

HARD EDGE
ABSTRACT
SCULPTURE
1960s–70s

Artwork labels

Hard Edge: Abstract Sculpture 1960s–70s

The 1960s was a significant decade in the development of Australian sculpture. Major exhibitions, such as the Mildura Sculpture Triennial, the first Australian event dedicated to large-scale sculpture; *Recent Australian Sculpture* introduced in 1961, which toured all state galleries in 1964; and the National Gallery of Victoria's *The Field* in 1968 signified the growing interest in contemporary sculpture.

The later part of the decade saw many artists embrace a new style of abstraction which originated in the United States, and the most adventurous Australian sculptors' work tended towards this minimal style seen in New York City. Continuing into the 1970s, these artists created works that incorporated regular geometric forms and smooth curves. Their experimental formalist sculptures, when painted, were in flat, even colours; when left unfinished, the forms were often smooth and industrial in appearance.

Consisting of 1960s and 1970s abstract sculpture from the NGV's permanent collection, *Hard Edge* presents brightly coloured painted sculptures alongside large polished and welded steel forms. The exhibition represents key artists involved in the development of the movement in Australia, including Jock Clutterbuck, Tony Coleing, C. Elwyn Dennis, Inge King, Clement Meadmore, Clive Murray-White, Lenton Parr, Ron Robertson-Swann and David Wilson.

Exhibition essay available at ngv.to/essay

Tony COLEING

born Australia 1942, lived in England 1963–68

FronDESCENCE

1968 Sydney

aluminium, painted steel

Purchased, 1969

82-6

Tony Coleing's practice covers a range of mediums, including painting, drawing, prints and sculpture. He was represented by three large-scale sculptures in *The Field*, the NGV's inaugural exhibition at the Gallery's new premises on St Kilda Rd in 1968. Coleing's debut solo exhibition, *FronDESCENCE*, was held the following year at Gallery A, Sydney and Melbourne, from which this work of the same name was purchased. *FronDESCENCE*, meaning to bear or appear as having an abundance of leaves or fronds, encapsulates the sculpture: its biomorphic aluminium fronds move organically and naturally, resembling delicate branches caught in a breeze.

Lenton PARR

Australia 1924–2003, lived in England 1955–57

Daedalus

1965 Melbourne

steel, enamel paint

Gift of Sue Walker AM through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2010
2010.136

Lenton PARR

Australia 1924–2003, lived in England 1955–57

Marina

1965 Melbourne

steel, enamel paint

Gift of Sue Walker through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2011 2011.327

Lenton Parr travelled to England in 1955 where he worked as sculptor Henry Moore's assistant for two years. It was during this period overseas that Parr made his first welded sculptures. *Daedalus* and *Marina* are from a group of important works he produced in 1965 that mark a major conceptual and stylistic change in his style and technique. Parr's earlier sculptures were typically more figurative and featured textured surfaces. From this point on, his work is characterised by a smooth and more streamlined finish and often takes the form of assembled circular and semicircular steel plates and strips.

For Kids

Lenton Parr often made sculptures from painted steel. This metal can be very hard to work with. It is difficult to bend and has to be welded together. *Marina* is made of lots of little pieces of steel which have been welded together and painted the same colour. Can you find any other works that have been made in this way? What shapes can you see? How many different pieces are they made of?

Inge KING

born Germany 1915, arrived Australia 1951

Winged image

1964 Melbourne

welded steel

Presented by the AMP Society, 1971

A9-1971

Inge KING

born Germany 1915, arrived Australia 1951

Black sun

1974 Melbourne

enamel paint on steel, ed. 1/3

The Joseph Brown Collection

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

2004.241

Black sun represents the directional change in Inge King's art made after the commission in 1974 for *Forward surge*, now erected in the Victorian Arts Centre garden on St Kilda Rd, Melbourne. *Black sun* is the third of three maquettes for a monumental sculpture of the same name produced in an edition of two. King, who studied in Germany and Great Britain, has described her sculpture as romantic and emotional. She coaxes subtle curves and shifts out of uncompromising sheet metal, which soften the geometry of the disc that, in turn, is slit vertically so that light pierces it, depending on the angle of viewing.

Clement MEADMORE

born Australia 1929, lived in United States 1963–2005,
died United States 2005

Unwinding

1972 North Haven, Connecticut, United States
painted steel

Presented by Rio Tinto Limited through
the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2013

2013.410

After moving to the United States in 1963, Clement Meadmore began to explore what would become the central theme of his practice for the next four decades. This focused on variations of elongated, squared metal forms with understated surfaces painted matt black, left raw or allowed to rust. In the mid 1970s, the single forms of his sculptures started dividing, with elements moving in multiple directions. *Unwinding* was created immediately preceding this change and bears the influence of Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism.

Clive MURRAY-WHITE

born England 1946, arrived Australia 1959

Untitled yellow sculpture

1970 Melbourne

spun steel, paint

Gift of Mr Robert A. Dames, 1970

A19.a-c-1970

In 1969 Clive Murray-White commenced a series of works, including *Untitled yellow sculpture*, largely comprised of three varying-sized domes or discs arranged directly on the ground. It was Murray-White's intention that these sculptures could be positioned anywhere, so that they appeared to be part of their environment. However, these sculptures were only ever displayed within an exhibition context, and the artist's desired level of public interaction with the series was never fully realised.

Jock CLUTTERBUCK

born Australia 1945

Niagara

1970 Melbourne

aluminium

Presented as the winner of the Captain Cook Bicentenary Award for Sculpture, 1970 S7-1986

Jock Clutterbuck is best recognised for his burnished aluminium abstract sculptures. In 1970 he won the Captain Cook Bicentenary Award for his large, sophisticated formalist sculpture *Niagara*. Art critic Alan McCulloch stated in a review of this work that 'we scarcely need the title to envisage from the abraded aluminium the pervasive Niagara mist, or to seem to hear in contemplating the powerful arched forms the roar of mighty descending waters'.

For Kids

Jock Clutterbuck's sculpture shares its name with Niagara Falls – three large waterfalls separating the United States and Canada. The work is made of aluminium metal that has been rubbed and scratched using a technique called burnishing. The textured silver surface of this sculpture looks like foamy water splashing over the rocky edge of a waterfall. Does anything else about this sculpture remind you of falling water?

C. Elwyn DENNIS

born United States 1941, arrived Australia 1966

Evidence of origin

1971 Melbourne

wood, lacquer

Gift of Victor Smorgon, 1972

A13-1972

C. Elwyn Dennis states that his art practice from 1971 refers to 'reality independent of our species' prejudices, our cultural metaphors, our sensory limitations. It addresses structures that are too vast or too minute, events that are too slow or too quick, places that are too remote or too intimate for direct human perception'. An esoteric artist with a particularly broad approach to art-making, Dennis works in sculpture and photography, and is also a poet and recognised composer of electroacoustic computer music.

Ron ROBERTSON-SWANN

born Australia 1941, lived in England 1963–68

Maquette for Vault

1978

synthetic polymer paint on balsa wood

Purchased with the assistance of the NGV Foundation, 2005

2005.243

Ron Robertson-Swann is well regarded for his minimal, yet often rhythmically beautiful, abstract metal sculptures. The artist's most renowned public work is *Vault*, a 1978 commission by the City of Melbourne for City Square, installed in 1980. Few Australian sculptures have generated as much debate as *Vault*, which centred on the apparent incompatibility of the sculpture's scale, colour and angularity with the site. After a continued public campaign played out in the media, the work was relocated to Batman Park in 1981. In 2002 the sculpture was transferred to the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. This is the original maquette for the sculpture submitted to the City of Melbourne competition.

For Kids

This small sculpture is a model for the large work by Ron Robertson-Swann on display outside ACCA, only a few blocks away from the NGV. When it was first shown in public in 1980, many people did not like the sculpture. They were shocked by its bright colour, hard angles and large size. How do you feel about this work's yellow colour? Are you shocked? Can you find any other sculptures that use bright colours in a similar way?

Ron ROBERTSON-SWANN

born Australia 1941, lived in England 1963–68

Cyclops

1971 Sydney

steel

Presented by the National Gallery Society of Victoria, 1972

A12-1972

David WILSON

born England 1947, arrived Australia 1965

Untitled sculpture 12.71

1971 Melbourne

welded steel, lacquer

Purchased, 1972

A3-1972

This work is from a series of sculptures that David Wilson created after completing his diploma at the National Gallery School, Melbourne, in 1970. This was a productive period for the artist, during which he created two to three sculptures per week. Wilson was taught how to weld by Lenton Parr, and these early works are made from light gauge steel plate. *Untitled sculpture 12.71* was exhibited in Wilson's debut solo exhibition at Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne, in 1972.

David WILSON

born England 1947, arrived Australia 1965

Corner totem

1977 Melbourne

steel

Gift of Maria Vanneyonhoff, 1980

AC56-1980