

THE KALEIDOSCOPIIC TURN FROM THE NGV COLLECTION

Artwork labels

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ROOM 1

Ross Manning

born Australia 1978

Spectra VI

2014

coloured fluorescent lamps, motorised fans, timber, steel

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

A further instalment in Brisbane-based artist Ross Manning's ongoing *Spectra* series, *Spectra VI* consists of a series of balancing fluorescent lamps suspended at varying heights. At the end of each tube a small household fan oscillates at a regular speed, turning each light tube in independent orbit. Manning often employs everyday electronic equipment in his work, reusing components to create kinetic sculptures and atmospheric installations. He is interested in examining our relationship with technology, the rapidity of technological obsolescence and the nature of light and the fundamental role it plays in human perception.

John Nixon

born Australia 1949

Colour mountains 2

2014

digital video, silent, looped

Collection of the artist, Melbourne; courtesy Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney

John Nixon uses his paintings as the starting point for this film, creating different colour and black-and-white reproductions of them through digital filmic processes. The film uses a rapid succession of shapes, colours and permutations on a formal theme to create a dynamic retinal experience, while referring to nature in the simplified triangular form of the mountain. *Colour mountains 2* has been constructed from eight primary units that have been used to generate a multitude of images through variation, reversal and inversion. The looped work suggests a continuous stream of time, with no real beginning or end.

ROOM 2

Clockwise left to right

Sandra Selig

born Australia 1972

No. 54

2007

from the Universes series 2006–

enamel paint on spider's web on black paper

Purchased with funds donated by the
Vivien Knowles Fund for Contemporary Art, 2007

2007.733

Sandra Selig

born Australia 1972

Heart of the air you can hear

2011

spun polyester, thread, nails, paint

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

In her work, Sandra Selig often explores the discrepancy between seeing and what is seen, or that which can be loosely described as the 'poetics' of science. Relationships between physical and optical experiences are often at play within her works, mediated by materials as delicate as they are beguiling – as seen in this complex thread installation which appears like a drawing in space, and in her *Universes* series, made from spiders' webs, exhibited nearby.

Bridget Riley

born England 1931

Opening

1961

tempera and pencil on composition board

Felton Bequest, 1967

1791-5

One of the leading figures of the 1960s Op Art movement in Britain, Bridget Riley has dedicated her career to creating spatial relationships that explore the mechanisms of perception and optical illusion. Her carefully calibrated forms create harmonious rhythms or agitated contrasts. *Opening* exemplifies the movement's formal and conceptual principles: the engagement of the viewer's eye in a series of visual connections counterpointing each other in a dynamic flow. The eye is dazzled by vibrating contrasts, making the act of looking a physical as well as mental activity.

Jonny Niesche

born Australia 1972

Total vibration

2014

ink on voile and wood

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Jonny Niesche's works are often concerned with optical effects that encourage a physiological response. The title of this painting makes reference to a term coined by the German artist Otto Piene, a founding member the Zero movement that explored connections between art, nature and technology. Piene argued that the 'energy of light emanating from the field of the painting is converted mysteriously into the spectator's vital energy'. In his view, the 'continuous flow of rhythmic current between painting and observer' generated by the purity of light possessed the potential to produce 'total vibration'.

Bridget Riley

born England 1931

**Turquoise, olive and magenta
verticals**

1972

gouache and pencil

Felton Bequest, 1973

P27-1973

Daniel von Sturmer

born New Zealand 1972, arrived Australia 1993

Tableaux plastique (Sequence 2)

Tableaux plastique (Sequence 3)

Tableaux plastique (Sequence 8)

2008

colour high definition MPEG2 video files transferred to media players, silent, LCD monitors, ed. 2/3

2 min 55 sec

20 min 16 sec

2 min 5 sec

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2008

2008.105–2008.107

Daniel von Sturmer's *Tableaux plastique* series investigates the nature of perception and the relationship between viewers, images and objects. In these works, von Sturmer explores the formal possibilities of pictorial space via simple means, utilising a digital camera to film objects moving in space. Their presentation on wall-mounted screens reads like a traditionally framed picture, establishing a relationship between viewer and image that prompts a certain illusory expectation. These works consciously engage with the history of art, from the Op Art paintings of Bridget Riley to the spatial and light experiments of László Moholy-Nagy.

ROOM 3

Clockwise left to right

Stanislaus Ostoja-Kotkowski

born Poland 1922, arrived Australia 1949, died 1994

Enclosed spheres

1965

collage, plastic on plywood

Purchased, 1965

1532-5

Stanislaus Ostoja-Kotkowski

born Poland 1922, arrived Australia 1949, died 1994

The planet

1966

plastic collage and synthetic polymer paint on plywood

The Joseph Brown Collection. Presented through the NGV Foundation by
Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2004

2004.201

Polish émigré artist Stanislaus Ostoja-Kotkowski was one of the leading exponents of Op Art in Australia. During the 1960s he produced dynamic geometric abstractions comprised of circles, spirals and lines which formed dazzling moiré patterns and other optical effects, as seen in the paintings *Enclosed spheres*, *Pavo* and *The planet*. Ostoja-Kotkowski's belief that artists should use the technology of their own time also led him to develop a series of pioneering experiments incorporating projected light, laser optics and new sound and image technologies; projects that, in turn, informed his paintings.

Stanislaus Ostoja-Kotkowski

born Poland 1922, arrived Australia 1949, died 1994

Pavo

1965

plastic collage and synthetic polymer paint on plywood

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria from the
Bequest of Violet Dulieu, Founder Benefactor, 1997

1997.179

Angela Bulloch

born Canada 1965

Short, big, yellow drawing machine

2012

fibre-tipped pen, metal, plastic, microphone, speaker, synthetic strapping, electrical cables, MP3 audio

Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2013

2013.781

This work comprises a vinyl record player and wall-mounted drawing device. Operated by a series of pulleys and electric motors, the drawing machine is activated by external noise. Over time, the device produces a bold, layered ink drawing. An example of kinetic art, Bulloch's drawing machine seems to be a straightforward mechanism. This simplicity, however, belies the rich and complex way in which the work brings together the modernist concerns of grid, monochrome and colour field.

Anne-Marie May

born Australia 1965

Untitled

(Construction of coloured rays)

1993

coloured felt

Margaret Stewart Endowment, 1994

DC8-1994

Anne-Marie May

born Australia 1965

RGB (Mobile)

2013

synthetic polymer resin, stainless steel

Purchased with funds donated by the Gwenneth Nancy Head Foundation, the Betsy and Ollie Polasek Endowment and donors to the Anne-Marie May Appeal, 2014

RGB (Mobile) is a large-scale suspended sculpture created from acrylic that Anne-Marie May has manipulated through heating and stretching to yield a range of different colour harmonies. Suspended and gently moving in space, this dynamic work produces refracted light patterns, and shifting geometries, encouraging us to contemplate what we see and how we see it. The title of the sculpture refers to the RGB colour model, an additive process by which all colours of the spectrum can be made from varying combinations of red, green and blue.

Victor Vasarely

born Hungary 1908, died France 1997

Untitled

1970s

colour screenprint, ed. 61/225

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria from the
Bequest of Violet Dulieu, Founder Benefactor, 1997

1997.133

Victor Vasarely

born Hungary 1908, died France 1997

Untitled

1960s

colour screenprint, ed. 90/250

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria from the
Bequest of Violet Dulieu, Founder Benefactor, 1997

1997.132

Victor Vasarely was one of the leading exponents of the Op Art movement. In the 1950s he patented a compositional system known as 'Planetary Folklore', comprised of a range of standardised forms such as circles, squares, rhomboids and ellipses in various colours, from which a vast range of permutations could be made. During his lifetime, Vasarely also published a series of manifestos on the use of optical phenomena, suggesting that 'movement does not rely on composition nor a specific subject, but on the apprehension of the act of looking, which by itself is considered as the only creator'.

Martha Boto

born Argentina 1925, died France 2004

Square forms in movement

Structures carrés en mouvement

1968

transparent synthetic polymer resin, motor, plastic, metal

Purchased, 1969

EA1-1971

Martha Boto made important contributions to the kinetic and Op Art movements of the 1960s. *Square forms in movement* consists of a clear acrylic cylinder, sealed at each end, containing a motor and a vertical cluster of rotating acrylic rods covered with small plastic cubes. The work sets planes of splintered light spinning across its environment, and reflects Boto's interest in reflective surfaces and their potential to transform space through the modification and reflection of light.

Jesús Soto

born Venezuela 1923, lived in France 1950–2005, died 2005

London scribblings

Écriture de Londres

1965

wire, nylon, synthetic polymer paint on composition board and plywood

Felton Bequest, 1966

1588-5

Jesús Soto is a renowned Op Art and kinetic artist whose three-dimensional works experiment with optics and the representation of energy. The free-form filaments which appear against a background of black and white stripes in *London scribblings* create vibrant patterns and dazzling moiré effects, heightening viewers' consciousness of their role as one of the various forces at play. For Soto, the real and illusionary movement of the rods, stripes and wires forms a pictorial language or writing, communicated through energy and vibrations.

ANNEX TO ROOM 3

Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack

born Germany 1893, arrived Australia 1940, died 1965

Tale of man (Growing)

1940

watercolour over pencil

Gift of Mrs Olive Hirschfeld, 1971

P74-1971

Briony Galligan

born Australia 1983

Rafaella McDonald

born Australia 1987

Movement behind the backdrop

2014

synthetic polymer paint on canvas; synthetic polymer paint on wall; colour digital video, silent, 1 min 56 sec

Collection of the artists, Melbourne

Movement behind the backdrop is inspired by the work of Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, a German artist and teacher who studied under Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky at the Bauhaus. In 1940 Hirschfeld-Mack was deported from England to Australia and spent time at an internment camp in Tatura, Victoria, where he continued to teach and create work, including a number of painted backdrops for use in puppetry performances for children. Briony Galligan and Rafaella McDonald draw on this history, as well as vignettes from conventional 'backdrop' paintings, to create a highly coloured, playful tribute to the life and work of Hirschfeld-Mack.

ROOM 4

Clockwise left to right

Robert Hunter

Australia 1947–2014

Untitled

1998

synthetic polymer paint on plywood

Purchased, 1999

1999.51

The late Robert Hunter was a leading exponent of the minimal and conceptual painting that emerged in Australia in the late 1960s. He was also the youngest artist included in the National Gallery of Victoria's seminal exhibition *The Field* in 1968. From then onwards, Hunter pursued a singular aesthetic, evidenced in 'white' non-objective paintings that reveal simple, gridded geometries; their subtle transformations in tone achieved through the use of layers of matt and gloss paint. Hunter uses board as a medium to ensure absolute flatness, and the shapes discretely layered upon its surface delicately float in and out of perception.

David Thomas

born Northern Ireland 1951, arrived Australia 1958

Colour field: Paint as light series

2012

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Proposed acquisition

Like other works in this room, these small paintings by David Thomas reward close observation. Colour is a central concern for the artist, and in this series he has intuitively developed 'gently dissonant' colour combinations inspired by disparate sources, from modernist design to Korean temples. Writing on this body of work, the artist has stated: 'I am drawn to the monochrome by its visual energy and its emptiness ... A pure monochrome exists only as an idea, not as a physical reality. If used in certain ways [it] can help us see and consider the world around it more attentively'.

Eugene Carchesio

born Australia 1960

Decay of the angel

2005

watercolour over pencil

audio CDs, 75 min 50 sec (overall)

Purchased with funds from the Victorian
Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2005
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2012

2005.504.a-r, 2012.256.a-b

Eugene Carchesio is well-known for watercolours and small constructions made from simple materials, such as matchboxes and other everyday objects. Since the 1980s he has been involved in the parallel pursuits of art and music, exhibiting and performing regularly over this period. Carchesio often employs the simplest means to explore the essence of things, reflecting his interest in metaphysics. Like his watercolours and assemblages, his improvisational sound recordings encourage an appreciation of the ephemeral and the sublime.

Tomislav Nikolic

born Australia 1970

3: We all have a dream of a place we belong

2013

synthetic polymer paint, marble dust and gold leaf on canvas and wood

Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

2014.74

Tomislav Nikolic is known for luminous abstract paintings built up from many layers of pigment mixed with marble dust. Colour is a primary concern for the artist, who has stated that his aim is not to control or 'illustrate' it, but instead to allow each painting to express a 'chromatic potential'. This work is one of seven paintings that explore the Seven Rays, a concept that has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy and appeared in religious iconography throughout centuries before being popularised by theosophists, such as Alice Bailey, in the early twentieth century.

Matt Hinkley

born Australia 1976

Untitled

2014

polyurethane resin, pigment, aluminium

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2014

Each of these small-scale resin sculptures has been cast from an arrangement of found materials, including scraps of cloth, polystyrene and cardboard, as well as from small synthetic polymer impressions of drawings made by the artist in plaster. The intricacies of the surfaces, patterns and colours of these tiny sculptures invite close observation. From a distance they reveal subtle shifts in colour, form and texture. Up close, they suggest infinite expressive possibilities.

ROOM 5

Olafur Eliasson

born Denmark 1967, lives in Germany (late 1990s)–

Limbo lamp

2005

glass colour effect filter, motor, spotlight, iris diaphragm, metal, wire

Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2013

2013.782

Olafur Eliasson is interested in the way we see and experience the world around us. *Limbo lamp* continues the artist's exploration of the relationship between spectators and objects, inviting viewers to reflect upon their experience of the physical world. Eliasson has described the moment of perception activated when a viewer pauses to consider what they are experiencing as 'seeing yourself sensing'. As he explains: 'The viewer becomes the object and the context becomes the subject. I always try to turn the viewer into what's on show, make him mobile and dynamic'.

ROOM 6

Clockwise left to right

David Harley

born Australia 1961

Hay wire

2001

colour inkjet print, ed. 2/2

Purchased, 2002

2002.34

At the time David Harley produced this work, digitally made art was often considered harsh or mechanical and lacking in organic sensuality. Harley challenged that assumption with works such as *Hay wire* that reassert flow, form and vitality. Accordingly, Harley bridges the gap between traditional painting techniques and the vast possibilities that new technologies offer art.

Melinda Harper

born Australia 1965

Untitled

1993

oil on cardboard on canvas

Margaret Stewart Endowment, 1993

DC2-1994

Melinda Harper's *Untitled* features a complex arrangement of multi-hued tesserae that appear casual and organic but sit on a highly ordered vertical striped canvas. Within this formal structure, Harper painted with no overall plan, deciding the work was complete when an overall balance of activity was achieved that shifts the viewer's focus restlessly across the painted surface.

Diena Georgetti

born Australia 1966

The In residence / Compartmental sculpture workshop

The In residence / Courtyard with embellished cabinetry parallel to street

2008

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2008

2008.342, 2008.341

Diena Georgetti's small, dense abstractions combine complex arrangements of geometric forms and bright but slightly out-of-kilter colours. Her pictorially ambiguous paintings delve into the history of modernism and mix an eclectic range of references. Elements derived from Constructivism, Cubism and Dada sit happily alongside quotations from architecture, fashion, design and popular culture, offering a kaleidoscopic amalgam of various modernist styles.

Jan van der Ploeg

born The Netherlands 1959

WALL PAINTING No. 401 clean

2015

synthetic polymer paint on wall

Collection of the artist, Amsterdam, courtesy of Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney

Jan van der Ploeg first created wall paintings on the sides of buildings in his home town of Amsterdam. In *WALL PAINTING No. 401 clean*, basic, linear components painted in alternating directions confuse the distinction between foreground and background. Van der Ploeg employs simple, familiar shapes – such as these delicate blue and bright orange zigzags – combined with high-keyed colour and shifts in scale to create dynamic installations that encourage us to reconsider the architecture of the space we inhabit.

John Nixon

born Australia 1949

Project for a theatre set XI, colour group E (Random)

Project for a curtain for an opera house, colour group E (Spectrum)

2009

Project for a wall painting, colour group E (Random)

2008

enamel paint on composition board

Purchased, Victorian Foundation
for Living Australian Artists, 2009

2009.185, 2009.183, 2009.184

Each of these paintings by John Nixon employs either random or ordered arrangements of colours (primary and secondary colours with the addition of grey, black and silver) and geometric shapes selected according to specific systems devised by the artist. The works are part of Nixon's ongoing *Experimental Painting Workshop* project, which investigates the practice of painting and the histories and strategies of Constructivism, Minimalism and the monochrome. Nixon invites viewers to consider the possibility of an expanded field of abstraction with these paintings, presenting them as models or propositions for various uses and activities in the real world.

Elizabeth Newman

born Australia 1962

Untitled

2013

cotton thread on canvas

Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

2014.73

Using simple, everyday materials, Elizabeth Newman's abstractions employ preconscious and primal gestures to encourage subjective responses. With the simple act of a cut, *Untitled* creates optical effects by juxtaposing the wavy three-colour pattern of the fabric with its reverse. In this way, the work references the formal techniques of the Op Art movement.

Marco Fusinato

born Australia 1964

Paintings

1996

enamel paint on steel and composition board

Margaret Stewart Endowment, 1996

DC5.a-e-1996

Melbourne artist and experimental musician Marco Fusinato is interested in political and artistic radicalism. Much of his work adopts a punk approach or anti-art sensibility, as seen in this group of monochromes which were first exhibited in 1996 at Melbourne's 200 Gertrude Street (now Gertrude Contemporary). Painted quickly, using cheap everyday materials found readily in his studio, these paintings reveal the artist's interest in speed and seriality, and in challenging preconceived ideas about art; while his use of red alludes to a career-long investigation into the history of far-left politics in Italy.

Žilvinas Kempinas

born Lithuania 1969

Double O

2008

video tape, fans, ed. 6/6

Loti & Victor Smorgon Fund, 2012

2012.317.a-d

Žilvinas Kempinas is best known for kinetic works that combine loops of videotape with electric fans. *Double O* exploits the physics of air and motion, the loops of tape rotating and twisting, suspended in midair through the force of the fans. This kinetic sculpture is in a constant state of flux, transforming physical space and challenging the viewer's visual and spatial senses. Incorporating readily available, everyday materials, Kempinas harnesses motion in a way that is both beguiling and miraculous.