‘let me not call you lovely. Be the chaos of the dream that knows nor nature nor lurid beauty. (...)

MAX HARRIS, 1940
Let Me Not Call You Lovely
Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes explores the profound influence Surrealism, from its historical origins to the present day, has had on Australian art. The exhibition identifies particular subjects and approaches begun by Surrealism taken up by subsequent generations of artists, including contemporary Australian artists.

Approximately 250 works are included, by more than eighty artists, embracing a gamut of media; from painting, drawing, sculpture, photography and printmaking to fashion, installation and video. Presenting historical and contemporary art in dialogue and correspondence, Lurid Beauty is an exuberant exploration of Surrealism and its echoes, reverberations and repercussions in Australian art.
This major installation by Judith Wright introduces the exhibition *Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes*, and many of the conceptual territories examined within it.

*A journey* is made up of a procession of twelve figures, mannequins and dolls. On account of its appearing both lifelike and lifeless at the same time, the mannequin was one of two examples of ‘the marvellous’ mentioned by André Breton in the *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924).

Judith Wright’s poignant work is part of a large body of recent practice centred on the death of her daughter, and the lost potential of a life. Together the figures form an otherworldly phalanx as they proceed on their unsettling journey.
Barry Humphries
born Australia 1934, lived in England 1959–

Forkscape
1958 Melbourne
steel, solder

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of John Perceval, 1991
S6-1991

As a schoolboy, Barry Humphries read about the early twentieth-century international art movement named Dada, and ‘decided then and there to become a Dadaist, starting immediately’. Later, while a student at University of Melbourne, Humphries founded a Dada group, and they undertook a series of pranks and performances whose objective was to shock and provoke. He later recalled, ‘I had a gift for that peculiar combination of ferocity and absurdity that marked the authentic Dadaist’.

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Barry Humphries  
born Australia 1934, lived in England 1959–

Exhibition catalogue for  
Barry Humphries’ ‘Second Pan-Australasian Dada Exhibition’  
1953 Melbourne  
colour lithograph

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre Melbourne  
Gift of Barry Humphries, 1981  
1981.202.098

Barry Humphries is considered to be Australia’s first Dada artist. In 1952 while a student at University of Melbourne he staged the *First Pan-Australian Dada Exhibition*. This was followed by a second exhibition in 1953. Both exhibition catalogues used classic Dada typography and imagery and included provocative manifestos. The 1953 manifesto declared:

DADA HATES YOUR GUTS
CIVILIZATION IS A RACKET.
Like Dadaism, religion, cookery, cannibalism, football, etc.
Don’t be deceived
ADMIT CULTURE STINKS.
Barry Humphries
born Australia 1934, lived in England 1959–

Single-breasted hat
1953, remade 2003 Melbourne
fur felt, zip, satin lining, leather

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre Melbourne
In 1958 Humphries held a solo exhibition at the Victorian Artists’ Society gallery in Melbourne. He exhibited *Single-breasted hat*, *Surgical glove* and *Siamese shoes I* as a group entitled *Dress Reform for the Australian Male*. These irrational objects are in the spirit of Dada, confounding expectations and poking fun at middle-class sensibilities. This glove (originally one of a pair) was knitted by Humphries’s sister in 1968, and is a recreation of a glove in the 1958 exhibition.
Barry Humphries  
born Australia 1934, lived in England 1959–

Siamese shoes I  
1958, remade 1968 Melbourne  
leather, silk scarves  

Private collection, Melbourne  

This work recalls *Das Paar (The couple)*, 1936, a pair of brown shoes attached at the toes, by the German-born, Swiss Surrealist Meret Oppenheim. During the 1930s Surrealist artists were deeply interested in combining and transforming ordinary functional items to create object-sculptures which challenged reason or gave rise to unexpected associations. In a similar vein, Humphries created irrational and absurd objects such as these shoes.
Lou Hubbard
born Australia 1957

Bore me
2007 Melbourne
two channel colour digital video, sound, 4 min

Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne
Stuart Ringholt
born Australia 1971

Untitled (Baroque)
2014 Melbourne
wood, upholstery

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane
Alex Vivian
born Australia 1981

Entry level sculpture (Things)
2015 Melbourne
fencing, iron, wire, handbag, clothing, rust, flannelette, food packaging, soiled bed sheets, used tissues, polyvinyl acetate and super glue, beach towel, wool hair and fur, scissors, pocket knife, spray adhesive

Courtesy of the artist and Sandy Brown, Berlin

Alex Vivian’s recent practice makes commonly utilised objects unsettling and abject. Domestic objects from childhood are either smeared in Vaseline or covered in teddy bear fur; both treatments provoke confusion and disgust while creating an unnerving tension between nightmare, sexual and childhood imagery.

In this work, commissioned specifically for *Lurid Beauty*, objects are attached on walls strangely, like repressed and perverted memories emerging out of the structure of the space. These absurd objects unsettle the viewer, and poke fun at or question learned or conditioned associations.
Alex Vivian
born Australia 1981

Entry level sculpture (Dream, thoughts, etc.)
2015 Melbourne
wire, toys, bird cage, composition board, doll’s ballet shoe and jacket, soiled bed sheets, flannelette, hat, found wooden sculpture, synthetic fur, spray adhesive

Courtesy of the artist and Sandy Brown, Berlin
Surrealism was officially launched in Paris in 1924 with the publication of André Breton’s *Manifesto of Surrealism*. As imagined by Breton and the writers and artists who formed the original Surrealist group, the movement aimed for nothing less than the radical transformation of society. Based upon the psychological theories and dream studies of Sigmund Freud, Surrealism sought to liberate the unconscious mind from the dominance of reason and the restriction of social conventions, in order to enable the expression of ‘true desires’. Although it was not conceived primarily as an artistic movement, Surrealism was to have its greatest impact in the visual arts.

From the 1930s into the 1950s, Surrealism played a crucial role in Australian art and was the most visible and debated of the modern movements. Surrealist artists were fascinated by the world of dreams, the illogical, absurd and irrational. They explored new techniques of generating imagery directly from the unconscious through the relaxation of conscious control, and championed a new kind of beauty typified by irrational juxtapositions, transgressive subjects and dream imagery. This was to transform viewers’ understanding of art, and Surrealism’s ongoing influence is evident in works by contemporary artists included in this exhibition.
In 1932 Sam Atyeo completed his studies at the National Gallery School in Melbourne and began to experiment with a range of modern styles, including Surrealism and abstraction. At this time he would only have known of Surrealism through reproductions of works in imported magazines, or from friends and colleagues who had travelled overseas. With its looping lines, reminiscent of automatic drawing, and its prominent eye (a Surrealist symbol of consciousness), this was one of the earliest Surrealist paintings produced in Australia.
In 1937 James Gleeson studied at the Sydney Teachers College where he encountered the psychoanalytical theory of Sigmund Freud. He also learned of Surrealism through books and journals in the college’s library. In 1938 Gleeson created his first Surrealist paintings and poem-drawings, and it was a path he followed for the rest of his life. **Massive journey of personally nocturne’d object** was exhibited together with Gleeson’s *The attitude of lightning towards a lady-mountain* in the first exhibition of the Contemporary Art Society, Melbourne, in 1939.
The attitude of lightning towards a lady-mountain

1939 Sydney

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased with the assistance of
James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007
NGA 2007.969

The attitude of lightning towards a lady-mountain is one of James Gleeson’s earliest Surrealist paintings. It caused a sensation when exhibited in the inaugural Contemporary Art Society exhibition in Melbourne in June 1939 and brought Gleeson to prominence as Australia’s foremost Surrealist. Gleeson’s earliest paintings were inspired by the dreamlike imagery and precise style of Salvador Dalí, whose work Gleeson knew only through reproduction. It was not until the end of 1939 that he saw his first original painting by Dalí, when L’Homme fleur, 1932 (now known as Memory of a child-woman), was shown in Australia in the Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art.
‘Surrealism has always been suspicious of the weight put upon us by habits of thinking. Established patterns can restrict our reactions to reality by predetermining our response to an event or condition. Tradition, and habit, often stand in the way of an instinctive and personal response. It is a corrosive factor that can eat away and hollow out the truth of the matter.

The influence of Salvador Dalí is obvious in the finished painting … though another source of the initial image could probably have come from a reading of T. S. Eliot’s *The Hollow Men* of 1922.’
Melbourne artist Eric Thake was one of the first artists in Australia to become interested in Surrealism. He was particularly drawn to the English Surrealists Edward Wadsworth and Paul Nash, whose work he first saw in reproduction in imported art magazines.

In 1940 Thake’s *Salvation from the evils of earthly existence* shared the Contemporary Art Society’s prize for ‘new expression of thought in art’ with James Gleeson’s *We inhabit the corrosive littoral of habit* (displayed nearby). Despite vigorous opposition from some of the National Gallery of Victoria’s trustees, both works were subsequently presented to the Gallery, becoming the first Surrealist works to enter the NGV Collection.
Eric Thake
Australia 1904–82

Archaeopteryx
1941 Melbourne
oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Purchased 1964 OA6.1964

Eric Thake maintained a lifelong interest in flight, and such images appear repeatedly in his work. Archaeopteryx is a genus of dinosaurs regarded as being the evolutionary link between non-avian feathered dinosaurs and modern birds. Thake’s creature is similarly transitional – both aeroplane and bird – an image of the classic Surrealist theme of metamorphosis between two opposing states; in this instance machine and animal.
Robert Klippel  
Australia 1920–2001, lived in England and France  

James Gleeson  
Australia 1915–2008, lived in England and Europe  

No. 35 Madame Sophie Sesostoris (A pre-raphaelite satire)  
1947–48 London  
Beech, painted wood

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Gift of James Gleeson and Robert Klippel 1970  
SA3.1970

This collaborative work was carved and assembled by Robert Klippel and painted by James Gleeson in the years 1947–48, when both artists were living in the same studio complex in London. The title derives from T. S. Eliot’s prose poem *The Waste Land* (1922) which features the character ‘Madame Sosostris, a famous clairvoyant’. The finished work reminded Gleeson of the mysterious women painted by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones and hence he added the additional title *A pre-raphaelite satire*, as well as deliberately misspelling the character’s name. The paintings on the plinth are taken directly from images in the poem.
Roy de Maistre

Conflict
1932 London
oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Purchased 1960

One of Sydney’s leading modernists in the 1920s, Roy de Maistre departed for London in 1930 where he quickly established himself in avant-garde art circles. In 1933 he was included in Herbert Read’s influential publication Art Now and invited to exhibit at London’s Mayor Gallery. The gallery was the leading promoter of modern art in London, showing artists such as Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst, Joan Miró and other members of the international avant-garde. Although Surrealism was at that time still little-known in England, through contact with these artists’ work and regular visits to France, Surrealism came to influence de Maistre’s practice.
Roy de Maistre

New Atlantis

c. 1933 London
oil and scraffito on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 2006

Soon after his arrival in London, de Maistre developed a friendship with painter Francis Bacon, who is an acknowledged influence on the younger artist. New Atlantis depicts a corner of Bacon’s sparse, modern studio – a subject de Maistre returned to in at least eight paintings. Employing a skewed perspective and sharp diagonals, de Maistre’s composition is complex and sophisticated. One of his abstract paintings leans oddly angled against the open doorway, providing a vibrant contrast to the circular mirror suspended opposite. This mirror likely represents one designed by Bacon in 1932, produced while he was working as an interior designer.
J. W. Power
born Australia 1881, lived in Europe 1906–43, died Jersey 1943

Group or Bathers
*Groupe or Baigneuse*
1931–32 Paris or England
oil on canvas

The University of Sydney, managed by Museum of Contemporary Art
Mrs Edith Power Bequest 1961 PW1961.84

After studying with Fernand Léger at his Académie Moderne in Paris during the mid 1920s, Sydney-born J. W. Power became closely involved with the Parisian avant-garde and in 1931 was a founding member of the group Abstraction-Création. Among his paintings of the 1930s are several examples of biomorphic abstraction, a thread of Surrealism that drew upon imagery of the natural world and most commonly associated with the rounded sculptural forms of Jean Arp and the paintings of Joan Miró.
J. W. Power
born Australia 1881, lived in Europe 1906–43, died Jersey 1943

Head
Tête
1930 Paris or England
oil on canvas

The University of Sydney, managed by Museum of Contemporary Art
Mrs Edith Power Bequest 1961

J. W. Power completed a number of head studies during the early 1930s. Rather than representing individuals, these works take on universally recognisable forms which embody the ideas of biomorphic Surrealism. In Head, overlapping planes mimic the features of the human face. The arched brow, graceful slope of the nose and sharp angle of the jaw are rendered as loops of fabric and coarse stone. Several of these paintings, including this one, were displayed as part of Power’s first exhibition at the Abstraction-Création gallery in Paris in 1934.
Sydney artist James Cant lived in London during the heyday of Surrealism. In 1936 he became a member of the British Surrealist Group, and his work was exhibited in several important Surrealist exhibitions. During the summer of 1936 Cant lived in Barcelona. The biomorphic forms of *Objects in a landscape* are reminiscent of the work of Spanish Surrealist Joan Miró, whom he met at this time. Cant returned to Australia at the beginning of the Second World War and in 1940 exhibited his Surrealist paintings in Sydney.
James Cant was the first Australian artist to make Surrealist sculpture using the technique of assemblage. During the 1930s, Surrealists increasingly began arranging objects in combinations that challenged reason and summoned subconscious and poetic associations. In 1937 Cant participated in the *Surrealist Poems and Objects* exhibition at the London Gallery which was opened at midnight by Herbert Read, the chief spokesperson for Surrealism in England.
James Cant

Welcome to Empire Day
1938 London
wood, pencil, ink on paper, paper collage, leather, found objects

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Purchased 1999 996S7
James Cant

Floating head, screaming man buried in landscape
1936–37 London
pen and ink

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Dora Chapman Bequest Fund 2001

In 1936 James Cant, together with his friend Geoffrey Graham and other members of the British Surrealist Group, took part in a clinical trial of the effects of the hallucinatory drug mescaline. Knowing that Surrealist artists were interested in accessing the subconscious mind, doctors had specifically asked members of this group to be involved. After taking the drug the artists were encouraged to draw their visions, with Cant recalling that the effects were ‘marvellous’. It is possible that these drawings were produced as part of this experiment.
James Cant

Naked man tearing head off
1936–37 London
pen and ink and pencil

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Dora Chapman Bequest Fund 2001
200111D6
Geoffrey Graham
Australia 1911–86, lived in Europe 1935–39

Leaning figure supported by one arm

c. 1938 London
etching

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of Mrs Elizabeth Graham 1991
NGA 91.975
Geoffrey Graham
Australia 1911–86, lived in Europe 1935–39

Striding bone figure
c. 1938 London
etching

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of Mrs Elizabeth Graham 1991   NGA 91.978

Geoffrey Graham studied at the East Sydney Technical College, where he met fellow student James Cant. In 1935 he travelled to England and for a while shared a studio with Cant. Graham joined the British Surrealist Group in 1936 and was included in the *Realism and Surrealism* exhibition in Gloucester in 1938. On his return to Australia at the beginning of the Second World War, Graham exhibited with the Contemporary Art Society, where his work was singled out for special mention by James Gleeson in his 1940 article for *Art and Australia*, ‘What is Surrealism’.
In early 1938, following a visit to New York, Peter Purves Smith took up a studio in Paris, where he remained until the outbreak of war the following year. During this period he produced several paintings that reflect the political tensions and anxieties of the prewar period. Among the most surreal of these is *The mad woman*. Amidst a palette of psychedelic purples and greens, a female figure appears to disintegrate into a wild, abstracted landscape. Her headless form is almost entirely lost, subsumed into the psychedelic display of the background.
Like many other Australian artists living in London, Peter Purves Smith was deeply impressed by the *First International Surrealism Exhibition* held at the New Burlington Galleries in 1936, which included almost 400 works by sixty-nine artists. Later that year Purves Smith travelled to New York where he saw *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* at the Museum of Modern Art, the exhibition that catapulted Salvador Dalí to art-world stardom and made his name synonymous with the Surrealist movement. Dating from this time, the forked branch form of Purves Smith’s *New York* pays direct homage to Dali’s paintings, such as *The persistence of memory*, 1931, which was included in the 1936 MoMA exhibition.
Russell Drysdale
born England 1912, arrived Australia 1923, died 1981

Man reading a newspaper
1941 Albury, New South Wales
oil on canvas

University Art Gallery, The University of Sydney
Donated by Lucy Swanton 1953

In 1941 Russell Drysdale painted three works which clearly show the influence of his friend Peter Purves Smith’s Surrealism, and also that of Salvador Dalí. In *Man reading a newspaper* the forked trees resemble Dali’s ubiquitous crutches and, similarly, the deeply receding plain littered with strange objects recalls Dali’s dreamscapes. Drysdale would have become very aware of Surrealism during the ten months he spent in Paris and London in 1938–39, during the heyday of Surrealism in England. At this time Drysdale stayed in Paris with Purves Smith, who was painting Surrealist works, including *The mad woman*. 
Russell Drysdale  
born England 1912, arrived Australia 1923, died 1981

The rabbiters  
1947 Sydney  
oil on canvas  

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased, 1947  

In contrast to earlier, pre-Second World War depictions of Australia as a pastoral arcadia, Russell Drysdale’s 1940s paintings of the desolate outback and its inhabitants presented a radical new vision of Australia. While Drysdale did not proclaim himself a Surrealist, many of his works reflect his interest in Surrealism, particularly the work of Salvador Dalí, Giorgio De Chirico and British artists Henry Moore, Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland. In The rabbiters, Drysdale has hidden a face in the tangled roots of the upturned tree, while the shadows cast by the two figures are a reference to the work of Dalí.
Minotaure was founded in Paris in 1933 and was co-edited by André Breton, founder of the Surrealist movement. It included illustrated articles about cutting-edge contemporary art, historical European art and artists, as well as art, sculpture and architecture from many diverse cultures. Covers depicting the mythical bull-man were commissioned from artists such as Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dalí. An eye-opening experience for those far removed from the epicentre of Surrealism, Minotaure was one of the magazines avidly read by young artists in Australia.

André Masson
France 1896–1987

Melancholy of the Minotaur
Melancholie du Minotaure
reproduced in Minotaure, 1938, third series, no. 11
photo-offset lithograph
Unknown

Stone objects from Boeotia, 9th–7th century BC
reproduced in Minotaure, 1936, second series, no. 9, p. 44
photo-offset lithograph

Salvador Dalí
Spain 1904–89, worked in United States 1940–48

Premonition of civil war
reproduced in Minotaure, 1936, second series, no. 9, p. 45
photo-offset lithograph
Man Ray
United States 1890–1976

Occultation of Venus
En Pleine Occultation de Vénus
Veiled erotic
Érotique-Voilée
reproduced in Minotaure, 1934, no. 5, pp. 14–15
photo-offset lithograph

Friends of the Gallery Library
National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

René Magritte
Belgium 1898–1967

Cover
for Minotaure, 1937, third series, no. 10
colour photo-offset lithograph

Friends of the Gallery Library
National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library
Salvador Dalí
Spain 1904–89, worked in United States 1940–48

Cover
for Minotaure, 1936, third series, no. 8
colour photo-offset lithograph

Pablo Picasso
Spain 1881–1973, worked in France 1904–73

Crucifixions and An anatomy
Crucifixions et Une Anatomie
reproduced in Minotaure, 1933, third series, no. 1, pp. 6–7
photo-offset lithograph
By the later 1930s, leading Australian magazines, such as *Art in Australia*, were publishing articles about Surrealism, including essays written by, and even commissioned from, some of the leading European proponents of the movement. Australian followers, such as James Gleeson, also wrote about the theoretical principles and rationale behind the seemingly irrational art being created.

**Pablo Picasso**  
Spain 1881–1973, worked in France 1904–73

**Guitair**  
**Guitare**  
reproduced in *Art in Australia*, 1939, third series, no. 77, p. 38  
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria  
Shaw Research Library
Salvador Dalí
Spain 1904–89, worked in United States 1940–48

Memory of a child-woman
La Mémoire de la femme-enfant
formerly known as
The male flower
L’Homme fleur
reproduced in Art in Australia, third series, no. 77, p. 38
photo-offset lithograph

Both of these paintings were included in the Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art, which toured Australian capital cities in 1939. Salvador Dali’s Memory of a child-woman (at that time known as L’Homme fleur), 1932, became the star attraction of the exhibition and the focus for heated debate around modernism and Surrealism.
James Gleeson

What is Surrealism?
essay in Art in Australia, 1940, third series, no. 81, p. 27
photo-offset lithograph

André Breton
France 1896–1966

Originality and liberty
essay in Art in Australia, 1941–42, fourth series, no. 4, p. 11
photo-offset lithograph
Case label

**André Masson**
France 1896–1987

**Life and liberty**
essay in *Art in Australia*, 1942, fourth series, no. 5, p. 9
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library
The earliest proponents of Surrealism initiated it as a textual movement, created from the written or spoken word. But collage – the use and juxtaposition of diverse and assorted images and materials – was swiftly employed as the quintessential visual equivalent of their writings, allowing Surrealist artists to create illogical and unsettling works that challenged perceptions of reality and aided access to unconscious thoughts through chance encounters.

Australian artists in England during the 1930s had opportunities to see examples of Surrealist collage and to explore the technique, and young experimental artists in Australia began utilising its possibilities. A decorative and accessible form of Surrealism manifested itself in fashion photography, graphic design and advertising, and a number of commercial designers and illustrators began creating work from juxtaposed images or unusual material. Photomontage, as well as dramatic lighting and unexpected props, were used to great effect by photographers.

During the second half of the twentieth century, collage and its many sculptural and photographic permutations, such as assemblage and photomontage, were employed in a wide variety of ways. The rise of digital technology has simplified collage processes and many contemporary artists now employ it as one of the diverse techniques available in their repertoire.
Max Dupain
Australia 1911–92

Solarised hands and flowers
c. 1934 Sydney
gelatin silver photograph

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Max Dupain
Australia 1911–92

Solarised lily
C. 1934 Sydney
gelatin silver photograph

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Max Dupain  
Australia 1911–92

The Debussy Quartet in G  
1937 Sydney  
gelatin silver photograph

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
d' Auvergne Boxall Bequest Fund 1995  
961 Ph2
Max Dupain
Australia 1911–92

Homage to Man Ray
1937 Sydney
gelatin silver photograph

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Contemporary Art Acquisition Fund of Visual Arts Board 1980  801Ph9

Max Dupain was one of the few photographers in Australia to fully explore Surrealism, and he became the leading portrait photographer in Sydney in the 1930s and 1940s. Dupain greatly admired the work of the American-French Dadaist and Surrealist photographer Man Ray, which appeared both in art magazines as well as popular magazines such as American Vogue. Like Ray, Dupain experimented with solarisation, double exposure and photomontage techniques, combining the human figure with natural forms, such as shells, and mechanical components.
The title \textit{Impassioned clay} refers to a philosophical and spiritual book of the same name by the English writer Llewelyn Powys, who considered ‘man’ an elemental being who draws power from his or her association with nature. Here Dupain merges the outline of the female body with the sinuous curves of an enlarged shell, encouraging the viewer to appreciate the similarity in texture and form.
Max Dupain
Australia 1911–92

Surrealist study
1938 Sydney
gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased with the assistance of
James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007

NGA 2007.949
Zoë Croggon  
born Australia 1989  

Challenger  
2012 Melbourne  
digital type C print  

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased with funds arranged by Loti Smorgon for Contemporary Australian Photography, 2013  
2013.700  

_Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes_
Zoë Croggon
born Australia 1989

Fonteyn
2012 Melbourne
digital type C print

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with funds arranged by Loti Smorgon for Contemporary Australian Photography, 2013
2013.699

Zoë Croggon revels in the unexpected connection of disparate images – one human, one not, typically – sourced from magazines, newspapers, books and other media. In contrast to Christopher Day’s soft melding of images (seen in works nearby), Croggon crisply dissects her chosen images, freezing them mid-movement and manipulating their scale to create hybrid forms suggestive of the mythical mermaid or centaur. Croggon often employs cinematic techniques, such as the graphic match or mismatch, a film editing method based on formal similarities and dissonance.
David Noonan
born Australia 1969

Leicester Square
2005 Melbourne
archival inkjet print on paper from original paper collage

Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

The relationships between painting, photography and film are explored in the photomontages of David Noonan, for whom collage is an essential technique. In the Images series, cut-paper collages of found images gleaned from films, photographs, magazines and the internet are subsequently photographed, allowing the merging of images to become seamless, and thus increasingly deceptive. Characterised by emotional intensity and a complex layering of historical and cultural references, these uncanny conjunctions between real and imagined spaces make connections between art and everyday life.
David Noonan
born Australia 1969

Harlem
2005 Melbourne
archival inkjet print on paper from original paper collage

Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
David Noonan
born Australia 1969

Untitled
2005 Melbourne
archival inkjet print on paper from original paper collage

Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
Christopher Day  
born Australia 1978

Untitled  
2015 Melbourne  
pigment on paper

Courtesy of the artist

A multitude of texts, images and ideas cascade through today’s digital landscape. The fluidity of the digital stream is apparent in the work of Christopher Day, a self-taught artist who has built up a personal archive of images prized from of a diverse range of photographic sources. Selecting from these, Day digitally manipulates and distorts elements to create ethereal monochromatic photomontages which retain the perversity and eroticism of Surrealist collage, and in which objects and disjointed elements seem to appear from a mist, like a memory or a hallucination.
Christopher Day  
born Australia 1978

Untitled  
2015 Melbourne  
pigment on paper

Courtesy of the artist
Christopher Day
born Australia 1978

Untitled
2015 Melbourne
inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist
Carl Plate lived in London from 1934 to 1940 where he witnessed the emergence of British Surrealism and visited the First International Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936. On his return, Plate became an active member of the Sydney branch of the Contemporary Art Society, and his Notanda Gallery became Sydney’s epicentre for art books, magazines, reproductions of contemporary art, postcards and theoretical debate. Plate’s collages of the mid 1940s employed magazine illustrations and postcards, onto which incongruous images were applied, suggesting fantastic or absurd narratives or dreamlike combinations. Collage was a significant medium employed by Plate throughout his life.
Case label

Carl Plate
Australia 1909–77, lived in England 1937–40

33
1945 Sydney
collage of cut printed magazine illustrations

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of Jocelyn and Cassi Plate, 2009  2009.217

Carl Plate
Australia 1909–77, lived in England 1937–40

37 (‘Home sweet home’)
1945 Sydney
collage of cut printed magazine illustrations

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Carl Plate
Australia 1909–77, lived in England 1937–40

39 (Pink snail)
1945 Sydney
collage of cut printed magazine illustrations

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Sidney Nolan's collage series, produced between 1938–40, are among the first Australian examples of this quintessentially Surrealist art form. Inspired by nineteenth-century poet Arthur Rimbaud, who was greatly admired by the Surrealists, Nolan created collages that respond to the rich imagery and irrationality of Rimbaud's poetry. Using nineteenth-century steel engravings, Nolan cut out small squares which he pasted onto other engravings. In this way he created an unstable, constantly shifting image – a jumbled ‘nonsense’ image – defying visual or narrative interpretation.
Sidney Nolan

London and the Thames from Waterloo Bridge
1940 Melbourne
collage of cut wood-engravings, coloured crayons

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007

Sidney Nolan

Mountain scene in the Scottish highlands
1940 Melbourne
collage of cut wood-engravings, coloured crayons

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007
Sidney Nolan
born Australia 1917, lived in England 1953–92, died
England 1992

Untitled
c. 1940 Melbourne
collage of cut wood-engravings

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Purchased 2003

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

Untitled
c. 1940 Melbourne
collage of cut wood-engravings

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Purchased 2003

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Sidney Nolan

Untitled
c. 1940 Melbourne
collage of cut wood-engravings

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Purchased 2003

James Pickering
Australia, worked 1940s

Rememory
1941 Melbourne
collage of cut and printed paper and cardboard, pen and ink
in A Comment, no. 5, July 1941

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library
Irvine Green
Australia 1913–

Passion waiting
photo-offset lithograph
reproduced in A Comment, no. 12, July 1942

A Comment provided a venue for the artistic and design skills of many young Melbourne artists, some of whom are little-known today. The collage by James Pickering is an original work, tipped into this journal, and is an early example of the use of collage in Australian art. Irvine Green worked as a writer, photographer, designer and printmaker, and had co-founded A Comment, with his cousin and later wife Cecily Crozier, who modelled for this image. Passion waiting was the first photograph to be exhibited by the Contemporary Arts Society, who agreed that photography was a contemporary art form.
In addition to the illusionistic dream imagery typified by the paintings of Salvador Dalí and René Magritte, Biomorphic Surrealism, associated with painter Joan Miró and sculptor Jean Arp, was another important strand of Surrealist art influential in Australia.

Early biomorphic imagery often found its source in natural forms, such as pebbles, bones or shells, or resembled organic structures. Part of the Surrealists’ fascination with nature was that it was seen as fundamentally unstable and subject to processes of metamorphosis and evolution. The rounded and pierced forms of English sculptors Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth were to be particularly influential upon sculptors in the 1930s and 1940s. By the 1950s this kind of biomorphic imagery had given way to spiky and menacing forms resembling crustaceans and insects. The seaside, a constantly changing zone inhabited by creatures that can live in both land and sea which is symbolic of the meeting of the conscious and unconscious minds, was another important source of imagery for Surrealists.

In mid-1950s Melbourne a flurry of Surrealist activity took place around artists Ian and Dawn Sime, who encouraged others to explore automatic Surrealist techniques. For some this became a means of generating images, while for others it became a pathway to abstraction.
Bernard Boles

Girl with blimp
1945 Melbourne
watercolour

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Gift of Sir James and Lady Cruthers, 2005 2005.3

Melbourne artist Bernard Boles studied at the Melbourne Technical College from 1936–38. After serving in the Second World War, he travelled in Britain and America, before returning to Australia in 1948–49. Depicting an air hostess walking across Essendon Airport, Girl with blimp was rejected from the 1948 exhibition of the Victorian Artists’ Society. In protest Boles hung it (together with another painting) on the fence outside the Gallery. Boles subsequently lived in England for many years and, in addition to making his own painting and sculpture, worked as an exhibition organiser, critic and writer.
Mervyn Cassidy
Australia 1926–2000

Guardian forms
1956 Melbourne
oil on composition board

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne

Little-known Melbourne artist Mervyn Cassidy was part of a group interested in Surrealism that formed around artists Ian and Dawn Sime. Cassidy studied at the George Bell School alongside Erica McGilchrist and worked in the finance section at the Myer department store on Bourke Street where he was friendly with artist Julius Kane, who was employed in the display section. In 1953 Cassidy was elected to the council of the re-activated Contemporay Art Society and in 1956 Cassidy, McGilchrist and Dawn Sime held a joint show at the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Melbourne.
In Melbourne during the early 1950s, Ian and Dawn Sime introduced a small group of artists, including Julius Kane and Erica McGilchrist, ‘to Surrealist methods, automatic painting, automatic writing and various sorts of ways of producing accidents … as triggers to start off a work’. McGilchrist consequently began to use Surrealist techniques such as frottage, in which a rubbing is taken from an uneven surface to generate an image which would then be developed into another image.
Julius Kane
born Hungary 1921, arrived Australia 1949, died 1962

Organic forms
1962 Melbourne
Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga sp.*)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1963

From the mid 1950s Julius Kane developed his sculpture towards a biomorphic-abstraction closely allied to natural forms, stating that his aim in sculpture was ‘to preserve the sense of nature and her growth’. In this, one of his last works, Kane has hollowed the interior of the sculpture to create an cavity filled with forms reminiscent of bodily organs or seed pods.
Gerald Lewers
Australia 1905–62

The plough
1934 London
limestone

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
South Australian Government Grant 1963

From 1934–35 Sydney artist Gerald Lewers studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London under sculptor John Skeaping. With its smooth forms suggestive of natural, organic forms, *The plough* reveals Lewer’s interest in the biomorphic sculpture of English artists Barbara Hepworth, whom Skeaping had been married to, and Henry Moore.
Ivor Francis
born England 1906, arrived Australia 1924, died 1993

Growth
1941 Adelaide
oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased with the assistance of James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007 NGA 2007.960

In this work embryonic forms appear in the ocean, and in stages evolve into more complex beings, eventually taking root on land. A shape resembling an eye, symbolising consciousness, becomes more defined in each stage. Growth refers to Charles Darwin’s theory of evolutionary biology in which all life begins with a common ancestor in the ocean. In turn, Darwin’s theory underpinned Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung’s notion of the ‘collective unconscious’ in which structures of the unconscious mind are shared among beings of the same species. This idea was to be influential among Surrealists, and Francis’s painting explicitly refers to it.
Helen Maudsley
born Australia 1927

The listening lady
1956 Melbourne
gouache

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of the artist, 2013  2013.1044

‘It’s in one sense a Man light and a Lady light, but gender, not sex, so these two pieces together made a sort of essay on gender difference ... The Lady’s head is completely receptive, is the culmination of herself, and her spine is poised to hear what she’s listening to. The way I placed the base of the light, her pelvis, was also intended to be like giving birth, the flesh of the legs being also the flesh of the new-born ... The Man is fastened to his base and he himself illuminates. He listens but he also controls ... He Knows.’

HELEN MAUDSLEY
Helen Maudsley
born Australia 1927

The listening man
1956 Melbourne
gouache over pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of the artist, 2013  2013.1045

‘[In these works] I was trying to find another way of representation and was profoundly influenced by discovering the double images in [Jan van Eyk’s paintings]. I’d be wanting to describe something I saw happening and I’d trawl through my mind and the world of objects to find something that would visually fit … I don’t think this process stems from Surrealism or Freud or psychoanalysis, but perhaps there’s a far distant common relative. Van Eyk was my teacher.

HELEN MAUDSLEY
Robert Klippel

Sheet of studies including drawing for No. 42
1947 London
pen and brush and coloured ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of James Mollison AO, 1989
P168-1989
Robert Klippel

No. 40 (Red sandstone carving)
1948 London
sandstone

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased, 1969

Robert Klippel and James Gleeson formed a lifelong friendship in 1947 in London when both were resident at the Abbey artist studios. Through Gleeson, Klippel became increasingly interested in Surrealism. No. 40 (Red sandstone carving), was included in their joint exhibition at the London Gallery in 1948. Of this work Klippel wrote, ‘I am thinking of it as an “abstract” – organic but with a certain element of geometric and machine form’. This bringing together of the natural with the man-made was to be an important aesthetic strategy for Klippel over the next decade.
Inge King  

Flower dancer  
1948 London  
sandstone

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria  
by Inge King, Fellow, 1997  
1997.233

After the Second World War, a number of Australian artists lived and worked in London at the Abbey Arts Centre, owned by gallery director William Ohly. These included Robert Klippel and James Gleeson, art historian Bernard Smith, abstract painter Mary Webb, Melbourne artist Grahame King and German artist Inge Neufeld who met and married King while living there. Through Ohly, they met important figures in the British Surrealist movement, including Roland Penrose, Herbert Read, Henry Moore and the Belgian Surrealist E. L. T. Mesens, Director of the London Gallery, who invited Klippel and Gleeson to exhibit in 1948, and King in 1949.
Robert Klippel

Not titled (P19, organic machine with suspended shape in electro-magnetic field)
1949 Paris
pen and brush and brown ink

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased with the assistance of James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007 2007.1068

In December 1948 Robert Klippel moved to Paris where he soon became part of the Surrealist group centred around André Breton. In Paris, Klippel turned his energies to drawing, creating an extraordinary series of sinister biomorphic forms, including this work. James Gleeson considered that ‘it is with this sequence of drawings that [Klippel] makes his closest approach to Surrealism, and through them we are drawn into the darkest chambers of his imagination.’
It was not until Klippel’s reluctant return from Europe to Sydney in 1950 that he began exploring collage, a creative alternative during a period of little sculptural production. His vast output of works on paper during this decade was extraordinary for its spontaneity and inventiveness, and reflected his intense self-scrutiny as he sought to define his personal interpretation of Surrealism, Tachism and abstraction. Klippel used his profound knowledge of the natural world to endow his constructions with an organic vitality that animated his creations.
Robert Klippel

Untitled
1956 Sydney
collage of cut printed illustrations

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of James Mollison, 1981

P55-1981
Robert Klippel

No. 38, Child’s God
1948 London
Walnut, ball bearings

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased with the assistance of James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007
NGA 2007.1073
Lenton Parr

Head of Christ
1958 Melbourne
steel, brass on wood base

McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery
Purchased, 1993 1993.66
Lenton Parr

Standing figure
1958 Melbourne
steel, enamel paint

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Sue Walker through the Australian
Government’s Cultural Gifts Program, 2011
2011.326

In 1955 Melbourne sculptor Lenton Parr travelled England and for almost two years worked as a studio assistant for Henry Moore. Parr’s works from this time and immediately after his return to Melbourne in 1957 were influenced by postwar British artists such as Reg Butler and Lynn Chadwick. Their anxious works, typically featuring torturous forms and harsh angles, was described as the ‘Geometry of Fear’ by Herbert Read.
‘For a while, especially during the war years, I did think of Surrealism as a revolutionary weapon. I accepted Breton’s contention that by utilising the subconscious one could arrive at a condition that held the rational mind in balance and perhaps prevent such disasters as war, indifference or fanaticism.’

JAMES GLEESON

Surrealism was embraced by a generation of young Australian artists coming to maturity during the Second World War. For some, Surrealism appealed as a radical movement aligned with anti-fascist politics; for others, it was a means of expressing personal anxieties and addressing a world in chaos.

In Melbourne, Surrealist activity crystallised around the modernist journal *Angry Penguins* – started by Max Harris and others in Adelaide in 1940 and published by Harris and John Reed in Melbourne from 1943 – and the Contemporary Art Society, which was founded in 1939 (of which Reed and Albert Tucker were committee members). Reed and his wife Sunday lived at ‘Heide’ on the outskirts of Melbourne, and their circle included artists Sidney Nolan, Tucker and Joy Hester, as well as various poets, writers and intellectuals. Sydney and Adelaide were also important centres of Surrealism, and in both cities branches of the Contemporary Art Society were established. The Society’s annual exhibitions became important showcases for Surrealist art.
Arthur Boyd

The cripples
1943 Melbourne
oil on muslin on cardboard

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Transferred to Heide Museum of Modern Art by the Council of Trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria 2005 2005.24

‘I used to see some weird characters walking up and down the beach at South Melbourne. The woman wheeling her paralysed dog by its hind legs, the man running up with a flower trying to ingratiate himself … I sketched them on the spot … The cripples, the factory girls and the factory chimneys. They were meant to serve as reminders.’

ARTHUR BOYD
Arthur Boyd

Butterfly man
1943 Melbourne
oil on muslin on cardboard

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Bequest of John and Sunday Reed, 1982  1982.45
Arthur Boyd

Figure with flowers in ear beside figures with moth in coffin
1942 Melbourne
reed pen and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1964  1591-5
Arthur Boyd

Figure in factory chimney with beast
1942 Melbourne
reed pen and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1964 1597-5

Arthur Boyd had limited time for painting during the war, and instead produced numerous drawings. In their expressionistic violence and often irrational, surreal imagery, these marked a radical new direction for his art. Moths, coffins, flowers, cripples, recumbent or floating figures, entwined lovers and strange hybrid animals appear in various permutations in industrial or inner-city landscapes, and became the basis of the private iconography that Boyd used throughout his life.
Erwin Fabian
born Germany 1915, arrived Australia 1940

Beast-like creature leading a group of anthropomorphomic figures
1941 Hay, New South Wales
monotype

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1997  1997.59
In 1938, threatened with persecution because of his Jewish background, Erwin Fabian fled his native Berlin for London. In 1940, together with more than 2500 mostly German and Austrian ‘enemy aliens’, he was deported to Australia on the infamous *HMT Dunera*, and subsequently spent almost two years in internment camps in country New South Wales and Victoria. Many of the internees were artists and intellectuals who had fled Nazi Germany, and a rich artistic culture flourished in the internment camps at Hay and Tatura.
Erwin Fabian
born Germany 1915, arrived Australia 1940

Mail
1941 Hay, New South Wales
monotype

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gordon Darling Australasian Print Fund 1997
NGA 97.1026

In the Hay internment camp, Erwin Fabian and his friend Klaus Friederberger participated in art classes run by Surrealist painter and stage designer Hein Heckroth. They also had contact with Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack, a former teacher at the Bauhaus. Fabian may have learned from Mack the monotype technique he developed with Paul Klee in the early 1920s. Produced by drawing on the back of a sheet of paper laid down on an inked surface, the monotypes were made using scrounged and recycled materials; ink from the office duplicating machine mixed with boot polish, and discarded glass or masonite.
Erwin Fabian  
born Germany 1915, arrived Australia 1940  

Noon  
c. 1944  
monotype  

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased, 1997  
1997.58  

After being released from internment in 1942 and joining a labour corps unit in the Australian Military Forces, Erwin Fabian spent the occasional weekend in Melbourne where he made contact with local artists such as Arthur Boyd and Sidney Nolan, as well as John Reed, president of the Contemporary Art Society. In December 1944 one of Fabian’s monotypes was reproduced in Reed and Max Harris’s modernist journal *Angry Penguins*. 
Ivor Francis
born England 1906, arrived Australia 1924, died 1993

Sunblast
1943 Adelaide
oil on fabric on cardboard

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with the assistance of the
National Gallery Society of Victoria Century Fund, 1986

Ivor Francis was one of Adelaide’s most prominent modernist artists, and his work was strongly influenced by Surrealism. In 1942, together with poet Max Harris and painter Douglas Roberts, Francis was instrumental in establishing the South Australian branch of the Contemporary Art Society. Their first exhibition sent a shock wave through the staid Adelaide art establishment. Francis later preferred to identify himself as an Apocalyptic painter, aligning himself with the British literary movement.
Herbert McClintock  
Australia 1906–85

Dawnbreakers  
1939 Perth  
oil on canvas on composition board

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Purchased 1969  
OA3.1969

While Melbourne and Sydney were the centres of Surrealism in Australia, other cities also felt its reverberations. Herbert McClintock, a longstanding member of the Communist Party of Australia was Surrealism’s first proponent in Perth. McClintock exhibited paintings under the pseudonym ‘Max Ebert’ in 1939 and 1940 before moving to Sydney later in 1940. For a brief time he rivalled Gleeson as Australia’s most recognised Surrealist, willingly playing up his Surrealist persona to the media.
James Gleeson

The sower
1944 Sydney
oil on canvas

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Purchased 1966  OA13.1966

‘For a while, especially during the war years, I did think of Surrealism as a revolutionary weapon. I accepted Breton’s contention that by utilising the subconscious one could arrive at a condition that held the rational mind in balance and perhaps prevent such disasters as war, indifference or fanaticism’.

James Gleeson
James Gleeson  

Funeral procession in a wounded landscape  
1945 Sydney  
oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased with the assistance of  
James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007  
NGA 2007.976

‘[In this work James Gleeson] pictures himself in the form of a youth setting out in a coffin-shaped contraption whose sail will drive it where the winds of war dictate … [The female nude] is conceivably a mother figure, the only protector the young protagonist will have as he ventures into the awesome unknown. It is hard to suppress the thought that she is, at the same time, the generator of the whole dystopic display before them – a globally scaled vagina dentata. That the painting speaks of war does not preclude it from speaking of sex.’

BRUCE JAMES
Oswald Hall  
Australia 1917–91

War  
1945 Melbourne  
pen and ink and brush and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased, 1992  
P4-1992

Bernard Smith wrote that ‘war, the fear of war, and the disquiet growing out of the aftermath of war, when present with a general instability of social and political institutions’ provided the social conditions necessary for the existence of Surrealism. Oswald Hall was the son of long-serving Director of the National Gallery of Victoria Bernard Hall, and studied at the NGV School from 1934–38 alongside Clifford Bayliss and Sidney Nolan. Like many young artists, in the early to mid 1940s Hall experimented with the irrational imagery of Surrealism, with many of his works responding to the Second World War.
Joy Hester  
Australia 1920–60

Fun fair  
c. 1946 Melbourne  
brush and ink, watercolour, coloured chalk and pencil on paper

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne  
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2007  2000.360

While Joy Hester’s work overall is more closely aligned to Expressionism, *Fun fair* has a strong Surrealist element. The monstrous black mask, a reference to Sidney Nolan’s Ned Kelly series and to the clown’s-face entrance of St Kilda’s Luna Park, looms behind a supine female figure. Hester locates this nightmarish scene in an archetypal Surrealistic setting, a featureless landscape on the edge of the sea.
Joy Hester
Australia 1920–60

Gethsemane V
c. 1946 Melbourne
brush and ink and gouache

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Gift of Barrett Reid 1990

Joy Hester was the only female artist in the Angry Penguins group who congregated and were supported by John and Sunday Reed at their farm Heide, in Templestowe, Melbourne. Others included Hester’s husband Albert Tucker, Sidney Nolan, John Perceval and, to a lesser extent, Arthur Boyd. Hester and Sunday were close friends, and Hester often depicted Sunday’s handmade doll Gethsemane. In these works and other studies of faces, Hester emphasised and exaggerated the eyes to convey powerful emotions and psychological states.
Joy Hester
Australia 1920–60

Face (With eye on a stalk)
c. 1947 Melbourne
brush and ink and wash

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Gift of Barrett Reid 1990  1990.6
Douglas Roberts
Australia 1919–76

The ambassador
1944 Adelaide
oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
South Australian Government Grant, 1977

Douglas Roberts was one of the most outspoken advocates of modernism and Surrealism in Adelaide during the 1940s and was closely associated with Max Harris and Ivor Francis. Robert’s wartime paintings reveal personal emotions and anxieties, their fluid forms suggestive of a distorted reality as a result of these internal realities. Roberts’s Surrealist style was particularly influenced by French Surrealist André Masson, whose work featured in the magazine Art in Australia in 1942.
Vera Rudner
born Germany 1922, arrived Australia 1938

Sacrilege

c. 1948 Sydney
oil on cardboard

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased with the assistance of
James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007
NGA 2007.1126

Vera Rudner arrived with her family as a refugee from Nazi Germany in 1938. Having started her art training in Berlin, she studied briefly at the East Sydney Technical College (now the National Art School), and then at the Julian Ashton Art School under the tutelage of Eric Wilson, who had recently returned from Europe. Rudner ceased painting around the end of the war, but this is one of several dramatic works that she subsequently exhibited at the Contemporary Art Society in 1949.
Bernard Smith

Pompeii
1940 Sydney
oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased, 2008
NGA 2008.667

Bernard Smith became Australia’s greatest art historian; however, in the late 1930s he also briefly worked as an artist. In 1939 Smith joined the Communist Party and became active in the Teachers’ Federation Art Society in Sydney. Under his influence the society played a major role in the promotion of modern art, in particular Surrealism. Smith’s own paintings of the time (of which few have survived) were exhibited under the pseudonym ‘Joseph Tierney’ and were influenced by Surrealism and Expressionism.
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

The futile city
1940 Melbourne
oil on cardboard

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Purchased from John and Sunday Reed, 1980  1980.92

The futile city was inspired by the themes of despair and the search for redemption of T. S. Eliot’s poem *The Waste Land* (1922). The painting reflects Tucker’s emotional state in response to the Second World War.

‘The mood was one of depression – a sense of inadequacy walking down a city street. There was a relaxation of conscious focused thought … Under these conditions a brief image flashed involuntarily into my mind – an image of a glaring white space, with a large key throwing a thin blue shadow across the bottom and, simultaneously the word “futile”’.

ALBERT TUCKER
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

Army barracks
1942 Melbourne
enamel paint on plywood

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria
with the assistance of the Westpac Banking Corporation,
Founder Benefactor, 1992  A5-1992

A self-taught artist, Albert Tucker was articulate and a fluent writer who entered forcefully into debates about the role of art being argued at the Contemporary Art Society and in the pages of the Angry Penguins journal. In 1942 he was drafted into the army, but after a period spent in a training camp in Wangaratta, Melbourne, was invalided to Heidelberg Military Hospital. Here he worked as a medical illustrator among shell-shocked, maimed and disfigured soldiers. After he was discharged as unfit for duty, Tucker returned to full-time art, expressing his horror of war in compelling and claustrophobic paintings.
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

Army breakfast
1942 Melbourne
enamel paint on plywood

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of the Westpac Banking Corporation, Founder Benefactor, 1992

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

Hospital ward
1942 Melbourne
coloured pastel

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1980

P1-1980
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

Clown
1943 Melbourne
watercolour, pen and ink and gouache

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1978

Darkle city doom. Inked iron lace
Rococo marks the room
of a twitching clown. The blistered door
opens. We drown
Splayed thighs and the honey nest
flush for the pelvic thrust

... the encircling grins tightens

ALBERT TUCKER, c. 1942
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

Image of modern evil: woman and clown
1943 Melbourne
oil on canvas on composition board

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of the artist, 1983
NGA 83.2859
In May 1942 Melbourne was shocked by the serial killings of three young women. The murderer was eventually caught and identified as Private Edward Joseph Leonski, an American stationed in Melbourne. Known as the ‘Brownout Strangler’, Leonski had grown up in an abusive home with a controlling mother, leading the psychologist who interviewed him to label his crimes ‘symbolic matricide’. Tucker’s painting shows a deconstructed body with allusions to both female and male genitalia. One hand holds a white dove, traditionally an emblem of peace, while the other gestures to an aeroplane, a clear symbol of war.
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

Flirting
1945 Melbourne
coloured pastel

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1980
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

Image of modern evil
1945 Melbourne
pen and coloured inks on buff paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
The Joseph Brown Collection.
Presented through the NGV Foundation by
Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2004

In the 1940s Tucker was closely involved with the magazine Angry Penguins. He wrote articles on art, edited the ‘Sociology’ section, and designed this image to be used as the cover for issue 7 in 1945.
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

Sunbathers
1945 Melbourne
oil on composition board

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Commonwealth Industrial Gases Limited, Governor, 1982

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

Image of modern evil
1945 Melbourne
coloured pastel on brown paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1978

After his discharge from the army in 1942, Albert Tucker worked on a series of unsettling paintings and drawings, collectively titled *Image of modern evil*. These works show the blacked-out streets of Melbourne inhabited by hideous leering clowns and predatory, sexualised women, and express what Tucker considered to be the decay of social and moral values caused by the war. Like a number of other artists, as the war progressed Tucker became disenchanted with Surrealism in his quest for a more politically involved art; however, motifs developed at the time, such as the crescent, remained significant in his work.
Eric Thake
Australia 1904–82

Meteorological balloon, Alice Springs
1945 Alice Springs, Northern Territory
gouache over pencil

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Gift of the Commonwealth Government, 1947  1:0414
Eric Thake
Australia 1904–82

Parachute store, No. 31 Squadron, Morotai
1945 Morotai, former Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia
gouache and pencil

Australian War Memorial, Canberra
Presented, 1947 ART26789
Eric Thake  
Australia 1904–82

Night time – Alice Springs  
1945–47 Alice Springs, Northern Territory  
watercolour, pastel and charcoal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased, 1947  
1748-4

During the Second World War Eric Thake served as an official war artist with the RAAF from 1944 to 1946, a period that offered him his first opportunity to work as a full-time artist. Thake made two extensive journeys through northern Australia, Timor and Indonesia, and often chose to depict the detritus of war, such as the twisted wreckage of crashed aeroplanes, and nocturnal scenes in which jagged bands of light punctuate and make patterns in the darkness. Thake’s Surrealist leanings are given flight in this whimsical image of a solitary man’s contribution to the war effort.
Two Australian magazines devoted to avant-garde art and literature were founded in 1940: the better known Angry Penguins, in Adelaide (later moving to Melbourne); and the small journal A Comment, in Melbourne. A Comment was the work of Cecily Crozier, an Australian who had grown up in Europe but returned to Australia at the start of the Second World War. Twenty-six monthly issues, printed on cheap brown paper due to the war restrictions, were published, including poetry, commentary, linocuts, photographs and collages laid out according to contemporary graphic design trends. Some of these volumes come from the library of James Gleeson, who was the Sydney agent for the magazine.

Unknown

Cover
for A Comment, no. 17, October 1943
colour linocut on brown paper

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library
Robert Miller
Australia 1916–

Cover
for A Comment, no. 15, March 1943
colour linocut on brown paper

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

James Gleeson

Poem
in A Comment, no. 11, April 1942
letterpress on brown paper

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Unknown

Cover
for A Comment, no. 13, October 1942
colour linocut on brown paper

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library
James Gleeson

Maintenance of identity
reproduced in *Angry Penguins*, 1943, no. 4, p. 15
colour photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Frank Kellaway
born England 1922, died Australia 2012

Poem
in *Angry Penguins*, 1943, no. 4, p. 14
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Max Harris
Australia 1921–95

The Pelvic Rose (to Salvador Dalí)
poem in *Angry Penguins*, 1941, no. 1, p. 23
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

*Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes*
Sidney Nolan

Arabian tree
cover for *Angry Penguins*, Ern Malley commemorative edition, 1944, p. 34
colour photo-offset lithograph

The Ern Malley affair was Australia’s greatest literary hoax. In 1944 the *Angry Penguins* journal, edited by Max Harris and John Reed, devoted an entire issue to the Surrealist poems of the recently deceased Ern Malley, who was, in fact, the creation of the young poets Harold Stewart and James McCauley, who wished to ridicule what they considered the pretentiousness of the *Angry Penguins* group. Exposure of the hoax let to a huge media outcry, but Harris, Reed and others argued that, despite the hoaxers’ intentions, the poems were indeed valid examples of Surrealist poetry.
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

Art, Myth and Society
essay in Angry Penguins, no. 4, 1943, p. 49
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

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

Image of modern evil
cover for Angry Penguins, 1945
colour photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library
Albert Tucker
Australia 1914–99, lived in Europe and United States 1947–60

Image of modern evil
reproduced in Angry Penguins, 1944, p. 98
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Erwin Fabian
born Germany 1915, arrived Australia 1940

Untitled
reproduced in Angry Penguins, 1944, p. 99
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library
James Gleeson
Australia 1915–2008, lived in England and Europe

The necessity for Surrealism
essay in A Comment, 1941, no. 5
letterpress on brown paper

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library
Peter Booth
born England 1940, arrived Australia 1958

Drawing (Figure on all fours with red shoes)
1982 Melbourne
black chalk and pastel

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria
with the assistance of the Rudy Komon Fund, Governor, 1985  P115-1985
Peter Booth
born England 1940, arrived Australia 1958

Drawing (Hybrid man/insect with four legs)
1982 Melbourne
black chalk and pastel

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of the Rudy Komon Fund, Governor, 1985
Peter Booth
born England 1940, arrived Australia 1958

Drawing (Cyclops eating leg)
1982 Melbourne
pastel

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of the Rudy Komon Fund, Governor, 1985

P108-1985
Peter Booth
born England 1940, arrived Australia 1958

Drawing (Saltimbanques)
1982 Melbourne
black chalk, gouache and watercolour

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of the Rudy Komon Fund, Governor, 1985

P113-1985
Peter Booth
born England 1940, arrived Australia 1958

Drawing (Small monster with human head)
1984 Melbourne
black chalk and pastel

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of the Rudy Komon Fund, Governor, 1985

Peter Booth's exploration of a disturbing nocturnal world
commenced in the mid 1970s. The works, which emerged
after a process of recording his dreams, were figurative and
highly expressive and had the appearance of nightmares.
The subject matter, to which he returned compulsively,
prevents terrifying scenarios, including lonely travellers
in apocalyptic landscapes, helpless humans fleeing the
destruction of cities, and cannibals devouring their prey.
Like Francisco Goya, Booth created monsters and hybrid
creatures to communicate the failings of humankind he
perceived in contemporary life.
Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes

Louise Hearman
born Australia 1963

**Untitled #475**
1996 Melbourne
oil on composition board

Collection of Dr David Ellison, Melbourne

**Untitled #1328**
2011 Melbourne
oil on composition board

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

**Untitled #994**
2003 Melbourne
oil on composition board

Courtesy of the artist

The experiences of the Second World War and the widespread trauma associated with it resulted in a flood of imagery depicting nightmarish and grotesque scenes.

Related imagery continues to be mined today: in many of Louise Hearman’s contemporary works, eerie, disembodied heads of domestic animals — cats and dogs — or infants float over cinematic, hyper-real scenes. Situated in her dreamlike landscapes are renditions of unnaturally large teeth, a source of waking and sleeping anxiety for many, appearing resolutely pearlescent and sinister. These are realms where the dream tips into the nightmare.

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Louise Hearman
born Australia 1963

Untitled #282
1991 Melbourne
oil on composition board

Collection of Dr David Ellison, Melbourne

Untitled #724
1999 Melbourne
oil on composition board

Courtesy of the artist

Untitled #1339
2011 Melbourne
oil on composition board

Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
Automatism, or acting in ‘unthinking’, automatic ways, was central to André Breton’s *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924). The technique was simply to undertake writing, or later drawing, in a state of mind that tapped into the unconscious – whether in great haste, in a trance, or even under the influence of drugs – to bring forth text and images from that realm into reality, uncensored by the conscious mind.

Over the decades, Australian artists have explored this technique in a variety of ways, from the early drawings of James Cant inspired by hallucinogens, and the found images of Eric Thake – in which the image is purely in the eye of the beholder – to the large-scale performative drawings of Dale Frank, collaborative works of Zilverster (Goodwin & Hanenbergh) and video-performance work by identical twins Gabriella and Silvana Mangano. Artist Peter Ellis summarises the artistic potential of automatism as follows:

One must hallucinate in front of the surface. Somewhere in this process the artist’s conscious thought metamorphoses with the unconscious desire and the picture tells you what it wants to be … The idea that one thing can be transformed into another assumes that there is no unbeachable gulf between different realities.
Zilverster (Goodwin & Hanenbergh), Melbourne
est. 2010

Sharon Goodwin
born Australia 1973

Irene Hanenbergh
born the Netherlands 1966, arrived Australia 1998

Eighteenth-century equaliser
(500 years)
2010–15 Melbourne
pen and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015
Zilverster (Goodwin & Hanenbergh), Melbourne
est. 2010

Sharon Goodwin
born Australia 1973

Irene Hanenbergh
born the Netherlands 1966, arrived Australia 1998

In tenderness we seek
2010–15 Melbourne
pen and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015
Zilverster (Goodwin & Hanenbergh), Melbourne
est. 2010

Sharon Goodwin
born Australia 1973

Irene Hanenbergh
born the Netherlands 1966, arrived Australia 1998

It’s in your self-interest to find a way
(The Chambers)
2010–15 Melbourne
pen and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

These mesmerising drawings are the result of a five-year collaboration between Irene Hanenbergh and Sharon Goodwin. While the two artists share many interests and concerns, including art history, fantasy, cult iconography, alchemy and supernatural phenomena, each operates within a distinct temporal and imaginative framework. Goodwin’s contributions are rooted in a medieval and Gothic context, while Hanenbergh’s derive from a Romantic sensibility. By swapping back and forward, with each artist working independently, the drawings undergo various transformations until, by mutual consent, they are deemed complete.
Dale Frank
born Australia 1959

The appealing eyes of the blacksmith facing the tyrant
1981 NSW
graphite on paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Michell Endowment, 1982

‘The paper goes up on the wall, no sketches, no constructed plan of how it’s going to look. Visually a mark is put close to the centre, then it spreads out from there. It seems to evolve … [it is] not constructed. The paper is the peripheral of perception at that time.’

DALE FRANK, 1982

In this monumental drawing, Dale Frank’s bodily involvement, through the rhythmic circling and sweeping of his arm across the expansive surface, is paramount, and performative. With its deliberately obscure title, this automatist work becomes an ominous and mesmeric self-portrait, the repetitive swirling patterns depicting auras; visible energy emanating, in this case, from the artist’s own psyche.
Identical twin artists Gabriella and Silvana Mangano have largely worked together as a duo throughout their artistic careers. The title of their video work *If… So… Then…* perfectly encapsulates the activity of the unconscious: successively repeating the same operation in response to the last, in this case producing a drawing by tracing around the figure of the twin facing opposite, spinning them around before they perform the same act. The mirroring of the twins and the action proposes a collapse of discrepancies between the self and the other and a strange, automaton-like mutuality.
Sidney Nolan
born Australia 1917, lived in England
1953–92, died England 1992

Untitled
(Head with ladder and stars)
c. 1940 Melbourne
monotype printed in red ink on tissue paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of James Mollison, 1998
1998.50
Sidney Nolan  

Untitled  
(Weeping head and stars)  
c. 1940 Melbourne  
monotype printed in red ink on tissue paper  

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Unilever Australia, Pty Ltd, Fellow, 1982  
P8-1982  

In the late 1930s and early 1940s Sidney Nolan went through an intensely experimental phase in his art. He created numerous collages, abstract studies and monotypes such as these, which explore the idea of intuitive artistic ability that can be drawn from one’s subconscious through automatic drawing. The latent talent in the art of children, naïve artists and the insane was a topic under much discussion and research at this time.
Eric Thake
Australia 1904–82

Omnivorous bulldog
from the *Accidental animal* series 1967–68
1967 Melbourne
gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1971

PH121-1971
Throughout his long career, Eric Thake sought the irrational and the humorous in his daily life. While employed as a medical draughtsman at the University of Melbourne, where he had to prepare precise diagrams and information panels, during his lunchbreaks Thake wandered the streets of Carlton. Here he often found ‘accidental images’, in these cases splashes of paint on footpaths, which suggested a form that he photographed and enhanced with a suggestive title.
Eric Thake
Australia 1904–82

The white rat
from the Accidental animal series 1967–68
1967 Melbourne
gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1971

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Eric Thake  
Australia 1904–82

The black bunyip  
from the Accidental animal series 1967–68  
1968 Melbourne  
gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased, 1971  
PH123-1971
Peter Ellis
born Australia 1956

Sensitive teeth
2015 Melbourne
synthetic polymer emulsion

Courtesy of the artist
Surrealism was particularly influenced by the writings of Sigmund Freud and his model of the human mind as a dynamic, active system, and artists today have often remained interested in psychoanalysis and the unconscious. The challenging and reworking of Freud's theories, particularly via the lectures of Jacques Lacan, provided fertile ground for feminist theorists’ and artists’ reimagining of the female subject. Contemporary women artists have regularly leaned on these discourses in their depictions of the feminine, employing uncanny, doubling and metaphysical elements in their work, in contrast to the ideal and sexualised imagery found throughout art history.

The term ‘monstrous feminine’ was used by theorist Barbara Creed to characterise the presentation of the woman within popular culture as abject and feared. Creed’s argument that women have historically been ‘constructed as “biological freaks” whose bodies represent a fearful and threatening form of sexuality’ is a point of departure for artists interested in undermining a patriarchal mode of representation. Her concept can also be linked back to the ideas of Biomorphic Surrealism, and is a position that has been utilised productively in contemporary art.
Susan Norrie  
born Australia 1953  

Shudder I  
1994 Sydney  
oil on canvas  

Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne  
Purchased 1995  

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Susan Norrie  
born Australia 1953

Shudder VI  
1994 Sydney  
gouache

Monash University Collection, Melbourne  
Purchased 1995  
1995.55

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Susan Norrie
born Australia 1953

Shudder (Pathology)
1994 Sydney
oil on canvas

Monash University Collection, Melbourne
Purchased 1995 1995.52
Susan Norrie
born Australia 1953

Shudder (Dialogue)
1995 Sydney
lacquered timber, digital iris prints

Monash University Collection, Melbourne
Purchased 1995 1995.43
Susan Norrie
born Australia 1953

Shudder (Dialogue)
1995 Sydney
lacquered timber, digital iris prints

Shudder VI
1994 Sydney
gouache

Monash University Collection, Melbourne
Purchased 1995

Susan Norrie’s Shudder series was inspired by Michelangelo Antonioni’s film L'Avventura (1959), and these two small landscapes bring to mind its rocky coastline setting. Despite the softness of the gouache, the scenes depicted are grim and portentous. These feelings are also evoked by two large-scale oil paintings from the series: dense, abstract works that bring the interior and architectural into relationship with the corporeal and psychological. Norrie’s cabinets continue these strange relationships; their legs unusually tall and appearing extruded as if made of stretched skin instead of wood. It is an uncanny combination of ideas and sensations that may indeed induce a shudder, as the title suggests.
Vivienne Binns
born Australia 1940

Untitled
1965–66 Sydney
blue ballpoint pen

Untitled
1965–66 Sydney
blue ballpoint pen

Untitled
1965–66 Sydney
blue ballpoint pen

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, Victorian Foundation for
Living Australian Artists, 2008


These works are from a large group of spontaneous pen
drawings that represent a pivotal moment in Vivienne
Binns’s artistic development. She said, ‘It felt like the
floodgates had opened, suddenly I broke through to
something else’. Influenced by Dada and Surrealist art,
emergent feminism and long and intense discussions with
fellow artist Mike Brown, Binns’s art radically challenged
representations of sexuality and social expectations of the
female body.
Pat Brassington
born Australia 1942

Starlight
from the Gentle series 2001
2001 Hobart
colour digital print, ed. 1/4

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with funds arranged by Loti Smorgon for Contemporary Australian Photography, 2001
2001.164

‘Too much digging into one’s motivation runs counter to free-flowing spontaneity, but I do seem to be attracted to the enigmatic. When morphing an image I baulk prior to resolution and prefer to leave it hovering in uncertainty. Our visual brain endlessly seeks resolution and hence the real exerts a magnetic attraction. My aim is to use this gravitas to spin off towards other possibilities.’

PAT BRASSINGTON
Pat Brassington
born Australia 1942

Voicing
from the Gentle series 2001
2001 Hobart
colour digital print, ed. 1/4

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with funds arranged by Loti Smorgon for Contemporary Australian Photography, 2001
2001.165
Susan Fereday
born Australia 1959

Not for reproduction
from the *Patrimony* series 2007–13
2008–13 Vienna and Wiesbaden
colour inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne

Susan Fereday’s *Patrimony* series references the picture-poems of René Magritte, a member of the French Surrealist movement before his expulsion. His famous work *The treachery of images*, 1929, with its inscription *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* (This is not a pipe), is mirrored in Fereday’s *Not for reproduction*, which itself puns on the reproduction of the work and biological reproduction; the text ‘Remember me’ inferring loss and lack.
Susan Fereday  
born Australia 1959

**Tathata (There it is!)**  
from the *Patrimony* series 2007–13  
2009–13 Vienna and Wiesbaden  
colour inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne

In *Tathata (There it is!)* a phallic cigar hovers above a rug; the word ‘ding’ is a reference to the biological organ as well as to the imagined sound of a ‘lightbulb moment’ as one achieves insight; and *tathata* is Sanskrit for ‘suchness’, or the true nature of things. This work shows the influence of Jacques Lacan whose restructuring of Sigmund Freud’s work using linguistics introduced a notion of the phallus, creating a new way of conceiving the formation of the (female) subject. Lacan’s model centres on a mother’s desire instead of a child’s physiology, a key development in the employment of psychoanalytic theory by Feminist artists.
This work is a pun that references psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s work, its influence on the artist and on female subjectivity. Lacan uses a story about seeing, and being seen by, a glinting sardine can floating in the sea to describe the relationship between the subject and the object in a key insight into the instability of the subject. ‘The gaze’ would become a key concept in Lacanian theory. Fereday’s title refers to Gustave Courbet’s controversial 1886 painting owned by Lacan *Origin of the world*, which depicts a woman’s naked body, her legs splayed and head out of frame.
Fiona Hall  
born Australia 1953

Paradisus Terrestris Entitled  
1996 Adelaide  
aluminium and tin

Paradisus Terrestris Entitled comprises fifteen sardine cans, transformed from mundane rubbish into refined aesthetic objects. The wound-down top of each tin reveals a human erogenous zone or body part. Sprouting above these are botanically correct representations of native flora – suggestive equivalents of the anatomical details below. Hall uses the juxtaposition of the human body and native flora to imply a collision between Culture and Nature. Each component of the work bears three titles: the Aboriginal plant name specific to the language group indicated in parentheses, the Latin (botanical) name, and the common English name.
Claire Lambe  
born England 1962, arrived Australia 2002  

Shhhh men at work I  
2013 Melbourne  
polyurethane foam, transparent synthetic polymer resin, fabric, bronze

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014  
2014.71

In this sculpture Claire Lambe combines tactile abjection, an aesthetic favoured in feminist art, with hard-edged abstraction. Drawing on her rich memories of the experimental art, music and club scenes of the United Kingdom in the 1970s, her work uses the female body to address underlying histories of violence, social discontent and sexual promiscuity, unsettling conventional notions of gender and sexuality.

This sculpture incorporates a crumbling foam cushion, split down its centre, splayed like the legs of the model in Gustave Courbet's painting Origin of the world, 1866. The dainty feet, cast in luminous bronze, bring a fetishistic quality, sexualising the work further.
Jacques Lacan’s theory of *manque* (lack) – the opposite of presence – though not ‘feminist’, allowed a new engagement with Sigmund Freud, and provided the psychoanalytic language for a feminist retort to castration theory. Lacan articulates the difference between ‘being’ and ‘having’ the phallus: men are positioned as men insofar as they have the phallus. Women, lacking, are theorised to be the phallus. By casting the negative space between her legs for her installation *Vital statistics*, Julie Rrap renders Lacanian lack into presence – the negative space inciting desire rather than horror.
Jill Orr
born Australia 1952, lived in the Netherlands 1980–85

She had long golden hair
1980 Adelaide
black and white video transferred to Mac mini, sound, 3 min 39 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Fehily Gallery, Melbourne

In her 1980 performance at Adelaide’s Experimental Art Foundation She had long golden hair, Jill Orr addresses the symbolic nature of women’s hair; both the expectation for it to be long, and the pulling of it or cutting of it as punishment. Orr entered the room to a male chant of ‘witch, bitch, mole, dyke; witch, bitch, mole, dyke’, and fixed her hair to suspended chains. Members of the audience were invited to cut off sections of the artist’s hair as she narrated stories of women forcibly having their hair cut.
Dusan and Voitre Marek spent their formative years in Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic). During the 1930s and 1940s the city was one of the most important centres of European Surrealism after Paris and Brussels, and the Mareks immersed themselves in its ideas, literature and art. This was the start of a lifelong commitment to Surrealism, particularly for the younger Marek brother, Dusan.

When their country was invaded by Communist Russia in 1948, the Mareks fled to Adelaide, hoping the ‘city of churches’ would have some affinity with Prague; they were greatly disappointed. At the time, Adelaide was insular and parochial, and when Dusan and Voitre exhibited their challenging Czech-Surrealist art there in 1949 it met with puzzlement, criticism and even censorship.

Dusan and his wife Helena abandoned Adelaide in 1951 and moved from state to state within Australia, and lived for a period in Papua New Guinea where Dusan exhibited his Surrealist art. From the early 1950s he also added experimental filmmaking to his working practice. Voitre Marek remained in South Australia, and Dusan later returned there. Little known outside Adelaide, the Mareks’ lyrical Surrealist art is an important chapter of the movement in Australia.
Dusan Marek
born Czechoslovakia 1926, arrived Australia 1948, lived in Papua New Guinea 1954–59, died 1993

Equator
1948 en route to Australia, SS Charlton Sovereign
oil on wood panel

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
South Australian Government Grant, 1972 721P4(B)

Dusan Marek painted Equator on a discarded card table top, to mark their ship’s crossing from the Northern to Southern Hemisphere on 12 October 1948. A naked female form with mechanised body parts is connected to a petal-like propeller; a disembodied hand unmasks her; and a tiny figure, standing upside-down, his feet on the equator line of a sphere, suggests the great distance the emigrants were travelling.
Dusan Marek
born Czechoslovakia 1926, arrived Australia 1948, lived in Papua New Guinea 1954–59, died 1993

Gibraltar
1948 en route to Australia, SS Charlton Sovereign
oil and pencil on cardboard

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Dusan Marek
born Czechoslovakia 1926, arrived Australia 1948, lived in Papua New Guinea 1954–59, died 1993

Gravitation – The return of Christ
1949 Adelaide
oil on wood panel, mirror

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased with the assistance of James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007
NGA 2007.1080

This unsettling painting is one of Dusan Marek’s earliest works produced in Adelaide. In it he creates a menacing mood with a barren landscape populated with amorphous and humanoid forms and a phallic canon dominating the left side of the composition. Adding to the sense of unease, a convex mirror on a boat, floating on the rolling ocean, gives a distorted vision back to the viewer. Marek uses the mirror to draw the spectator into the composition and to suggest an alternative and distorted reality, while the boat on the ocean is suggestive of journeys and transformations.
Dusan Marek
born Czechoslovakia 1926, arrived Australia 1948, lived in Papua New Guinea 1954–59, died 1993

Not titled (Prostrate biomorphic figure and geometric forms)
1951 Sydney
pen and ink

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of Helena Marek 1995  NGA 95.380

Untitled (Creatures)
c. 1949 Adelaide
pen and ink

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Gift of Helena Marek 1996  962D2

I eat myself which obstructs to know myself
1949 Adelaide
pen and ink, gouache

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Dusan Marek
born Czechoslovakia 1926, arrived Australia 1948, lived in Papua New Guinea 1954–59, died 1993

Scientific priest
1965 Sydney
oil on plywood

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through the NGV Foundation by The Agapitos/Wilson Collection, Member, 2000
2000.202

Dusan Marek declared that he became a Surrealist at the age of thirteen. His commitment may have influenced his move in 1954 to Papua New Guinea, which was placed at the centre of the 1929 Surrealist Map of the World. During his five years there, Marek held an exhibition of his Surrealist art in a Red Cross hall in Rabaul, to the surprise of the local community. Marek is a rare and important example of an artist who remained firmly dedicated to Surrealism throughout his life and artistic career, melding it with mysticism, philosophy and a lyrical form of abstraction to create landscapes filled with figures and forms caught mid metamorphosis.
Dusan Marek
born Czechoslovakia 1926, arrived Australia 1948, lived in Papua New Guinea 1954–59, died 1993

Cobweb on a parachute
1966–67 Sydney
black and white 35mm film transferred to DVD, sound, 62 min

National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra  524498

Dusan Marek experimented with filmmaking from the early 1950s, using puppets and animation to make short features and documentaries. *Cobweb on a parachute* was his first full-length, live-action film, and is one of the few truly surreal works to emerge in Australian cinema. Throughout the film, a protagonist, played by Marek himself, contemplates his life and relationship with the world, relentlessly pursued by a creature signifying ‘the fight between the conscious and the sub-conscious mind’. Legal disputes meant the film was never resolved as Marek had originally intended, yet it remains among his most ambitious cinematic projects.
Dusan Marek
born Czechoslovakia 1926, arrived Australia 1948, lived in Papua New Guinea 1954–59, died 1993

Absit Invidia (Let there be no ill will) / Positive negative
1968 Sydney
charcoal on canvas on plywood

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through the NGV Foundation by The Agapitos/Wilson Collection, Fellow, 2002 2002.64
Dusan Marek
born Czechoslovakia 1926, arrived Australia 1948, lived in Papua New Guinea 1954–59, died 1993

2000
1987 Adelaide
oil on plywood

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Gift of the artist, 1988

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Voitre Marek
born Czechoslovakia 1919, arrived Australia 1948, died 1999

My Gibraltar
1948 en route to Australia, SS Charlton Sovereign
oil on wood panel

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
d’Auvergne Boxall Bequest Fund 1996  965P88

Together with one thousand other displaced Europeans, the Marek brothers sailed for Australia in 1948. Mechanical problems delayed their ship en route, particularly in Gibraltar, inspiring both Dusan and Voitre Marek to create paintings using materials they scavenged, along with those supplied by the crew. My Gibraltar depicts a merged male and female head (possibly referencing Voitre’s fiancée, Vera, who had fled from Czechoslovakia with them, but sailed on a different ship), which wears the Rock of Gibraltar like a crown. A ship follows its set route across the image to the distant horizon over which Australia lies.
Voitre Marek
born Czechoslovakia 1919, arrived Australia 1948, died 1999

Victim of the world
1952 Adelaide
pen and blue ink on photographic paper

All secrets remain hidden
1956 Kangaroo Island, South Australia
pen and ink on photographic paper

Mood
1952 Adelaide
pen and ink on photographic paper

Apart from a brief period spent working as lighthouse keepers on Kangaroo Island, Voitre Marek and his wife Vera remained in Adelaide. Like his brother Dusan, Voitre produced numerous fantastic and metamorphic creatures in pen and ink drawings. In his later years his increasingly devout Catholicism led to a career in religious art and sculptural ornamentation, strongly influenced by his folk art heritage.
Petr Herel  
born Czechoslovakia 1943, arrived Australia 1973

Untitled  
6 plates from the *Borges sequel* portfolio  
1982  
etching, soft-ground etching, foul-bite and plate-tone, ed.  
9/55

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Gift of Mrs Gwen Frolich, 1994

P18.6-1994, P18.7-1994, P18.3-1994,  

The continuing impact of Surrealism is apparent in the art of Petr Herel, a Czech-born artist who studied in Prague and Paris before arriving in Australia. Herel’s art has been influenced by the fantastical figures of earlier artists such as Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Breugel the elder and Jacques Callot; and by the nineteenth-century writers Comte de Lautréamont and Arthur Rimbaud. These skilfully drawn and imaginative plates were originally created to accompany a publication of three short stories by the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges.

‘[The *Borges sequel* etchings] are like pages from a half-retrieved mediaeval manuscript, no longer legible but where the marginal grotesques are still alive and have begun to take over the page, playing on our dreams, fears, fantasies, disgust, and also our sense of humour.’

DAVID SPODE, 1983
Sigmund Freud’s theory of the structure and workings of the mind influenced the development of Surrealism enormously. Freud suggested the existence of a dynamic unconscious responsible for the content of dreams and into which the mind exiles forbidden desires and urges. Because the unconscious was central to the Surrealist aim for dreams and reality to coexist as Surreality, dreams were at the very heart of the movement.

Viewing the dream as a liminal site of exchange between the conscious and unconscious, the Surrealists used various techniques, such as automatic drawing and free association, to create a situation where the unconscious could intrude into the waking world. One of the lasting effects of Surrealism was the popularisation of dreamscape images: paintings featuring impossible landscapes, or bleak vistas in which only the significant symbols of a dream appear, sometimes warping or melting to represent the liquid nature of dream logic. The uncanny nature of the dream, in which everyday situations are often heightened to a point of anxiety, combined with a lack of fixed logic or reason, remains rich terrain for art today.
Clifford Bayliss

Pursuit (Eyeball balloon in net over landscape)
mid 1940s London
pen and blue-black ink

Untitled (Woman with flowing hair beside stairs with molten form)
mid 1940s London
pen and brown-black ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014  2014.12, 2014.10

Clifford Bayliss’s image of the balloon/eye was inspired by a famous lithograph *The eye like a strange balloon mounts toward infinity*, 1882, by the nineteenth-century French Symbolist artist Odilon Redon. The Surrealists were particularly interested in the fantastical imagery of Redon, whom they regarded as one of their precursors.
Clifford Bayliss  

**Nude with hair caught in a door (recto)**  
c. 1945 London  
pen and ink  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased with the assistance of James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007  
2007.928AB  

**Untitled (Naked man with mask in landscape with female torsos)**  
mid 1940s London  
pen and ink  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014  
2014.6
Clifford Bayliss

Untitled (Torso of man with twisted neck, prosthetic arms and banner in landscape)
mid 1940s London
pen and ink

Untitled (Figure with flowing hair lying within tent with banner)
mid 1940s London
pen and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

2014.8, 2014.15

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Clifford Bayliss
born Australia 1912, lived in England
1935–89, died England 1989

Spinning mobiles
mid 1940s London
pen and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2012  2012.28

Untitled (Hand holding branch form)
mid 1940s London
pen and brown ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014  2014.13
Clifford Bayliss

Man adjusting his spectacles
mid 1940s London
pen and brown ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2012

Clifford Bayliss’s art has been described by art historian Juliet Peers as a Surrealist checklist of ‘sexual narratives, anthropomorphic ruins, dissolving flesh, suppurating wounds, mechanical frames and skeletons’. His drawing style shows his study of the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, and that of contemporaries such as André Masson and Salvador Dalí, who was himself greatly influenced by the draughtsmanship of Renaissance masters.
Clifford Bayliss

Untitled
1940s London
oil on composition board

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased NGV Foundation Patrons, 2014

Clifford Bayliss was a star student at the National Gallery School in Melbourne, and won the coveted Travelling Scholarship in 1935. Arriving in London in 1936, he most likely saw the First International Surrealist Exhibition that year. Bayliss began his own Surrealist explorations around 1940, during the Second World War when he was part of a Rescue Squad during the bombing of London. He remained in England for the rest of his life and rarely exhibited. As a result, Bayliss’s early Surrealist works remained virtually unknown until after his death.

Surrealism had set out to liberate desire – considered to be the authentic voice of the inner self – and Bayliss reportedly explained that the winding sheet motif that appears repeatedly in his work referred to the unwrapping of his fantasies.
Clifford Bayliss

Nude with hair caught in a door (recto)
c. 1945 London
pen and ink

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased with the assistance of James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007 NGA 2007.928AB

Untitled (Naked man with mask in landscape with female torsos)
mid 1940s London
pen and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014 2014.6
Clifford Bayliss

Untitled (Torso of man with twisted neck, prosthetic arms and banner in landscape)
mid 1940s London
pen and ink

Untitled (Figure with flowing hair lying within tent with banner)
mid 1940s London
pen and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014
2014.8, 2014.15
Clifford Bayliss  

Spinning mobiles  
mid 1940s London  
pen and ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2012  
2012.28

Untitled (Hand holding branch form)  
mid 1940s London  
pen and brown ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014  
2014.13
Clifford Bayliss

Man adjusting his spectacles
mid 1940s London
pen and brown ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2012

Clifford Bayliss’s art has been described by art historian Juliet Peers as a Surrealist checklist of ‘sexual narratives, anthropomorphic ruins, dissolving flesh, suppurating wounds, mechanical frames and skeletons’. His drawing style shows his study of the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, and that of contemporaries such as André Masson and Salvador Dalí, who was himself greatly influenced by the draughtsmanship of Renaissance masters.
Clifford Bayliss was a star student at the National Gallery School in Melbourne, and won the coveted Travelling Scholarship in 1935. Arriving in London in 1936, he most likely saw the First International Surrealist Exhibition that year. Bayliss began his own Surrealist explorations around 1940, during the Second World War when he was part of a Rescue Squad during the bombing of London. He remained in England for the rest of his life and rarely exhibited. As a result, Bayliss’s early Surrealist works remained virtually unknown until after his death.

Surrealism had set out to liberate desire – considered to be the authentic voice of the inner self – and Bayliss reportedly explained that the winding sheet motif that appears repeatedly in his work referred to the unwrapping of his fantasies.
James Lynch  
born Australia 1974  

Nadine’s dream of me #1  
from the series Other peoples’ dreams of me 2003–06  
2003 Melbourne  
pencil, ink and synthetic polymer paint on paper transferred to digital video, 2 min 24 sec  

Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne  

Over a period of some years, James Lynch collected family and friends’ accounts of dreams in which he appeared. The resulting series of hand-drawn animations, which play out irrational narratives, present a challenge to the modernist idea of the unconscious as the source of dream content. Inspired by his experiences working in the large artistic collective DAMP and the changes in perspective and subjectivity that it facilitated, Lynch conceptualised the unconscious as, in part, a shared domain, following Edmund Husserl’s development of phenomenology.
James Lynch  
born Australia 1974

Nadine’s dream of me #2  
from the series *Other peoples’ dreams of me* 2003–06  
2003 Melbourne  
pencil, ink and synthetic polymer paint on paper transferred to digital video 2 min 25 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne
James Lynch
born Australia 1974

I was running and running...
from the series Other peoples’ dreams of me 2003–06
2004 Melbourne
pencil, ink and synthetic polymer paint on paper transferred
to digital video 5 min 30 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne
James Lynch
born Australia 1974

You were moving...
from the series Other peoples’ dreams of me 2003–06
2005 Melbourne
pencil, ink and synthetic polymer paint on paper transferred to digital video 30 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne

‘We each have unspoken roles to play in one another’s lives.’

JAMES LYNCH
James Lynch
born Australia 1974

We awoke...
from the series Other peoples’ dreams of me 2003–06
2004 Melbourne
pencil, ink and synthetic polymer paint on paper transferred
to digital video 2 min 40 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne
James Lynch
born Australia 1974

Everybody was...
from the series Other peoples’ dreams of me 2003–06
2006 Melbourne
pencil, ink and synthetic polymer paint on paper transferred
to digital video 3 min 30 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne
Tom Moore
born Australia 1971

Self-preservation
2014 Adelaide
glass, wood

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Anne Wallace
born Australia 1970

Damage
1996 Brisbane
oil on canvas

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Purchased 1997 under the Contemporary Art Acquisition Program with funds from Alex and Kitty Mackay through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation and the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Grant 1997.144

The ideas around dream symbols are useful for reading the uncanny imagery in the paintings of Anne Wallace. *Damage*, featuring blood running in rivulets down the backs of a woman’s legs, issuing from beneath her pressed skirt, can surely be read as a quintessential anxiety dream.
Anne Wallace
born Australia 1970

Sight unseen
1996 Brisbane
oil on canvas

Private collection, Sydney

Water seeping under a door and pooling on the floor in *Sight unseen* – perhaps a trivial domestic incident of leaving the bath running – is made to feel decidedly unhomely and otherworldly with the painting’s lurid green walls, and again points to anxiety made manifest in the dream world.
Anne Wallace
born Australia 1970

Talking cure
2010 Brisbane
oil on canvas

Collection of Brisbane Girls Grammar School, Brisbane

This work’s title makes a nod to Sigmund Freud, whose approach to the treatment of psychological conditions, proposed talking cure and the interpretation of dreams represented the birth of psychoanalysis. The strange perspective in Talking cure is quite dreamlike: the office plant in the background seems to be in the foreground as the reclining female, her analyst’s chair empty behind her, presents the scene as a heightened interior reality.
Alison Burton
born Australia 1951

Archaeology
2014 Melbourne
vitrine, plaster, clay, synthetic hair, synthetic polymer paint
and found objects

Courtesy of the artist and Kalli Rolfe Contemporary Art, Melbourne
‘Now, of course, it’s obvious that my optimism, and the hopes of the Surrealist movement in its initial phase, have not been justified. It hasn’t been a cure for all the ills of life. It has changed nothing … But, if it has not changed the world it has at least enriched it by broadening the field in which the creative imagination can act. And that, I think, makes it worthwhile.’

JAMES GLEESON
James Gleeson

Icons of hazard
2001 Sydney
oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through the NGV Foundation by the artist, Governor, 2004
2004.354
James Gleeson

Rising to the night
2001 Sydney
oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through the NGV Foundation by the artist, Governor, 2004 2004.353

After several decades dividing his energies between his art practice and his endeavours as a writer and critic, James Gleeson returned to painting with renewed vigour from 1983. The monumental group of works he produced during this late phase of his career are considered among his most challenging. In the sensuous Rising to the night, literal figuration is abandoned for a new visual vocabulary. Painted in fleshy hues, semi-recognisable elements merge with biomorphic shapes, creating unsettling new forms. Suggesting the real and the fantastical, Gleeson’s liquefied imagery foreshadows the turmoil of apocalyptic catastrophe.
Alex Pittendrigh
born Australia 1966

Cartouche for the Column House at the garden of Le Désert, near Retz I
2014 Melbourne
papier mâché, synthetic polymer paint, gesso, cardboard, oyster shells and styrofoam on plywood

Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne
Alex Pittendrigh
born Australia 1966

Cartouche for the Column House at the garden of Le Désert, near Retz III
2014 Melbourne
papier mâché, synthetic polymer paint, gesso, cardboard, oyster shells and styrofoam on plywood

Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne
Alex Pittendrigh
born Australia 1966

Cartouche for the Column House at the garden of Le Désert, near Retz V
2014 Melbourne
papier mâché, synthetic polymer paint, cardboard, styrofoam, gesso and natural materials on plywood

Courtesy of the artist and Murray White Room, Melbourne
Tim Schultz
born Australia 1960

Rinaldo
2009 Sydney
oil on linen

Courtesy of the artist and The Commercial, Sydney

Tim Schultz is an artist particularly interested in recovering and mining art-historically outmoded, unpopular or ‘abhorrent’, movements, and his paintings reference Baroque, Rococo, Art Nouveau and Surrealist art. In this series, voluptuous figures inspired by French Rococo painter François Boucher are distorted and elongated, set in dreamlike landscapes of the kind popularised by Salvador Dalí. Further references include the Venus di Milo, c. 100 BC; ornate designs of Hector Guimard, the Art Nouveau architect of ornate Paris Metro entrances; and a reworking of Oedipus and the Sphinx, 1864, by French Symbolist painter Gustave Moreau.
Tim Schultz
born Australia 1960

Original hunger
2010 Sydney
oil on linen

Courtesy of the artist and The Commercial, Sydney
Tim Schultz
born Australia 1960

The famous onyx staircase
2011 Sydney
oil on linen

Courtesy of the artist and The Commercial, Sydney
Tim Schultz
born Australia 1960

Hotel Schlupfyr
2012 Sydney
oil on linen

Courtesy of the artist and The Commercial, Sydney
Tim Schultz
born Australia 1960

Ideal reconstruction (the Venus of Agesandros)
2012 Sydney
oil on linen

Courtesy of the artist and The Commercial, Sydney
Tim Schultz
born Australia 1960

The perfume burner
2012 Sydney
oil on linen

Courtesy of the artist and The Commercial, Sydney
Peter Daverington
born Australia 1974

The Hanging Gardens of Nineveh
2014 New York
oil on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and ARC ONE Gallery, Melbourne
Adrian Feint
Australia 1894–1971

The lighthouse
1943 Sydney
oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased with the assistance of James Agapitos OAM and Ray Wilson OAM 2007

NGA 2007.955
The early involvement of Surrealist artists with theatre, ballet, dance and performance made the stage a principal site for the transmission of Surrealist ideas, techniques and aesthetics. In particular, Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes was instrumental in introducing the work of leading avant-garde artists, such as Max Ernst, Joan Miró and later Giorgio de Chirico and Andre Masson, to Australian audiences. Touring nationally between 1936 and 1940, these visually and conceptually spectacular ballets made an enormous impact on the development of the arts in Australia, helping to propagate a fantastical Surrealist ‘style’ that soon informed the language of design, fashion and advertising.

Fashion, especially, offered Surrealism a vehicle by which to explore a range of psychological and sexual ideas. Seen first in the collaborative works of Elsa Schiaparelli and Salvador Dalí from 1936, perverse bodily themes were still visible in Leigh Bowery’s ‘looks’ and performances throughout the mid 1980s and 1990s. Similarly, the legacy of Surrealist aesthetics can be seen in the dramaturgy of Centre for Style’s chaotic and collaborative mise en scène.
Charles Atlas  
born United States 1949

Because we must  
1989 London  
colour video transferred to MPEG 4, sound, 52 min 30 sec

Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix

In 1989 Leigh Bowery collaborated with the Scottish-born ‘punk’ choreographer Michael Clark on this dance work, both by contributing a series of costumes based on his own clubbing outfits and participating in the performance. Based on the original 1987 ballet production staged at Sadler Wells Theatre, London, this film by Charles Atlas highlights the irrationality and artifice of the mise en scène through extended sequences featuring a chainsaw-wielding nude and Bowery as a perverted teapot.
Infamous Australian Leigh Bowery was a key figure in London’s cultural scene throughout the 1980s. As host of the decadent nightclub Taboo, Bowery blurred the lines between art, fashion and performance with his surreally perverse ‘looks’ and burlesque on-stage endeavours. Described by Boy George as ‘modern art on legs’, in 1988 Bowery was invited to undertake a week-long residency at Anthony d’Offay Gallery, London. The performance saw him adopt a different ‘look’ for two hours each day over five days. Reclining on a cushioned chaise longue in front of a two-way mirror, all Bowery could see was his own reflection.
In Australia the association between ballet and the irrational realm found unlikely expression in the commercial sphere. In 1938 Max Dupain produced a series of fashion illustrations for David Jones that used the stage as a symbol, and the ballerina as a romantic figure of unconscious desire. *Theme for a mural*, commissioned by Sydney architect Sam Lipson for a client, was produced by Olive Cotton while managing Dupain’s studio while he was in active military service. A composite of two negatives – a background and the dancers – the final printed image plays with scale, shadow and depth to create a magical dreamlike landscape.
Atrophy Amphitheatre
2015
wood, metal (railing), metal (furniture), carpet

Atrophy Amphitheatre takes the theatrical stage as its departure point for a collaborative and chaotic dramaturgy of art, props, steel mannequins, and clothing made by a number of local fashion designers. Mannequins – the embodiment of the uncanny because they are lifelike and lifeless – featured heavily in international Surrealist practice throughout the 1930s, culminating in the infamously fetishist Rue Surrealist at the Exposition Internationale de Surrealism, 1938, Paris. Here the mise en scène is a site of disrepair, an untidy zone that questions the use of art as prop and the moral struggle between art and commerce.
Atrophy Amphitheatre participating artists
Left to right

Liam Osborne
born Australia 1991

Hanging ember #2
2015 Melbourne
resin, wicker (basket), plastic

Courtesy of the artist

Natasha Havir Rose Smith
born Australia 1989

Costume II
2015 Melbourne
polyester

Courtesy of the artist

Blake Barnes
born Australia 1983

Outfit
2015 Melbourne
cotton, acetate, paper, feathers

Courtesy of the artist
Atrophy Amphitheatre participating artists continued ...
Left to right

Blake Barnes
born Australia 1983

Outfit
2015 Melbourne
cotton, polyester, silk, hessian, dried flowers, diamantés

Courtesy of the artist

Zac Segbedzi
born Australia 1991

Punk of the rags
2015 Melbourne
newspaper, adhesive, wire, cotton, polyester

Courtesy of the artist

Joshua Petherick
born Australia 1979

Scalper
2014 Melbourne
paper, carbon, synthetic hair, spirulina, fabric dyes,
galvanised steel

Courtesy of the Christo Crocker Collection
Atrophy Amphitheatre participating artists continued ...

Left to right

Joshua Petherick
born Australia 1979

Scalper
2014 Melbourne
paper, carbon, synthetic hair, spirulina, fabric dyes, galvanised steel

Courtesy of the artist and Minerva, Sydney; Croy Nielsen, Berlin; Robert Heald, Wellington

Kate Meakin
born Australia 1989

Shirt
2014 Melbourne
cotton, tape

Courtesy of the artist

Blake Barnes
born Australia 1983

Outfit
2015 Melbourne
cotton, acetate, paper, sequins

Courtesy of the artist
Atrophy Amphitheatre participating artists continued ...

Left to right

Alison Pyke
born Australia 1987

Soft stiletto
2015 Melbourne
silk, synthetic fibre, polyester (thread)

Courtesy of the artist

Susan Jacobs
born Australia 1977

Prospects
2015 Melbourne
aluminium, lead, magnetite

Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Scout Presents

Kate Meakin
born Australia 1989

Model
2015 Melbourne
paper (tissue), steel (pole), metal (floristry frog), cotton

Courtesy of the artist
Atrophy Amphitheatre participating artists continued ...

Left to right

Jason Matthew Lee
born Unites States 1989

Doves: bliss to pain
2015 Chicago
inkjet print on adhesive vinyl

Courtesy of the artist

Josey Kidd-Crowe
born Australia 1987

Swiss cheese back
2015 Melbourne
oil on canvas

Courtesy of the Neon Parc

Blake Barnes
born Australia 1983

Outfit
2015 Melbourne
cotton, acetate, paper

Courtesy of the artist
Atrophy Amphitheatre participating artists continued ...

Left to right

Virginia Overell
born Australia 1985

Flag of convenience
2014 Melbourne
hand-dyed fabric

Courtesy of the artist

Quintessa Matranga
born United States 1989

Tijuana mud bath
2014 New York
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy of the artist

Blake Barnes
born Australia 1983

Outfit
2015 Melbourne
cotton, acetate, straw

Courtesy of the artist
Atrophy Amphitheatre participating artists continued ...

Left to right

Kate Meakin
born Australia 1989

a crust of bread
2015 Melbourne
painted steel, tape, fur (rabbit)

Courtesy of the artist

Grace Anderson
born Australia 1991

Ghost girl
2015 Melbourne
plaster, paint, straw, fabric, plastic

Courtesy of the artist

Matt Hinkely
born Australia 1976

Untitled
2014 Melbourne
polyurethane, pigment, sand, copper (filings), wire

Courtesy of Sutton Gallery
Greatest Hits, Melbourne
est. 2008

Gavin Bell
born Australia 1985

Jarrah de Kuijer
born Australia 1985

Simon McGlinn
born Australia 1985

Untitled
2012
taxidermied cat, electronic components

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

Lurid Beauty: Australian Surrealism and its Echoes
Hein Heckroth

Australia
1941 Hay, New South Wales
oil on composition board

German theatre designer and Surrealist painter Hein Heckroth immigrated to Britain in 1935 to avoid Nazi persecution. Ironically, during the Second World War he was interned as an ‘enemy alien’ and sent to Hay camp, New South Wales. Later returning to London, Heckroth won an Oscar for his surreal and hallucinatory set designs for the 1948 film The Red Shoes. Painted while at Hay, Australia shows Heckroth’s affinity for staging with its careful arrangement of figures, including his own self-portrait at lower left. Suggestive of inner emotional turbulence, the work also invokes a subverted reality through the effect of doubling and mirroring.
Jean Cocteau’s play *Orphée*, a Surrealist influenced reinterpretation of the Orpheus myth, was first performed in Paris in 1926; with Cocteau playing the part of the angel Heurtebise in the 1927 revival. In 1948 Sidney Nolan was invited to design the sets, program and poster for a Sydney University Dramatic Society production. This painting follows Nolan’s design for the stage drop curtain. Alluding to the symbolism in Cocteau’s script, Nolan depicts the mirror, incorporating silver foil from a Cadbury chocolate wrapper, as the play’s portal to the Underworld and a threshold between differing states of reality.
Loudon Sainthill
born Australia 1918, lived in England 1949–69, died
England 1969

The actress
1947 Sydney
watercolour, pen and ink and coloured inks over pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1947

Unable to make a living as a theatre artist in Australia, Loudon Sainthill worked across the fields of interiors, fashion, advertising and theatre design, and exhibited with the Contemporary Art Society (CAS), Sydney, stamping his highly decorative Surrealist aesthetic onto the public consciousness. His richly fantastical compositions were jarringly colourful and notable for their illusory references. *The actress*, with its distorted perspectives, apertures and central mannequin form, suggests a formal engagement with the works of Giorgio de Chirico.
Loudon Sainthill
born Australia 1918, lived in England 1949–69, died England 1969

Costume for a Vivandiere
1942 Sydney
gouache over pencil

Private collection, Sydney

Touring Australia between 1936 and 1940, Colonel Wassily de Basil’s Ballets Russes made a lasting impression on the aesthetics and career of Loudon Sainthill. Introducing modern choreography, music and design to Australian audiences, several of the ballets performed featured set designs and costumes by the Surrealists André Masson and Joan Miró and the metaphysical painter Giorgio de Chirico. In 1941 Sainthill was commissioned by the Kirsova Ballet to design sets for several productions. These were shown in the Australian Art for Theatre and Ballet exhibition of 1942, along with a number of Sainthilll’s costumes designs.
Loudon Sainthill
born Australia 1918, lived in England 1949–69, died England 1969

Prologue curtain design for Le Coq d’Or
1954
gouache and chalk on gauze

Private collection
A fantastical Surrealist ‘style’ came to inform the language of design, fashion and advertising in the 1940s. In Australia, this effect was visible in the commercial work of artists such as Loudon Sainthill and Max Dupain. In 1938 Sainthill's biomorphic murals for society interiors were featured in an issue of *Australian Home Beautiful*, while in 1946 he produced three ‘Surrealist’ fashion covers for the *Australian Women’s Weekly*. This 1942 cover for *The Home* is a dreamscape of ambiguous perspectives and elaborate costumes.
During the 1960s and early 1970s there was a revival of interest in the organic and the fantastic, inspired in part by the widespread use of hallucinogens. Art movements such as Art Nouveau and Surrealism were among the many influences incorporated with images and influences from popular culture at the time. Martin Sharp is one of Australia’s quintessential Pop artists, best remembered for his involvement in the controversial Oz magazine and for the wildly psychedelic posters he made in London, in which he collaged pictorial elements – in this case the radical folksinger Bob Dylan – with text.