided the specific framework necessary for achieving particular garment shapes. In keeping with the other areas of fashionable dress, designers of locally made foundation garments frequently took their lead from overseas precedents, particularly those of America.



2. ANN AUSTIN, Melbourne Hat (c. 1959)

CHECKLIST



2. ANN AUSTIN, Melbourne Hat (c. 1959) (detail)

ANN AUSTIN, Melbourne

est. c. 1949, closed 1975/6
Thelma PRENTICE, designer
born Australia c. 1925

1 Headpiece (c. 1957)

silk, rayon, viscose, paper, metal
height: 12.0 cm; circumference: 66.0 cm
Gift of Mrs Grace M. Tilley, 2003

2 Hat (c. 1959)

cotton, silk, rayon, feathers, paper, metal
height 11.0 cm; circumference: 70.0 cm
Gift of Mrs Grace M. Tilley, 2003

ELVIE HILL, Melbourne

est. 1956, closed 1991
Elvie PELMAN (née Hill), designer
born Australia 1918

3 Day dress (c. 1958)

silk, cotton, nylon, polyester, metal
centre back: 104.5 cm; waist: 36.0 cm (flat)
Gift of Mrs Grace M. Tilley, 2003

GEORGES Pty Ltd, Melbourne

est. 1934-66
PETER RUSSELL, London
est. c. 1928 closed 1953
Peter RUSSELL, designer
born England (n.d.), died 1965

4 Evening dress (1953)

centre back: 146.0 cm; waist: 37.5 cm (flat)
acetate, rayon, cotton, metal, elastic
Gift of Mrs L. V. S. MacKinnon, 1978
(D53-1978)

HALL LUDLOW, Melbourne

est. 1947, closed 1960
Hall LUDLOW, designer
born New Zealand 1919, arrived Australia
1947, died 2003

5 Evening dress (c. 1957)

viscose, acetate, acrylic, cotton, metal
centre back: 158.0 cm; waist 31.0 cm (flat)
Gift of Mrs Claudia Creswick, 2002
(2002.303)

6 Evening coat (c. 1958)

silk, metal
centre back: 111.0 cm; sleeve length: 37.0 cm
Gift of Mrs Beverly Warren, 1995 (1995.609)

7 Evening dress 1959

cotton, rayon, paper, elastic, metal
centre back: 107.0 cm; waist 32.0 cm (flat)
Gift of Mrs Wendy Seward, 2002
(2002.302)

LA PETITE, Melbourne

est. 1940, closed 1986
Pat RODGERS, designer
Neil RODGERS, business partner

8 Cocktail dress (c. 1955)

silk, wool, cotton, acetate, metal
centre back: 116.0 cm; waist: 31.0 cm (flat)
Gift of Mr J.O. Wicking, 1999
(1999.448)

9 Evening dress (c. 1955)

acetate, cotton, plastic, glass, metal
centre back: 135.0 cm; waist 34.0 cm (flat)
Gift of Mr J.O. Wicking, 1999
(1999.450)

10 Evening dress (1956)

acetate, cotton, plastic, metal, glass
Centre back: 142.0 cm; waist: 33.5 cm (flat)
Gift of Lady Brooks, 1963 (494A-B.5)

LE LOUVRE, Melbourne

est. c. 1929
Lillian WIGHTMAN, chief designer
Australia 1903-92

11 Gown 1956

silk, cotton, viscose, nylon, flax, rubber
centre back: 152.0 cm; waist: 35.0 cm (flat)
Gift of Mrs Cecil McKay, 1975 (D1-1975)

LINDA PATRICIA, Melbourne

est. 1949, closed 1969
Linda SUCHESTOW, designer
Australia 1919-92

12 Party dress (c. 1949-53)

linen, acetate, glass, leather, plastic, metal
centre back 87.0 cm; waist: 32.5 cm (flat)
Presented through the NGV Foundation by
Peter Corrigan, Fellow, 1995 (1995.522)

LINDA PATRICIA, Melbourne

est. 1949, closed 1969
Linda SUCHESTOW, designer
Australia 1919-92
Blas CANOVAS, fabric designer
born Spain 1903, worked in France from
1923, died 1983

13 Outfit, comprising blouse and skirt (c. 1955)

cotton, metal
blouse: centre back: 47.5 cm, sleeve length:
27.0 cm; skirt: centre back: 86.0 cm;
waist: 34.0 cm (flat)
Presented through the NGV Foundation by
Peter and Maggie Corrigan, Fellow, 2003

LUCAS, Melbourne

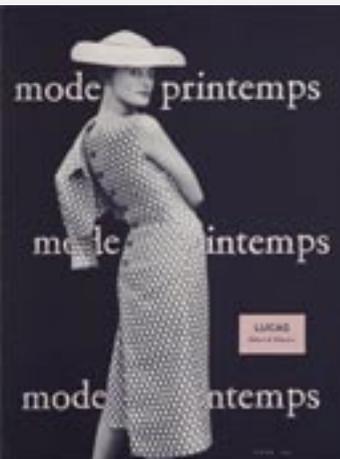
est. 1880 Ballarat, to Melbourne 1934,
closed 1968
Eva OGILVIE, chief designer

14 Evening dress 1950

acetate, cotton, elastic, metal
centre back: 123.0 cm; waist: 34.0 cm (flat)
Gift of Mrs S. McKechnie, 1973 (D239-1973)

15 Day dress 1952 (summer)

rayon, silk, acetate, cotton, elastic, metal
centre back: 129.0 cm; waist: 37.0 cm (flat)
Gift of Mrs Margaret Price, 1980
(D197-1980)



CHECKLIST

MAGG, Melbourne

est. 1920, closed 1925, reopened 1950,
closed 1977

Zara HOLT (née Dickens), chief designer
born Australia 1904, died 1989

Betty GROUNDS (née James), business partner
born Australia 1909

16 Cocktail dress 1955

silk, cotton, metal
centre back: 107.0 cm; waist: 31.0 cm (flat)
Gift of Miss Marie Balfour, 1981 (CT27-1981)

17 Engagement dress 1955

cotton, nylon, viscose, glass, metal
centre back: 106.0 cm; waist: 32.0 cm (flat)
Gift of Mrs. Kitty Howson, 2003

RAOUL COUTURE, Melbourne

est. c. 1955, closed 1964
Leonard LEGGE, designer
Australia 1917-98

18 Cocktail dress (c. 1958)

silk, rayon, cotton, metal
bodice: centre back 90.5 cm;
waist: 35.0 cm (flat)
Presented through the NGV Foundation by
Peter and Maggie Corrigan, Fellow, 2003

THOMAS HARRISON, Melbourne

est. 1929, closed 1975
Thomas HARRISON, designer
Australia 1897-1981

19 Hat (1947-50)

rayon, nylon, cotton, rubber
height: 11.0 cm; circumference: 125.0 cm
Gift of Thomas Harrison, 1980 (D235-1980)

20 Hat (1950-55)

straw, nylon, rayon, cotton
height: 10.5 cm; circumference: 156.0 cm
Gift of Thomas Harrison, 1976 (D312-1976)

21 Hat (1950-55)

sisal, wood
height: 21.0 cm; circumference: 64.0 cm
Gift of Thomas Harrison, 1976 (D308-1976)

22 Hat (c. 1955)

straw, silk, cotton, paper, metal
height: 14.0 cm; circumference: 155.0 cm
Gift of Thomas Harrison, 1976 (D323-1976)

23 Hat (c. 1955)

silk, cotton, rayon, glass, metal
height: 10.0 cm; circumference: 68.0 cm
Gift of Thomas Harrison, 1976 (D371-1976)

24 Hat (1957)

rayon, nylon, cotton, feathers, rubber
height: 43.0 cm; circumference: 59.0 cm
Gift of Thomas Harrison, 1980 (D250-1980)

12. LINDA PATRICIA, Melbourne

Party dress (c. 1949-53) (detail)



ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Age, 'For Olympic festivities', 12 September 1956, p. 8.
- 2 Argus, 'The store that leads our fashion', *Exclusive Myer Fashion supplement*, 22 February 1955, pp. 20-3.
- 3 *Australian Women's Weekly*, 'Operation Sunshine', 2 January 1957, p.32.
- 4 Carew, Laurie & Masters, Diane, *Behind Glass*, School of Architecture, RMIT, 2003, p. 69.
- 5 Wilson, Helen, 'Glamour and chauvinism', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 1940-54, NSW Institute of Technology, 1982, p. 23.
- 6 *Fashion Trade News*, 'Design in Australia', May 1950, p. 3.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

- 1 For the entire period of the Royal Tour of Australia in 1954, all but three weekly issues featured Queen Elizabeth II on the cover. Wilson, Helen, 'Glamour and chauvinism', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 1940-54, NSW Institute of Technology, 1982, p. 28.
- 2 Keith Dunstan, *The Store on the Hill*, Macmillan, 1979, p. 120.

- 3 See checklist number 4, Georges Pty Ltd/Peter Russell, *Evening dress* (1953) (D53-1978).
- 4 Programs from these parades are held in the Myer Archive at the State Library of Victoria.
- 5 *Fashion Trade News*, 'Success of fashion house', December 1948, p. 3.

THE LADIES' PARADISE

- 1 Gilbert, David, 'Urban outfitting: The city and the spaces of fashion culture' in Bruzzi, S & Gibson, P. (eds), *Fashion Cultures: Theories, explorations and analysis*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000, p. 12.
- 2 Dunstan, K. *The Store on the Hill*, Macmillan, 1979, p. 106. Under Ms.Reta Findlay's direction, Georges introduced both the first mannequin parades and, later, the first mannequin parades for teenagers. The popularity of parades resulted in a series of four annual fashion extravaganzas of Parisian fashions organized by the *Australian Women's Weekly* and hosted by department stores in Sydney and Melbourne. First held in

- 1947, fifty original Dior garments were sent to Australia for the 1948 parade.
- 3 White, Mollie, *Golden Thread: The story of a fashion house*, E. Lucas and Co. Pty. Ltd., 1888-1963, E. Lucas & Co, Victoria, 1963.
- 4 Lim, Ann, 'Master of the Dress Circle', *Australian, The Weekend Review*, 8-9 October, 1994, p. 10.
- 5 Webster, S., 'Grand dame of high fashion', *Woman's Day*, c. 1978.
- 6 Parsons, B., 'Reflections of a glamorous man', *Age, Tempo* 1994, p. 20. Ludlow's sense of proportion, detail and finish won him international acclaim and the prestigious 1955 and 1959 Australian Gown of the Year Awards. Harris, C., 'Unforgettable frocks', *Progress Press*, 12 December 1995. .

FINISHING TOUCHES

- 1 *Flair*, January 1958, p. 51.
- 2 With premises located in the Block Arcade, Austin employed about fourteen girls in the shop and workroom, while a further fourteen worked in the second workroom - also in the Block but across the way.

Published by the Council of Trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria, PO Box 7259, Melbourne, 8004

This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission. Enquiries should be directed to the publisher.

© National Gallery of Victoria 2003

Brochure text and exhibition prepared by:
Katie Somerville, Curator and Danielle Whitfield, Assistant Curator,
Australian Fashion and Textiles, National Gallery of Victoria

Conservators: Kate Douglas + Bronwyn Cosgrove + Annette Soumilas

Exhibition designer: Georgina Morgan

Graphic designers: Cameron Midson + Kai Brethouwer

Editor: Margaret Trudgeon

Word processor: Judy Shelverton

Photographer: Christian Markel

Exhibition dates

9 August 2003 - 11 January 2004

Cover and left:

8. LA PETITE, Melbourne Cocktail dress (c. 1955) (detail)



