

200 YEARS OF
**AUSTRALIAN
FASHION**

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200 Years of Australian Fashion

200 Years of Australian Fashion highlights distinguishing features of Australian fashion through the work of more than ninety designers and makers. From the early dressmakers of colonial Sydney and mid-century salons of Melbourne's Collins Street to the inner-city studios of contemporary designers, this exhibition considers what and who has defined Australian dress.

Australia's fashion industry has been informed by this country's geography and resources, as well as by migration and local responses to international trends. Australian designers have responded to these conditions with innovation and ingenuity, humour and irony in dialogue with the wider world. The definition of an Australian designer is broad. It is not necessary to have been born here: Australian designers may live here, have travelled here or come of age here.

200 Years of Australian Fashion brings together 101 outfits and numerous accessories drawn from the NGV Collection, key institutional and private loans to highlight key moments in Australian fashion history. This broad sweep examines what Australian fashion has been and can be.

Colonial fashion

Few garments are extant from the early period of Australian fashion. As the colony was establishing its cities, infrastructure, industry and culture, fashion items were not always preserved; however, a few precious examples survive. These early works track the beginnings of colonial Sydney society, where dress often functioned to signify status among the few ruling elite.

Fashion throughout the Western world at this time was inspired by developments in Paris and London, with fabric often imported from India and China for its fashionable appeal. Because it is close geographically to these centres, Australia was part of a network of international fabric trade from the very beginning. In addition, Australians followed overseas fashion through letters to relatives, magazines and newspaper reports.

When the gold rush struck in the mid nineteenth century, an influx of inhabitants from all over the world flocked to Melbourne, which became one of the richest cities in the world and, arguably, the most fashionable.

UNKNOWN, Australia

Evening dress

c. 1805

cotton (Indian muslin), gilt silver (thread), silk (tape),
pearl (button)

National Trust of Australia (New South Wales)
Gift of Miss H. Buchanan Observatory Hill Collection

75161

This is the earliest known surviving dress thought to be made in Australia. Its raised waist and slim skirt are referred to as the Empire line, and it is made of fashionable cotton muslin, sourced from India, which was geographically and advantageously closer to Australia than Britain. This white evening dress embroidered in thread which was once gold also reflects the status of its wearer, Anna Josepha King, wife of governor of New South Wales Philip Gidley King. In the newly established society of Sydney, it was important for those in positions of power to demonstrate their authority through fashionable dress.

UNKNOWN, Australia

Wedding dress

1823

silk, cotton

Sydney Living Museum, Sydney
Vaucluse House collection, Sydney Living Museums

V91/17-1:2

On 4 January 1823 Miss Anna Blaxland, daughter of John Blaxland, married Thomas Walker, Deputy Commissary General at Parramatta. For her wedding day she chose this ensemble of lightweight cream silk with a fine satin stripe. Its fabric may have come from India or England. Her gown has corded tabs at the waist and applied cord laces finished with acorn tassels – called ‘brandenbourgs’. This classically inspired silhouette was adorned with military-style braiding across the front.

UNKNOWN, Australia

Maternity dress

c. 1828

silk, cotton, metal

Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, Sydney
Gift of Royal Australian Historical Society, 1981

A7811

This maternity gown of hand-sewn silk serge (a woven fabric with diagonal ridge patterns of brown and cream threads) is one of the very few surviving examples of dress from the early nineteenth century. In contrast to the public display of a wedding dress, this gown was worn in private in the domestic environment. It has a front-opening bodice, as well as a useful drop or apron front cut into the gathered skirt which shows the shift as the waistline lowers and the skirt widens. Maternity gowns at the time varied from wrappers to skirted gowns with adjustable drawstring waists.

UNKNOWN, Australia

Dress

c. 1855

cotton, silk, metal, mother-of-pearl, baleen

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mrs Michael Parker, 1983

CT22-1983

This cream, mauve and grey hand-stitched cotton and silk gown was worn by Anne Lavinia Grice, wife of a prominent pastoralist and businessman. Anne had arrived in Australia in 1843, and married in Sydney before moving to Melbourne. Her dress is a fashionable 1850s silhouette with its bell-shaped skirt and wide pagoda sleeves decorated with appliqued mauve ribbons. Similar styles to this dress were published in the British *World of Fashion* magazine, which included paper patterns. The dress may have been made by Anne herself but it was more likely made by an (unidentified) highly skilled local dressmaker.

The department store

The nature of urban shopping in Australia changed considerably between 1850 and 1880. Prior to this, small general stores, sometimes called repositories, sold a range of drapery goods and trimmings, while men's tailors and outfitters and women's dressmaking establishments catered to the needs of the affluent classes. By the mid nineteenth century large emporiums of imposing grandeur with arcade windows, stylish interiors, tempting displays and a prodigious variety of merchandise were flourishing in all the state capitals.

These new department stores transformed the streetscape and increased local availability of fashionable clothing. They retailed a combination of imported, high-quality readymade garments selected by overseas agents, alongside custom merchandise produced in-house by expert tailors, dressmakers and milliners. By the 1880s, supported by a climate of economic prosperity, shopping was reconceived as a new pastime.

To a large extent department stores catered to the needs and desires of fashionable middle-class women, creating environments where they could shop privately at their leisure. Female customers were serviced by well-appointed mirrored areas, comfortable seating, fresh flowers, rest rooms and sections dedicated to different garments; such as millinery, underwear and fine gowns.

JENNY BANNISTER, Melbourne

fashion house

1976–2009

Jenny BANNISTER designer

born Australia 1954

Extinct hat

1984

stencilled calf skin

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of the artist, 1998

1998.201.d

Jenny Bannister is well known for the inventive clothing she created during the 1970s and early 1980s.

By experimenting with eclectic materials and construction techniques, she established her own recognisable style.

This hat recreates the skin of an extinct *Thylacine* (Tasmanian tiger). The stencilled stripes and additional spots of the animals 'hide' are displayed on the wide flattened shape of the hat to dramatic effect.

UNKNOWN, Australia

Fan

c. 1880

ivory, cockatoo feathers, silk, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mr James Reid, 1964

748A-D5

Feathers became a highly sought-after fashion commodity in the final decades of the nineteenth century. They appeared in vast quantities on accessories such as hats, muffs and fans. Millinery houses traded internationally and indiscriminately for such materials and some hats even featured entire birds.

Thought to be made by Chinese settlers in Darwin, this fan combines a carved ivory handle with the feathers of the female red-tailed black cockatoo, commonly found in northern Australia.

MATERIALBYPRODUCT, Melbourne

fashion house

est. 2004

Susan DIMASI designer

born Australia 1973

Chantal McDONALD designer

born Australia 1976

PRESTON ZLY DESIGN, Melbourne

shoemaker

est. 1998

Johanna PRESTON designer

born Australia 1967

Petr ZLY designer

born Czechoslovakia 1961, arrived Australia 1968

Benjamin ROSS decorator

born Australia 1976

Tattooed shoes

2007 spring-summer, *Soft Hard* collection

leather (kangaroo), ink, rubber

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2007

2007.125.

Conceptual fashion design duo Susan Dimasi and Chantal McDonald collaborated with a number of local artisans on their *Soft Hard* collection of 2006. Featured in the collection were these kangaroo leather shoes and a pair of woven kangaroo leather 'sleeves' which were decorated by tattoo artist Benjamin Ross. Stronger and also thinner than cow hide, most kangaroo leathers are exported to the United States and used to make cowboy boots.

UNKNOWN, Tasmania

Cape

c. 1890

platypus fur, silk, cotton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mrs F. Smith, 1985

CT105-198

Insatiable demand for fur coats, collars, cuffs, capes and trimmings, as well as Australia's geographic isolation, created a market for locally sourced pelts. Amateur hunters were quick to supply native animal furs to individuals and manufacturers.

This luxurious cape was originally thought to be made from wombat fur. Yet research and analysis undertaken in 2001 in collaboration with staff at the Melbourne Zoo soon proved otherwise. The cape was confirmed to be Tasmanian platypus fur, identifiable by the large size and density of the pelt. Hunted extensively, the platypus was finally afforded legal protection in 1907.

MATICEVSKI, Melbourne fashion house
est. 1999

Toni MATICEVSKI designer
born Australia 1976

PAGLIA SHOES PTY LTD, Melbourne
manufacturer
est. 1975

Shoes

2007 summer, ready to wear
leather, fur (kangaroo), resin, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of the artist, 2007

2007.74.a-b

Melbourne fashion designer Toni Maticevski designed these shoes as part of his summer ready-to-wear collection presented at Melbourne Fashion Week and New York Fashion Week in 2007. The collection, an exploration of bias cutting and drapery, was characterised by contrasting fabric textures and weights, and a soft palette. Towering heels accompanied each look, with Maticevski unconventionally using kangaroo fur to bring an unexpected tactile and surreal quality to the form.

BEECRAFT, New South Wales

manufacturer

active in Australia 1950–54

Handbag

1951–54

lizard skin, leather, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gerstl Bequest, 2001

2001.81

This bag one was one of the many items that formed part of the extensive wardrobe of Sydney personality Edith Ma. Renowned for her flamboyant style, and as the host of Chequers nightclub, Ma combined elements of traditional Chinese dress with key accessories inspired by fashionable trends of the United States, Europe and Australia.

Reptile-skin handbags, gloves and shoes were the cornerstones of a woman's wardrobe in the 1950s. The working rule was to match shoes and bag in colour and texture, and to keep the gloves a different colour.

ANDREW McDONALD, Sydney

shoemaker

est. 1990

Andrew McDONALD designer

born Australia 1962

Mules

1995

barramundi skin, suede, leather

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1995

1995.762.a-b

Bespoke shoemaker Andrew McDonald creates work for individual clients and film productions and retails ready-to-wear ranges from his Sydney boutique. McDonald is interested in the material possibilities of design, as well as in form and detail, and many of his early pieces frequently utilised locally sourced materials, such as barramundi, snake and perch skins.

BUCKLEY & NUNN LTD, Melbourne

manufacturer and retailer
1851–1982

Evening dress

c. 1907

silk, cotton, metal, glass (beads), gelatine (sequins), baleen

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Miss L. Kelly, 1970

D14.a-b-1970

Buckley and Nunn first opened as a small drapers, like many other department stores of the nineteenth century, in 1851 on Bourke Street, Melbourne. Initially merchandise was purchased abroad and shipped from London to Melbourne. Promoting itself as the 'Shrine of Fashion', Buckley and Nunn prided itself on quality merchandise and service, and promoted shopping as a 'leisurely, pleasant adventure'. *Evening dress* is an example of the high-end, custom-made fashions that were available from the store's specialist in-house dressmaking department by the turn of the century.

PETTY'S LIMITED, Brisbane

manufacturer and retailer

est. 1904

Afternoon dress

c. 1906

silk (moiré, faille), cotton, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mr J. D. Oswald, 1970

D58.a-b-1970

In 1904 Petty's Limited took over the running of Messrs' Grimes and Petty, drapery emporium, Brisbane, established in the late 1880s. Remodelling the premises at Victoria House, the new firm undertook extensive alterations, adding large plate-glass frontages, updating fittings, counters and showcases, and illuminating the store with powerful electric lights to meet the requirements of a 'first-class trade'. *Afternoon dress* would have been made in Petty's dressmaking department and shows the slimmer styles that emerged in the early twentieth century when black was no longer solely associated with mourning.

ROBERTSON & MOFFAT, Melbourne

manufacturer and retailer
1854–1923

Dress

c. 1880

silk, cotton, metal

National Trust of Australia (VIC)

Donated to the National Trust by Misses E G and L E Clark, 1975

CTX 0015

This striking navy dress epitomises fashions of the 1880s with its richly textured fabric, surfeit of pleated embellishments, tight-fitting bodice and large rear bustle. Most of the equipment needed for a fashionable silhouette in the Victorian era remained unseen, hidden beneath layers of garments. Elaborately suspended high bustles such as this were, in reality, supported by caged contraptions of steel half-hoops over which stiffened petticoats were worn.

ROBERTSON & MOFFAT, Melbourne

manufacturer and retailer
1854–1923

Dress

1880–90

silk, cotton

National Trust of Australia (NSW)

87506

‘Probably no firm has a greater reputation throughout the Commonwealth for style and quality of their goods than Robertson and Moffat Proprietary, Ltd., of Murray Street. From the dainty confections of millinery and costumery to the more solid and lasting articles of furniture.’

SUNDAY TIMES, 1912

Competition was fierce among Australian department stores of the nineteenth century. Firms regularly advertised in the local papers, spruiking their wares, services and the quality of their goods. From two cross-country city locations, Robertson and Moffat catered to the needs of city as well as country clients via catalogues of patterns and self-measurement forms.

BRIGHT & HITCHCOCKS, Geelong,
Victoria manufacturer and retailer
1853–1968

Day dress

1865–70

silk, glass, baleen

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Miss Bell, 1973

D243.a-c-1973

The labelling of fashionable garments was first introduced in the mid nineteenth century by French couturier Charles Frederick Worth as a means of bringing greater artistic and commercial value to goods. Labelled 'From Bright & Hitchcocks, Geelong', *Day dress* is the earliest known Australian example of a labelled garment in the NGV Collection. Bright & Hitchcocks was the largest department store in Victoria outside Melbourne, and stocked a diverse range of men's, women's and children's clothing and accessories, alongside dress fabrics, trims and linen. Most items were imported from Britain but specifically chosen for Australian tastes.

FARMER AND CO., Sydney

manufacturer and retailer

1840–97

Dress

c. 1877

silk, cotton

National Trust of Australia (VIC)

Donated to the National Trust by Mrs M. Mellor, 1975

CTX 0042

Joseph Farmer and his wife Caroline arrived in Sydney on the *Royal Saxon* in 1839. Within a year, Caroline had opened a small dressmaking and millinery shop and Joseph had established the Farmer and Company drapery in Pitt Street. Advertised as the 'House of distinction', Farmer's became a leading retailer of quality upmarket goods and an important Sydney commercial and social institution. In 1854 it was the first department store to install large plate-glass windows for the display of merchandise, ensuring its wares could be seen by the wealthy who travelled by horse-drawn carriage rather than on foot.

LOUISE MACDONALD MILLINER

millinery house

est. 1995

Louise MACDONALD designer

born Australia 1958

Miss Money Penny

2008

abaca fibre, straw, elastic, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2008

2008.372

Miss Money Penny uses the dramatic sweep of a wide brim to great effect. The simplicity of the contrasting colours and textures of the materials, natural-coloured sinamay – a strong and pliable material woven from the processed stalks of the abaca tree – and black patent vintage straw braid, as well as the theatrical quality of the large floating knot exhibit Louise Macdonald's ability to give elegant classicism a quirky twist.

MANDY MURPHY MILLINERY, Melbourne millinery house

est. 1987

Mandy MURPHY milliner

Australia 1959–2014

Department

1990s

cotton (velvet), silk (satin), silk, polyester, plastic

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of the family of Mandy Murphy, 2016

Millinery lends itself to fantasy and imagination. During the 1930s fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli produced her iconic high-heeled shoe hat as an absurdist and surreal statement. In the 1980s Mandy Murphy created a series of witty works that referenced everyday items such as pincushions, books and saddles.

Murphy's humorous *Department* was drawn as a flat cardboard pattern and then transferred onto a canvas base to become three-dimensional.

WILLIAM BEALE, Melbourne millinery house

c. 1946–92

William BEALE milliner

Australia 1929–92

Sunrise

c. 1946

velvet, straw, grosgrain

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1997

1997.145.a-b

This woven straw work is a rare example of one of William Beale's earliest designs, made for a Sydney client to wear to the Melbourne Cup. With rationing still in place in Melbourne until 1948, milliners often had to be extremely inventive with locally available materials. Beale was known for giving his works dramatic titles and for matching hat and bag sets, such as this one, which he launched with extravagant parades in fashionable hotels.

ANN SHOEBRIDGE MILLINER, Sydney

millinery house

est. 2003

Ann SHOEBRIDGE milliner

born Australia 1973

Geisha

2013

sinamay, nylon, lycra, rayon, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2013

2013.770

Each of Ann Shoebridge's collections is designed around a narrative. Here the inspiration is contemporary Japanese culture. Reinterpreting the traditional elaborate head comb's worn by geisha, Shoebridge has created a dynamic and lyrical headpiece of calligraphic sinamay swirls and gold-coloured fringing.

THOMAS HARRISON, Melbourne

millinery house

1929–75

Thomas HARRISON milliner

Australia 1897–1981

Hat

1934–39

cotton, feathers, acetate

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Thomas Harrison, 1976

D265-1976

Thomas Harrison was Melbourne's best-known milliner: his designs were synonymous with exceptional finish, dramatic form and visual flourish. Harrison's inventive approach saw him experiment with the simplest of materials with great success, and he produced one-off ranges for individual clients in addition to exclusive ranges for local fashion houses, such as Le Louvre. From 1931 Harrison's salon and workrooms were located at Chartes House, 163 Collins Street.

Gertrude SOUTHAM milliner
active in Australia 1920s –30s

Cloche

c. 1930

felt, silk, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented by Francis Howells, 1989

CT140-1989

TAMASINE DALE MILLINERY, Melbourne millinery house

est. 1986

Tamasine DALE milliner

born Australia 1965

Sun hat

1987

straw, ribbons

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1996

1996.773

Straw hats were adopted as fashionable sunhats in the eighteenth century when visiting the seaside became a popular leisure activity. Straw symbolised informality and country life, and had long been used as the lightweight headwear of rural workers. Dale's playful design draws on these associations by reminding us of the seasonal nature of summer and evoking holiday nostalgia. The blocked 'crushed' crown appears as if it is an old favourite that has seen better times.

The softly formed cloche is probably the most iconic hat form of the 1920s and reflects a modern ease in dress. Whether made of straw, fabric or felt, the high bulbous crowns lent themselves to experimentation with pleating, beading, embroidery or appliqué trim. Here the turquoise felt is unadorned, except for three cream satin 'stripes' forming a decorative feature against the sculptured brim.

LIZA STEDMAN MILLINERY millinery house

est. 1989

Liza STEDMAN designer

born Australia 1962

Plymouth Rock

1999

straw, nylon, feathers, silk, polyester, elastic

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 2003

2003.20

Plymouth Rock was created for the Melbourne Spring Racing Season, arguably the most important event on the Melbourne millinery calendar. Striking and flamboyant hat creations are in demand as racegoers compete in the fashion stakes for the best hat and outfit on the day. Employing several shaded layers of upturned crinoline to draw attention to the wearer's face, this hat also features striped plumes from a rare breed of South American chicken.

ANN AUSTIN, Melbourne millinery house 1949–75

Thelma PRENTICE milliner
born Australia 1915

Hat

c. 1959

cotton, silk, rayon, feathers, paper, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mrs Grace M. Tilley, 2003

2003.365

A society millinery business, Ann Austin produced hats fabricated from quality materials with exquisite finishing and employing skilful workmanship. Its premises and workrooms were located in the Block Arcade, where stitched, swathed, blocked and trimmed hats were produced for a variety of informal and formal social occasions.

As an essential component of women's dress, millinery underwent a major revival in the 1950s, with the latter part of the decade seeing the use of ostentatious and decorative trimmings increase in popularity. This fitted hat features brightly coloured hand-cut and shaped camellias, roses and flannel flowers, formed over a stiffened net foundation.

MANDY MURPHY MILLINERY, Melbourne millinery house

est. 1987

Mandy MURPHY milliner

Australia 1959–2014

Orchid hat

1999

cotton (velvet), silk, plastic

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of the family of Mandy Murphy, 2016

Self-taught milliner Mandy Murphy launched her own hat label in 1983, exhibiting with the newly formed Fashion Design Council at the *Fashion '88* and *Fashion '89* parades. Working from a small studio in the Nicholas building, Swanston Street, Melbourne, throughout the 1990s, Murphy produced millinery for fashion and racing, as well as film, theatre and television. Recently her hats appeared in ABC TV's *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries* (2012).

This flowering bicorn hat shows Murphy's technical agility with traditional millinery materials and her clever adaptation of traditional hat shapes into an arresting contemporary statement.

Dressmaking and tailoring

In the eighteenth century the dressmaking and tailoring trades were traditionally divided between the sexes. Tailoring, historically practised by men, is the careful art of measurements, pattern cutting and shaping; while dressmaking is based on draping fabric around a form, and was traditionally practiced by women. This division of labour was adopted all over the world and gave women, in particular, the ability to develop independent fashion businesses and trades.

A number of early female entrepreneurs are featured in this section of the exhibition, including Miss Scott, Doak and Beattie, and Mrs Eeles who, in what was then a very new practice, applied labels to their garments. These labels mark the beginnings of the recognition of designers and allow us to track an individual's signature style.

In the nineteenth century these conventions began to erode and tailors began to make men's as well as women's equestrian wear. Although not all of the works in this section are labelled, they do all exhibit sophisticated workmanship in the handwork of early unnamed, skilful dressmakers and tailors. While dressmaking and tailoring were sometimes an individual pursuit, early department stores, drapers and retailers often had their own in-house workshops in order to cater to clients' individual orders and tastes.

GEORGE & GEORGE, Melbourne

manufacturer and retailer
1880–1934

Cape

c. 1895

silk, metal wool, glass, mirror

National Trust of Australia (VIC)

Donated to the National Trust by Miss Dorothy Moffitt

CTX 0727

Brothers William and Harley George arrived in Melbourne from England in 1877 and established George and George in 1880 at 37 Collins Street. In 1883 they moved to a large four-storey building at 11–17 Collins Street named the Federal Emporium, and a new store was established at 89 Collins Street the following year. George and George included imported goods and also made-to-order garments. This cape is a very early labelled example of their work.

UNKNOWN, Australia

Dinner dress

c. 1880

silk (satin), cotton, rayon, wool, glass, metal, horsehair,
plastic

National Trust of Australia (VIC)

Presented by Mr S. W. Finlayson to the National Trust of Victoria, 1987

Many nineteenth-century garments were made by skilled dressmakers for formal occasions. This dinner dress was reportedly worn by Olive Louise Potter to her daughter's wedding in 1880. From 1880 commercially produced paper patterns catering to the domestic needlewoman were also made available. German dress designer Madame Johanna Weigel and her husband published *Weigel's Journal of Fashion*, which included dress patterns for two levels of income. While letters and diaries show that paper patterns were used and exchanged long before this, until this time there was no Australian published source for the domestic needlewoman.

MISS SCOTT, Brisbane dressmaker

1874–89

Margaret Scott, dressmaker

active 1870–90s

Afternoon dress

c. 1878

silk, cotton, metal, baleen

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mr J. D. Oswald, 1970

D55-1970

Miss Margaret Scott was considered one of Brisbane's leading dressmakers. She was known for her French taste, and her gowns used fine imported fabrics, such as China silks, as well as detailed finishes. She also labelled her garments, following the precedent set by Parisian couturier Charles Frederick Worth. Miss Scott's workshop and showroom was located on the corner of Queen and Albert streets in Brisbane, where she employed a small team of dressmakers and apprentices. There they made hand-finished gowns, but also used sewing machines, which had been introduced to Australia in the 1850s.

THE COLOSSEUM, Prahan, Melbourne
manufacturer and retailer
1902–82

Bodice

c. 1905

silk, cotton, paste pearls, baleen

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Miss Irene Mitchell, 1975

D17-1975

The Colosseum was located on Chapel Street, Melbourne, an important shopping strip that saw various surges of development in the 1860s, and later with the advent of trams. John Frederick Treadway opened The Colosseum during this phase, when he was around fifty-five years old. The original building was badly damaged by fire in 1914, and a more contemporary, larger building was erected in its place.

MRS EELES, Melbourne dressmaker

1883–1908

Kate Eeles, dressmaker

born England, arrived Australia 1882, died 1939

Evening bodice

c. 1900

satin (silk), silk thread, diamanté, metal, baleen

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Miss Bell, 1973

D244-1973

Mrs Eeles arrived in Melbourne from London with her husband, Henry Eeles, in 1882. In 1883 she established her dressmaking business at 155 Collins Street, listing herself first under as Mrs Henry Eeles and later as Mrs Kate Eeles. Her birth name was Keziah Predham. Eeles and her sister had been successful couturiers in London and decided to start a branch of their business in Melbourne during the city's economic boom of the 1880s; however, Eeles's sister stayed in London. In 1888 Mrs Eeles moved her business to Grosvenor Chambers at 9 Collins Street, where fellow tenants included Tom Roberts and Arthur Streeton.

UNKNOWN, Kilmore

Wedding outfit

1889

wool, silk, metal, cotton, wax, plastic

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift from the estate of Mrs Ailsa Clarice Keys, 2004

2004.68.a-b

This expertly tailored cream wool tailored gown was purchased and worn by Mrs Ethel Florence Francis for her wedding to Cr David Phillips, at the Sydney Rd Methodist Church, Brunswick, Melbourne, on 30 January 1889. The outfit combines Australian Merino wool with imported silk for decorative effect. Then, as now, Merino wool was highly sought after by the British textile industry. Historically, wool has been one of Australia's most significant fashion exports.

UNKNOWN, New South Wales

Frock coat

1890

wool, silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mr T. N. Mirfield, 1970

D5-1970

As its label indicates this frockcoat was most likely made by a local tailor in a workshop in New South Wales, where tailors worked long hours, typically sitting cross-legged posture on a worktable. The frock coat was a more formal type of coat that had been developed for menswear in the eighteenth century. In the late nineteenth century, formal and city wear continued to demand a frock coat and a top hat. The specific cut of the frock varied depending on the current fashionable silhouette, but the nineteenth-century coat always had a fitted waist and a knee-length skirt that fell from the waistline seam.

UNKNOWN, Australia

Dress

1880–1900

silk, cotton, metal

Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, Sydney

Gift of Barbara Shorter, 1984

A10682

This dress was worn by the donor's grandmother, Mrs Louisa Burrows, in the late 1800s, and embraces the Aesthetic movement style of dress, advocated among a group of intellectuals in England who encouraged good design, originality and self-expression. They promoted less restricting and less complicated clothes which borrowed historical elements. This dress borrows elements from medieval, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fashion, with its loose front and girdle, and hanging sleeves, bustle, bows and lace.

E. WEBB & CO., Bathurst, New South Wales manufacturer and retailer
1851–1963

Edmund Webb, tailor

born England 1830, arrived Australia 1848, died 1899

Riding habit

c. 1898

wool, cotton, silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

The Schofield Collection.

Purchased with the assistance of a special grant from the Government of Victoria, 1974

D191.a-c-1974

Edmund Webb arrived in Sydney from England in 1848 and moved to Bathurst in 1849. With savings of £200, Webb opened up his own tailoring business. E. Webb & Co. riding habits were specifically designed for women to wear while riding side-saddle, with a tailored jacket with a long matching skirt. The habit borrowed elements associated with that of male clothing, such as turned cuffs, metal buttons and darker, more 'masculine' tones of navy blue fine wool.

**G. H. V. THOMAS, Melbourne ladies
tailor**
1909–40

G. H. V. THOMAS tailor
Australia 1885–1938

Riding habit

1909–12
wool, silk, cotton, plastic (buttons)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Miss Irene Mitchell, 1975

D52.a-c-1975

Leading couturier George Herbert Victor Thomas first established himself in Melbourne as a habit maker from 1909 to 1916 at 283 Collins Street, Melbourne. From 1916 he was listed as G. H. V. Thomas, a ladies tailor, and ran his business from the Incey Pty Ltd building at 183–87 Collins Street. The business closed in 1932 and from 1935 to 1940 G. H. V. Thomas's listing changed to 'Ladies Costumiers and Tailors'. Lillian Wightman, who would go on to establish the Paris-end salon Le Louvre, undertook her training and apprenticeship there.

DAVID JONES AND COMPANY, Sydney

retailer

est. 1838

Frockcoat

1890–1910s

wool

National Trust of Australia (New South Wales)

90059

Welsh-born, London-trained merchant David Jones arrived in Australia in 1838. He opened a store on the corner of Barrack and George Streets in Sydney and began importing a range of goods from Britain. Like many stores, though, it included an in-house workshop. This garment may have been purchased ready-made or been custom-made by a tailor in the costume department. By the 1880s the company had established a mail-order service. Fashion catalogues including coloured postcards and fabric samples were sent to rural communities to provide easier and greater access to fashion.

THOS. MORRIS, Sydney milliner

active in Australia 1870s

Top hat

c. 1875

silk plush, wool, leather

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

The Schofield Collection.

Purchased with the assistance of a special grant from
the Government of Victoria, 1974

D279-1974

ANTHONY HORDERN AND SONS,
Sydney retailer
1869–1926

Lady's top hat
c. 1885
silk, leather, cotton, wool

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
The Schofield Collection.

Purchased with the assistance of a special grant from
the Government of Victoria, 1974

D288-1974

DOAK AND BEATTIE, Sydney

dressmaker

1873–83

Margaret DOAK dressmaker

born Ireland c. 1798, arrived Australia 1840, died 1883

Mary Jane BEATTIE dressmaker

born Ireland 1839, arrived Australia 1840, died 1907

Dress

1877

silk, linen, cotton, metal, metallic ribbon

National Trust of Australia (VIC)

Donated by M. Mellor, 1975

CTX 0057

The burgeoning society of Sydney offered employment opportunities not only for men but also women. The census figures for Sydney for 1861 revealed that twenty per cent of adult females worked outside of the domestic sphere, with many engaged in small businesses. Doak and Beattie were a mother and daughter of Irish decent. Margaret Doak initially established a business with her sister Rebecca Kerr in 1840 named Doak and Kerr. When Kerr died, Doak was joined by her married daughter, Minnie Beattie. At the time, Doak was nearly seventy and worked on into her eighties.

GEORGE & GEORGE, Melbourne

manufacturer and retailer
1880–1934

Cape

c. 1895

silk, metal wool, glass, mirror

National Trust of Australia (VIC)

Donated to the National Trust by Miss Dorothy Moffitt

CTX 0727

Brothers William and Harley George arrived in Melbourne from England in 1877 and established George and George in 1880 at 37 Collins Street. In 1883 they moved to a large four-storey building at 11–17 Collins Street named the Federal Emporium, and a new store was established at 89 Collins Street the following year. George and George included imported goods and also made-to-order garments. This cape is a very early labelled example of their work.

The salon

In the early twentieth century French haute couture represented the epitome of glamour and prestige. Leading couturiers determined trends, dressed cinema stars and royalty, and their collections regularly featured in the international and local press. In Australia the celebration and consumption of high fashion encompassed two distinct experiences: on the one hand, prestigious department stores such as David Jones and Georges; and on the other, opulent and exclusive dressmaking salons. Inspired by Parisian couture houses, these establishments specialised in custom-made luxury and sold imported, reproduced or original garments to a fashionable and well-heeled clientele.

In Melbourne, the tree-lined top end of Collins Street became the city's epicentre of style. The street with its wide roadway, outside cafes and bookshops, photographic studios and dressmaking boutiques had a cosmopolitan air. Known as the 'Paris End', the precinct was home to the glamorous salons La Petite, Le Louvre and Hall Ludlow, as well as the millinery houses of Thomas Harrison and William Beale. Sydney too had its share of 'French salons', many run by Parisian women who had trained overseas; but it was Australian-born Beril Jents who was considered the city's leading dressmaker.

1. LA PETITE, Melbourne fashion house

1940–86

Pat ROGERS designer

active in Australia 1940–86

Neil ROGERS designer

active in Australia 1940–86

Evening dress

c. 1958

silk, cotton, tulle, glass (beads), plastic (sequins), metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Mr J. O. Wicking, 1999

1999.447

La Petite, located at 165 Collins Street, opposite Georges, was founded by Pat and Neil Rogers in 1940. Producing mostly one-off made-to-measure garments, the label specialised in exquisite embroidery and hand-beading. Designs were based on popular French styles and were typically finished by hand in one of the three workrooms attached to the small salon.

Replicating a known Dior design, possibly at the client's request, *Evening dress* encapsulates the glamour of the exaggerated silhouette that Dior introduced. Outwardly soft and romantic, its interior hides a supporting armature of boning, inner waistbands, falsies and stiffened petticoats.

2. HALL LUDLOW, Melbourne

fashion house

1948–60

Hall LUDLOW designer

born New Zealand, 1919, arrived Australia 1947, lived in Hong Kong 1963–1973, died 2003

Evening gown

c. 1953

acetate, metal thread (lamé)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Peggy Stone in memory of the artist, 2011

2011.533.a-c

Hall Ludlow's opulent salon on Collins Street was furnished with satin drapes, gilt mirrors, golden cherubs and sparkling chandeliers. Ludlow lived upstairs and was the consummate couturier – handling everything from fabric selection to finishing – and his avant-garde designs showed astonishing technical ingenuity. He often worked without a pattern, deftly cutting on the stand, the floor, or even, at times, a client's body.

Evening gown was made for Ludlow's friend Peggy Stone to wear to the 1953 Derby Ball. The dress makes a feature of the décolletage with a fabulous high-standing collar and neckline framed by fine rows of parallel stitching; one of Ludlow's signature decorative treatments.

3. GEORGES PTY LTD, Melbourne manufacturer and retailer 1934–66

Evening dress 1950 silk, polyester, brass

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented from the Estate of Lady Grimwade, 1974

D1-1974

Alongside the intimate dressmaking salons of Melbourne's 'Paris End', department stores such as Myer and Georges were known destinations for locally made and imported high fashion. Of the two, Georges was the more prestigious. During the 1950s the store's magnificent window displays were known to congest traffic along Collins Street, and it was the first retailer to hold in-house parades.

Evening dress was produced in Georges' workrooms, of which there were four; reserved for millinery, tailoring and two for dressmaking. Juxtaposing cling and drape, the dress utilises horizontal ruching to create a flattering visual line.

UNKNOWN, Australia

Athol Shmith with box camera

1950s

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by the Shmith family, Governor, 1995 1995.198

Athol Shmith was one of the most celebrated photographers of early twentieth-century Melbourne. His career spanned more than fifty years, covering the fields of portraiture, fashion and advertising in a practice that became synonymous with sophistication and glamour. Shmith constructed illusory images of beauty and perfection for small exclusive boutiques and major department stores, and was a regular contributor to Australian magazines *Table Talk*, *The Home* and, later *The Australian Women's Weekly* and *Vogue*. Shmith's studio was located at 125 Collins Street, the 'Paris End' of town, from 1933 until its closure in the mid 1970s.

Athol SHMITH

Australia 1914–90

**No title (Fashion illustration. Model
Patricia Tuckwell)**

1949

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of The Ian Potter Foundation, Governor, 1989

PH48-1989

Between 1946 and 1949 *The Australian Women's Weekly* organised a series of annual French fashion parades which brought all the glitter and enchantment of Paris to Australian women. The gala productions made fashion history and front-page news, presenting haute couture from famous houses on French mannequins specially recruited to model the clothes.

In later years, Australian models, including Patricia 'Bambi' Tuckwell [Shmith's wife], were also given the opportunity to strut couture on the catwalks, becoming the local embodiment of Parisian glamour and style. In this image, Tuckwell's head-to-toe perfection sums up the fashionable ideal of the decade.

Athol SHMITH

Australia 1914–90

No title (Fashion illustration. Model Ann Chapman)

c. 1961

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of The Ian Potter Foundation, Governor, 1989

PH66-1989

This blue feathered gown by Melbourne fashion house La Petite appears in several photographs taken by Athol Shmith at Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens featuring the model Ann Chapman. Shmith produced many high-fashion commercial illustrations for local labels, including Le Louvre and La Petite.

In this image the heavily feathered skirt and Chapman's arched pose create an impression of grace and elegance, capturing the qualities essential to fashions of this period.

Athol SHMITH

Australia 1914–90

Fashion illustration

1950

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by the Shmith Family, Governor, 1995 1995.119

Athol SHMITH

Australia 1914–90

No title (Fashion illustration)

1950s

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by the Shmith Family, Fellow, 1993 PH1211993

Athol SHMITH

Australia 1914–90

No title (Fashion illustration, Le Louvre)

1950s

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by the Shmith Family, Fellow, 1993 PH111-1993

Athol SHMITH

Australia 1914–90

No title (Fashion illustration. Model Elly Lukas)

1955

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of The Ian Potter Foundation, Governor, 1989

PH34-1989

The extremely photogenic Elly Lukas was a favoured high-fashion model throughout the 1950s. Here Shmith emphasises her natural poise and fine features to evoke an atmosphere of sophisticated Old World charm.

The work of glamorous studio and catwalk models such as Lukas, Bambi Tuckwell and Diane Masters exerted significant influence during the 1950s. In 1953 Shmith and Masters established the first model-run modelling school in Melbourne, and one year later Lukas opened her Elly Lukas School of Elegance.

Athol SHMITH

Australia 1914–90

Robin Bailey

1959

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of The Ian Potter Foundation, Governor, 1989

PH29-1989

Athol SHMITH

Australia 1914–90

**No title (Fashion illustration. Model
Ann Chapman)**

c. 1961

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of The Ian Potter Foundation, Governor, 1989

PH66-1989

Bruno BENINI

born Italy 1925, arrived Australia 1935, died 2001

No title (Fashion illustration. Model Catherine Patchell, National Gallery of Victoria)

1956, printed 1998

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1998

1998.351

Bruno Bernini migrated to Australia with his family in 1935. After an early career as an industrial chemist he began to photograph in 1950, when he was employed in the studio of Melbourne photographer Peter Fox. Benini's images were coveted for their cool elegance and European flavour.

This image, taken in front of the Giambattista Tiepolo's *The Banquet of Cleopatra*, 1743–44, in the NGV Collection, shows the model Catherine Patchell dressed in an embroidered La Petite gown. Framed by the Classical columns and richly coloured costumes of the painting, Patchell gazes into the distance, ignoring the flagrant and sumptuous feast behind.

Bruno BENINI

born Italy 1925, arrived Australia 1935, died 2001

No title (Fashion illustration. Model Janet Dawson, Eastern Markets, Melbourne)

1957, printed 1998

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1998

1998.355

This image shows the artist Janet Dawson standing at the entrance to the Eastern Market, Melbourne. A precursor to the Queen Victoria Market, the Eastern Market opened in 1847 and closed in 1960.

Framed in the doorway, Dawson presents a beautifully elegant figure, the lustre of her crisp silk taffeta wrap and gown contrasting with faded advertising signage and grime. Dawson was a friend of Bruno Benini, and this was the only time she modelled for a fashion photograph.

LE LOUVRE, Melbourne fashion house

est. 1922

Lillian WIGHTMAN designer

Australia 1903–92

Evening coat

c. 1935

cotton, silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented by Mrs A. G. Pringle, 1982

CT186-1982

‘I’ve always been in the top end, who else is there?’

LILLIAN WIGHTMAN, 1978

The first, self-declared ‘French salon’ on Melbourne’s Collins Street was opened by Lillian Wightman in 1934. Modelled on the couture houses of Paris, Le Louvre’s grand interior was furnished with a sweeping staircase, gilt mirrors, antique furniture and animal pelts.

In the 1920s Wightman had worked as a salesgirl at leading ladies’ tailor G. H. V Thomas, but as owner of Le Louvre she established a culture of exclusivity and specialisation, importing, reproducing and delivering the very latest French styles to a well-heeled clientele.

LUCY SECOR, Melbourne fashion house 1922–89

Evening dress

1935–45

rayon, brass and glass (buckle)

Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, Sydney
Gift of Alison Allmark, 1986

86/1501

Lucy Secor was a flourishing local enterprise in early twentieth-century Australia. First established in 1922 at the entrance to the Block Arcade on Collins Street, by the late 1950s there were Lucy Secor stores in nearly every capital city, a mail-order business and a dressmaking school. Store employees were trained, over four years, as cutters, machinists and designers, and groomed for senior and executive positions with the company.

REMOND, Melbourne fashion house

c. 1931 – c. 1946

Ruby SHIER designer

born England 1886, arrived Australia c. 1888, died 1972

Evening dress

c. 1935

silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mrs Robyn Dredge

2004.118

Ruby Shier opened Remond in 1931. Ruby was married to social photographer Spencer Shier, and established her small boutique in a vacant apartment adjacent to her husband's studio at 88 Collins Street, Melbourne. A talented seamstress, Shier advocated for greater recognition of Australian design talent during the Depression years when tariff impositions also restricted the importation of international fashions.

Evening dress, with its panels of bias-cut black lace and chiffon, is a languorous design that typifies the figure-hugging silhouettes of the mid 1930s. Sheer styles such as this, worn over satin slips, expressed an emancipated approach towards female sexuality.

HALL LUDLOW, Melbourne

fashion house

1948–60

Hall LUDLOW designer

born New Zealand, 1919, arrived Australia 1947, lived in Hong Kong 1963–1973, died 2003

Evening ensemble

1955

linen, silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Mary Newsome, 1995

1995.520.a-b

While Paris remained a reference point for high fashion, appreciation for Australian design talent gained momentum during the 1950s with the establishment two national awards; the Australian Gown of the Year Award in 1953, and the Australian Wool Bureau Fashion Awards in 1954. Both were central to the promotion of the local fashion industry to wider audiences.

Hall Ludlow was honoured with two Australian Gown of the Year Awards during the 1950s in acknowledgement of his design innovation and technical ingenuity. *Evening ensemble* shows his skilful use of white linen to create a garment that is both minimalist and sculptural.

LA PETITE, Melbourne fashion house

1940–86

Pat RODGERS designer

active in Australia 1940–86

Neil ROGERS designer

active in Australia 1940–86

Evening dress

c. 1955

silk, glass (beads), plastic (sequins), metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Mr J. O. Wicking, 1999

1999.450

An alternative silhouette to the romantic full-skirted gowns of the early 1950s, this embellished sheath projects Hollywood glamour. Creating a long slender line, fitted styles such as this caused hips to become a focal point. Emphatic details such as ruffles, darts or pleats often figured at the top of skirts to draw attention to womanly curves.

LA PETITE, Melbourne fashion house

1940–86

Pat ROGERS designer

active in Australia 1940–86

Neil ROGERS designer

active in Australia 1940–86

Ball gown

1956

silk, cotton (tulle), glass (beads), sequins, diamanté,
artificial flower

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Lady Brooks, 1963

494.a-b.D5

After the austerity of the war years, the 1950s saw a return to fashionable extravagance. In Melbourne, social functions, balls and garden parties were common, intensifying around events such as the 1954 Royal Tour and the 1956 Olympics.

This lustrous duchess satin *Ball gown* features exquisite hand embroidery and a decorated surface of thousands of seed beads and pearls. It was worn by Lady Brooks, wife of the Governor of Victoria, Sir Dallas Brooks, to a reception they held for the Duke of Edinburgh in 1956 who was visiting Melbourne for the Olympics.

LA PETITE, Melbourne fashion house

1940–86

Pat ROGERS designer

active in Australia 1940–86

Neil ROGERS designer

active in Australia 1940–86

Evening dress

c. 1959

silk (organza), silk (taffeta), feathers (ostrich), cotton (tulle), glass (bugle beads), (diamentés), acetate (sequins)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Annette Taylor (née Klooger), 2012

2012.270.a-b

This gown was hanging in the workrooms of La Petite when Australian Annette Klooger, star of *The Annette Klooger Show* and a well-known singer, visited for one of her regular client fittings.

Captivated by the gown's extravagance and its theatrical qualities, Klooger purchased the work to wear on stage. She wore it, most memorably, in a live performance on *The Graham Kennedy Show*.

BERIL JENTS, Sydney fashion house

1944–86

Beril JENTS designer

born Australia 1918–2013

Wedding dress

1952

silk (satin), cotton, metal

Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, Sydney
Gift of Dr and Mrs Bob McInerney, 2003

2003/59/1

Beril Jents was crowned Australia's 'queen of haute couture' by the Sydney press in recognition of her excellent dressmaking skills, which encompassed all aspects of made-to-measure practice; from pattern-making and drafting to cutting and sewing. Apprenticing at age thirteen, then opening her own shop at sixteen, by the early 1940s Jents was selling to a loyal clientele of fashionable socialites, racegoers and theatrical stars from a plush salon in inner-city Sydney.

Wedding dress, worn by Betty McInerney in 1952, highlights Jents's expertise in the execution of the softly pleated bustline, fitted waist and cascading overskirt decorated with fabric roses.

Minis and maxis

The ascendancy of youth culture and the look associated with it were pivotal to the radical social changes that took place in the 1960s. As areas of art, pop culture and design merged, fashion came to be seen and experienced in totally different ways. From the world of intimate, exclusive salons to new swinging urban boutiques, fashion in Australia underwent a tremendous cultural transformation at this time. As ready-to-wear replaced custom-made, a new generation of talented young designers emerged to produce garments for their modern lifestyles.

Pioneering an aesthetic that was youthful and progressive, designers such as Prue Acton and Norma Tullo experimented with new design ideas, fabrics and technologies. From mini to maxi, baby-doll to unisex, fashion shifted from middle-age to teenage as the formal categories of day and eveningwear were exchanged for casual dress, and the top-down dictates of couture were swapped for the trickle-up effect of the street.

Amidst this air of excitement and possibility, magazines such as *Vogue Australia* and *Flair* started to report on the new talents in Australian fashion, featuring top models and entertainers wearing local designs. Likewise The Australian Wool Fashion Awards became a platform for emerging designers who were driving changes within the local industry and fashion retail.

PRUE ACTON, Melbourne fashion house
1963–91

Prue ACTON designer
born Australia 1943

Mini dress

c. 1966

acrylic

Museum Victoria, Melbourne
Donation from Ms Prue Acton, 21/11/1994

SH 942370

Often referred to as Australia's Mary Quant, Prue Acton launched her own label in 1963 at age nineteen. Adopting and translating the Chelsea look into an Australian idiom, Acton designed ranges of trendsetting mix-and-match separates, coats, sportswear, boots and stockings, and later her own cosmetics range. Quant also wrote a fashion column for the Australian weekly pop-culture magazine *Go-Set*.

This mini dress encapsulates the quintessential baby-doll look synonymous with the 1960s. Skinny pinafores, cutaway shifts and hotpants all represented new types of garment forms that could be worn without foundation garments.

PRUE ACTON, Melbourne fashion house

1963–91

Prue ACTON designer

born Australia 1943

Mini dress

1967

wool, terylene, polyester (lining), silver (buttons)

Museum Victoria, Melbourne
Donation from Ms Prue Acton, 21/11/1994

SH 942000

'All the kids who I was supplying, all the eighteen to twenty-year-olds, said: "That's what I wanna look like". And overnight we were cutting the skirts. We were cutting two inches off, and the next week, another two and another two. By Christmas we were up to something quite disgusting.'

PRUE ACTON, 1966

Raised hemlines were seen to express and celebrate the ascendancy of youth culture and were a radical departure from the womanly 'New Look' silhouette of the previous decade. As ready-to-wear radically replaced custom-made garments, styles such as *Mini dress* moved fashion's focus from middle-age to teenage.

PRUE ACTON, Melbourne fashion house

1963–91

Prue ACTON designer

born Australia 1943

Jumpsuit

1969

cotton (organdy)

Museum Victoria, Melbourne

Donation from Ms Prue Acton, 21/11/1994

SH 942381

The term 'flower power' was first coined as a slogan and used as a symbol of passive resistance during the American anti-war protests of the mid 1960s. Adopted by hippies, flowers soon made their way into general fashion as an emblem of the 'youthquake' and its changed attitudes and allegiances.

Barbara McLEAN designer

born Australia 1944

Dress

c. 1967

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Barbara McLean, 1982

CT195-1982

The hippy and counterculture trends of the late 1960s produced another type of fashion revolution. Marked by an interest in historical revivalism, nostalgia, op-shop recycling and a handmade aesthetic, the era saw decorative techniques such as fringing, beadwork, embroidery and patchwork reintroduced to contemporary dress.

Here Barbara McLean's free-flowing folk-inspired *Dress* contrasts heavily with the clean, spare lines of space-age fashions.

HOUSE OF STRIPES, Melbourne

fashion house

est. c. 1965

Peter LANGHAM designer

born Australia c. 1939

Dress

1966

synthetic fibre

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Jane England, 2015

Inspired by London's boutique culture and mix of pop, fashion and music, twenty-six-year-old Peter Langham established House of Stripes in the mid 1960s in partnership with Sue Ress. Langham started out making fashion accessories – fabric cufflinks, ties, braces, handbags and watchbands – and the successful retailing of these pieces encouraged him to expand into garment design. Within six months he had developed lines of miniskirts, plastic coats and dresses, and slacksuits.

Channeling the space-age aesthetic introduced by French couturier André Courrèges, *Dress* was purchased for an end-of-year school dance and worn with matching silver tights.

NORMA TULLO, Melbourne

fashion house

1956–77

Norma TULLO designer

born Australia c. 1936

Dress

c. 1965

paper, cotton, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Anthea Ball in memory of Mrs Gladys Ball, 2004

2004.799

Towards the end of the 1960s time-consuming couture practices such as hand-beading and embroidery were less frequently seen or desired, reflecting the demand for less 'fussy styles'. Despite this, many salons still produced spectacular, one-off examples for special occasions and clients.

This dress features a highly ornamental surface application of bunches of long-stemmed violets. It is notable for showcasing an unusual and innovative approach by Norma Tullo whose signature printed floral designs incorporated and expressed her love of nature and beauty.

NORMA TULLO, Melbourne

fashion house

1956–77

Norma TULLO designer

born Australia c. 1936

Hostess dress

c. 1968

wool, metal, cotton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Mrs Nonie Long, 2004

2004.584

Norma Tullo began her fashion career in 1956 while still employed full-time as a legal secretary. Unable to find clothing that she wanted to wear, Tullo set about designing and making her own garments regardless of her lack of professional training. She found great commercial success with her smart, spare, feminine designs.

Tullo was committed to designing and manufacturing locally, and was instrumental in raising the profile of Australian wool. Many of her designs, such as *Hostess dress*, featured fabrics that were woven and produced to her specification and colours.

HOUSE OF MERIVALE AND MR JOHN, Sydney fashion house

1960s – late 1980s

MR JOHN, Sydney fashion house

1967 – late 1980s

Merivale HEMMES chief designer

born Australia 1931

John HEMMES designer

born Indonesia 1931, arrived Australia 1955, died 2015

Suit

c. 1973

cotton, polyester, metal, plastic

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Phil Parnell, 2004

2004.793.a-c

Opening in 1967 as a companion to The House of Merivale, the Mr John stores gave a voice, look and location to young Australian males bored with conservative dress and attitudes. Mr John sold ranges of suits, shirts, trousers, shoes and accessories in mix-and-match separates; its look was sophisticated and suave.

Newly adopted as a fashion fabric in the 1960s, corduroy was well suited to the execution of a sharp tailored line. Here the belted waist reflects the early 1970s trend towards unisex attire, which saw traditionally ascribed masculine and feminine codes of dress become more androgynous.

MAGG, Melbourne fashion house

1925–29, 1950–77

Zara HOLT designer

Australia 1909–89

Evening kaftan

1968

silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by Mrs Patricia Davies AM, Member 1997

1997.216

Magg's Zara Holt was known for her personal flair and eye for colour. During the 1960s she won the prestigious Australian Gown of the Year award three times.

In 1967 *Vogue* magazine selected the best couture designs featured in each of its six international publications. The group was paraded twice daily in Sydney and Melbourne department stores during September and October, and included this geometric *Evening kaftan* by Magg, inspired by the Op Art movement.

MAGG, Melbourne fashion house

1925–29, 1950–77

Zara HOLT designer

Australia 1909–89

Evening outfit

c. 1974

silk, cotton, nylon, viscose rayon

Gift of Carolyn Fels, 1997

1997.439.a-d

CARLA ZAMPATTI, Sydney

fashion house

est. 1965

Carla ZAMPATTI designer

born Italy 1942, arrived Australia 1950

Jumpsuit

1970s

wool, acetate

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of the artist, 2015

Self-taught fashion designer Carla Zampatti launched her debut collection in 1965 of shirt dresses, playsuits and a show-stopping green velvet pantsuit. By 1972 she had opened her first boutique in Surry Hills, Sydney. Zampatti is known not only for her understated classic style, comprised of clean lines and a sophisticated simplicity, but also for her consistent re-invention of the jumpsuit season after season.

Versions like this *Jumpsuit*, with its plunging halter neck and flared leg, were popular choices for evening wear during the disco era.

Flamingo Park

In 1973 Jenny Kee opened her Flamingo Park 'frock salon' in Sydney's Strand Arcade. Here she and her friend and fellow designer Linda Jackson produced clothing that was grounded in an affection for Australian iconography; kitsch and craft that took inspiration from the landscape; Indigenous culture; and local flora and fauna, all channelled through the lens of art and fashion history. On the shop's door, in pink and black lettering, was the invitation 'Step into paradise!' Flamingo Park quickly became a hangout for people who wanted to be noticed: models, artists, career women and fashion editors who eagerly purchased the styles on offer. Kee and Jackson's annual Flamingo Follies parades were known as Sydney's most sensational fashion events.

Not only was Flamingo Park's celebration of the native visual characteristics of Australia original, but their reliance and participation of a close-knit network of artist practitioners, such as David McDiarmid and Peter Tully, was also something new. Kee and Jackson's work marked the emergence of a distinctive Australian look, as well as a distinctive Australian way of making.

FLAMINGO PARK, Sydney fashion house 1973–95

Linda JACKSON designer
born Australia 1950

Harem outfit 1975 silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2014

2014.679.a-i

Sensational parades helped to establish Flamingo Park as a dynamic force in Australian fashion. In the early 1970s international designers began to stage their own shows in lofts, nightclubs and restaurants, signalling a shift towards fashion as entertainment, and the highly anticipated annual Flamingo Follies parades (1974–81) were no exception. Both the billowing silk chiffon *Harem outfit* and Grecian-inspired *Titania* were made by Linda Jackson for the 1975 event at Bondi Pavilion, and later briefly worn by Jackson and Jenny Kee.

FLAMINGO PARK, Sydney fashion house

1973–95

Jenny KEE designer

born Australia 1947

Titania

1975

silk (chiffon)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2010

2010.294

FLAMINGO PARK, Sydney fashion house 1973–95

Jenny KEE designer

born Australia 1947

Jan AYRES knitter

born Australia 1947

Wattle dress and hat

1978

cotton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Flamingo Park's 'Australianana' made an enormous impact both locally and abroad. In 1977 Linda Jackson and Jenny Kee were awarded a Lyrebird Fashion Award and their collection of that year, which they took to Europe and the United States, captivated Anna Piaggi of Italian *Vogue* who ran a double-page spread in the December 1977 edition titled 'Australian graffiti: fashion arrives from another hemisphere'. This spread featured Kee adorned in wattle and wearing a version of *Wattle dress*.

FLAMINGO PARK, Sydney fashion house 1973–95

Jenny KEE designer

born Australia 1947

Jan AYRES knitter

born Australia 1947

Didgeridoo dolman

c. 1978

wool, mohair

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2012

2012.331

Jenny Kee became known for her colourful art knits inspired by Australian themes and using Australian merino wool. Her first range of zippered cardigans, titled *Koala*, *Kooka* and *Kanga*, was knitted by Jan Ayres in 1974 and by 1982 even Princess Diana owned one. Kee's celebration of the colloquial translated visually to pictorial knits and to abstract works such as this dolman, with its references to Indigenous art and culture.

FLAMINGO PARK, Sydney fashion house
1973–95

Jenny KEE designer
born Australia 1947

Jan AYRES knitter
born Australia 1947

Big fish dress and hat
1979
cotton, painted straw

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

FLAMINGO PARK, Sydney fashion house 1973–95

Jenny KEE designer

born Australia 1947

Jan AYRES knitter

born Australia 1947

Dress

1979

wool, synthetic yarn

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2012

2012.221

‘The knits went into the Park in late May 1974 and sold for \$55: very affordable. From the moment I did my first display everyone wanted one. As soon as the knits came in they went out. Two weeks to make and five minutes to sell!’

JENNY KEE, 2006

FLAMINGO PARK, Sydney fashion house 1973–95

Jenny KEE designer
born Australia 1947

Jan AYRES knitter
born Australia 1947

Snake goddess
1980
cotton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2010

2010.307

‘I needed to find good hand-knitters. In early January I was interviewed on an afternoon women’s TV show. “Is there anyone out there who can knit?” I brazenly asked the audience ... I immediately got quite a few phone calls, but one in particular stood out. Jan Ayres was an experienced hand-knitter from England and she would make up patterns as well. Her shyness on the phone changed to confidence when she talked about her work.’

JENNY KEE, 2006

FLAMINGO PARK, Sydney fashion house 1973–95

Jenny KEE designer

born Australia 1947

Jan AYRES knitter

born Australia 1947

Luna Park

c. 1980

wool

Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney
Gift of Terry Fitzgerald, 2008

2008/116/1

Jenny Kee's knits combine wool, one of Australia's greatest exports, and the traditional craft of knitting with Australian imagery. While Luna Parks exist all over the world, five were built in Australia (two are still operating). Melbourne's Luna Park, which opened on 13 December 1912, is the oldest operational Luna Park and famous for having the oldest continually operating roller coaster in the world, making it a distinctly Australian icon. Here Jenny Kee recreates the iconic mouth at the entrance of the Park on the front of the knit.

Jenny KEE designer

born Australia 1947

Lis knitter

active 1980s

***Oz All* outfit**

1980–85

wool, cotton

Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, Sydney
Purchased, 1999

99/6/23

This outfit was knitted by Danish knitter Lis for Jenny Kee. Its decorative design reflects Kee's interest in creating a distinctly Australian form of dress, using text by Australian poets to create a local version of the Fair Isle style.

FLAMINGO PARK, Sydney fashion house
1973–95

Linda JACKSON designer
born Australia 1950

Opera House outfit
1977
silk (taffeta), cotton, rayon

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2010

2010.302.a-e

This early work by Linda Jackson features an array of white appliqué sails against a background of vivid blue silk. The outfit is a playful abstraction of the Sydney Opera House, which opened in 1973, and adds to Jackson's recognisable repertoire of iconic Australian forms. An earlier linen version of this design was included in the first Flamingo Follies parade in 1974.

Art clothes

By the end of the 1970s an alternative inner-urban fashion scene was evident in Australian capital cities. Stores such as Flamingo Park in Sydney and Chai's: Clothes and Accessories in Melbourne sold avant-garde styles to models, artists, fashion editors and others interested in individuality in dress. Magazines such as *Rag Times* also championed independent fashion as a legitimate form of self-expression; publishing articles, reviews and editorial on the work of new and offbeat designers and positioning it within a vibrant creative scene aligned with art schools, nightclubs and bands.

The importance of alternative fashion culture was also reflected in the increasing acquisition and presentation of independent fashion by Australian art galleries and museums. In the 1980s the influential *Art Clothes* and *Art Knits* exhibitions curated by Jane de Teliga at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, examined how Australian fashion designers and makers were experimenting with unconventional materials and methods, and reconfiguring traditional craft practices blurring the lines between fashion and art.

KATIE PYE STUDIO, Sydney

fashion house

1978–80

Katie PYE designer

born Australia 1952

The party

1980

cotton, metal, synthetic polymer paint

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of the artist, 2006

2006.440.a-b

As an art student Katie Pye began painting fabrics and making clothes for friends before opening her own concept clothing store named Duzzn't Madder in 1976. Initially producing 'clothing statements' influenced by feminist art practice, Pye developed an uncompromising, multidisciplinary approach that spanned artistic collaborations, provocative performances and fashion.

The designer saw her work as a riposte to the commercial constraints of the Australian fashion industry, and five of her outfits featured in the *Art Clothes* exhibition. Among them was *The party*, a hilariously tongue-in-cheek work with libidinous imagery handpainted by Pye.

CHAI, Melbourne fashion house

1974–88

Clarence CHAI designer

born Australia 1946

Jumpsuit

1978

cotton, shell

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of the artist, 2014

2014.454.a-b

A contemporary of Jenny Kee and Linda Jackson, designer Clarence Chai ran the influential Chai: Clothes and Accessories in Melbourne's Crossley Street. Like Flamingo Park, Chai's boutique was a hub for the independent fashion crowd interested in individuality in dress.

Chai stocked emerging designers as well as his own small ranges and one-off garments. *Jumpsuit* features an airbrushed design commissioned from two graphic artists working under the name Dragstrip. This unisex jumpsuit was one of only three styles produced and gives a nod to the punk movement in terms of its iconography and design.

JENNY BANNISTER, Melbourne

fashion house

1976–2009

Jenny BANNISTER designer

born Australia 1954

Scallop bikini

1978

shells, cotton, polyester, lycra, paint

Gift of the artist, 1998

1998.183.a-b

Scallop bikini is made from thick cotton rope with gold-painted scallop shells and black-painted oyster shells. The shells were supplied by Bannister's boyfriend, who was undertaking a master's degree focused on Australia's scallop industry at the time. This bikini was one of several swimwear pieces paraded at the launch of Clarence Chai's second boutique in 1978, and was also illustrated in *Rag Times* magazine, modelled by her sister Wendy.

JENNY BANNISTER, Melbourne

fashion house

1976–2009

Jenny BANNISTER designer

born Australia 1954

Je suis mod deluxe

1980

plastic, cotton, metal, found objects

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of the artist, 1998

1998.192

In Melbourne, young fashion graduate Jenny Bannister was a key exponent of art-clothing. Highly critical of what she saw as the copycat derivations of the mainstream Australian fashion industry, Bannister made a point of using unconventional materials and methods. In 1978 the *Herald Sun* noted that 'she paints plastic, weaves and plaits it. She uses leather, net and synthetics and incorporates shells, doll's bodices and feathers in her designs. Nothing ever looks the same'. Early works such as *Je suis mod deluxe* highlight Bannister's anarchic approach to making, inspired by the punk movement.

Linda JACKSON designer

born Australia 1950

David McDIARMID painter

Australia 1952–95

Desert Bride ensemble

1980

hand painted silk

Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, Sydney

Purchased 1981

A7524

By the early 1980s fashion's capacity as a medium for artistic expression had gained traction, validated by coverage in mainstream media. In November 1981 *Vogue Australia* dedicated a double-page spread to artists producing handpainted fabrics and garments, including Susan Norrie, David McDiarmid, Clarence Chai and Deborah Leser. McDiarmid had been handpainting fabrics for Linda Jackson since 1975 and the duo's humorous *Desert Bride*, with its calligraphic line work, motifs and text, epitomises the disciplinary crossover between fashion and art at play.

RUBY BRILLIANT

active in Australia c. 1977–

Stefania AMBROZIAK designer

born Germany 1946, arrived Australia c. 1950

Dress

1983

wool, metal (fastening)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2015

2015.151

1988's *Art Knits* exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, highlighted the way in which Australian designers were reconfiguring traditional craft practices. Knitters Michael Glover, Douglas McManus and Stefania Ambroziak were among those represented. Ambroziak, who produced one-off designs under the name Ruby Brilliant, typified the new emphasis on conceptual approaches, stating in the exhibition catalogue, 'as with painting, I view knitting as a discourse, a journey through tactile and visual probabilities'.

The Fashion Design Council

Independent fashion took centre stage in Melbourne in the early 1980s with the formation of the Fashion Design Council (FDC). Co-founded by Kate Durham, Robert Buckingham and Robert Pearce, the FDC was a non-profit collective established with a mandate to promote, in their words, 'the art of fashion design ... the individualistic, idiosyncratic, experimental, new and provocative in its wearable and unwearable form'.

Operating between 1984 and 1993, the FDC staged extravagant annual parades, held exhibitions and seminars, produced catalogues and magazines, lobbied government and industry and in 1989 opened a short-lived shop in Collins Street. These combined activities enabled the work of small-scale designers, milliners and jewellers working from fertile inner-city studios, such as Stalbridge Chambers, to come to the attention of mainstream media and potential buyers.

Creating an environment of optimism and energy, the FDC gave visibility and confidence to young designers including Martin Grant, Bruce Slorach and Sara Thorn, Kara Baker and Brighid Lehmann, who increasingly chose to pursue their own labels rather than work for a commercial fashion house.

Kate DURHAM

born Australia 1957

**Sentimenta romantica de l'amour et
glamour: Wedding ensemble**

1982

Japanese ash, papier mâché, plastic, aluminium, enamel
paint, lacquer, diamanté, faux pearls, photographs,
transparency, found objects, metallic and acrylic thread,
pen and ink, ribbon, elastic, lace, glitter, brass, wire

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Kate Durham, 1982

D42.a-i-1982

SARA THORN, Melbourne fashion house 1983–85

Sara THORN designer

born Australia 1961

Bruce SLORACH designer

born Australia 1961

Calf print dress

1983

screenprinted cotton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented by the National Gallery Women's Association, 1995

1995.763

Fashion graduate Sara Thorn and fine art graduate Bruce Slorach launched the Sara Thorn label in 1983 as a vehicle for exploring innovative textile ideas. Pushing the boundaries of printed fabric, the pair began by screenprinting their designs from a small inner-city studio. *Calf print dress* dates from their first year of collaboration and was paraded in *Fashion '83*. For the collection, the pair collaged, printed and over-painted fabrics, drawing on a myriad of eclectic sources to create clothing that successfully traversed street fashion and club culture.

SARA THORN, Melbourne fashion house
1983–85

Sara THORN designer

born Australia 1961

Bruce SLORACH designer

born Australia 1961

Princess dress

1983

screenprinted cotton, plastic, paste, metal, gold plate

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented by the National Gallery Women's Association, 1995

1995.764

JENNY BANNISTER, Melbourne

fashion house

1976–2009

Jenny BANNISTER designer

born Australia 1954

Myochrome meccano maximus

1983

leather, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of the artist, 1998

1998.200.a-b

Throughout the 1980s Jenny Bannister's collections of experimental pieced, studded and quilted leatherwork earned her industry recognition and commercial success. *Myochrome meccano maximus* was part of an anatomical collection presented at Party Architecture's *Fashion '83* parade held at the Seaview Ballroom, St Kilda, Melbourne. Part parade, part theatre, part chaos, the event gave voice to the interdisciplinary experimentation happening on the street and in the clubs at that time. On the night, Bannister's collection was presented held aloft by oiled musclemen.

MAUREEN FITZGERALD, Melbourne

fashion house

c. 1981–82

Maureen FITZGERALD designer

born Australia 1960

Motion in colour dress

1983

wool, leather, synthetic fibre

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mr and Mrs Mario Schwal, 1983

CT116-1983

Maureen Fitzgerald's three-dimensional knitwear typified the kind of breakaway designs launched at the *Fashion '83* parade. Her architecturally conceived outfits mixed with fur or leather displayed the visual excitement sometimes lacking in mainstream clothing.

INĀRS LĀCIS, Melbourne fashion house
1983–95

Inārs LĀCIS designer
Australia 1952–95

Suit comprising jacket and skirt
c. 1985
silk, acetate, nylon (tulle), metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of the artist's family, 2005

2005.575.a-b

Inārs Lācis described his design style in 1985 as 'streamlined modernism'. Influenced by the work of international designers such as Thierry Mugler and Claude Montana, Lācis emphasised structure and form in his collections.

INĀRS LĀCIS, Melbourne fashion house 1983–95

Inārs LĀCIS designer
Australia 1952–95

Suit comprising jacket, shirt, trousers and cummerbund

1983
silk, metal

Gift of the artist's family, 2005

2005.576.a-d

Inārs Lācis was born in Australia to parents who emigrated from Latvia in the early 1950s, and initially studied Art and Design at the Caulfield Institute of Technology before undertaking a Diploma in Fashion Design at the Emily MacPherson College, Melbourne. Completing his degree in 1977, Lācis worked for a number of local fashion houses, including Prue Acton, before establishing his own label in 1983. *Suit* is indicative of the return to formality in men's dress during the 1980s. Here a slender tailored line contrasts with the delicacy of a sheer silk shirt and cummerbund.

VANESSA OLIVER Melbourne

fashion house

est. 1983

Vanessa OLIVER designer

born England 1959, arrived Australia 1981

Outfit

1983 *Indo-Arabian* collection

cotton, metal, bamboo, leather, plastic, glue

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1983

CT101.a-f-1983

BRIGHID LEHMANN, Melbourne

fashion house

1983–1990

Brighid LEHMANN designer

born Hong Kong, 1964, arrived Australia 1966

Suit

1984 summer

linen, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of the artist, 2007

2007.789.a-c

Brighid Lehmann was nineteen years old when she established her own label and joined the newly formed Fashion Design Council. A year later her sister, Sigrid, opened Empire, a small boutique in South Yarra, to represent the work of up-and-coming designers. Together they became an important part of Melbourne's flourishing independent fashion scene. Influenced by Italian tailoring, Lehmann's designs emphasise cut and proportion. *Suit's* strong lines and monochrome colour create a linear silhouette, while buckles and zips provide a decorative element that plays with notions of concealment and exposure.

SIRENS, Melbourne fashion house

1984–90

Kara BAKER designer

born New Zealand 1956, arrived Australia 1981

Dress

1984 *The Samoan Sirens* collection

cotton, metal, acetate

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased 2008

2008.573

Kara Baker immigrated to Melbourne from New Zealand in 1981. She was technically trained and her work was polished, silhouette-driven and glamorous. Baker formed her label Sirens in 1984 and her collections were presented at all of the Fashion Design Council parades in the mid to late 1980s. Individual but not outrageous, her work was regularly covered in the pages of *Follow Me*, *Studio* and *Vogue Australia*.

ALASDAIR DUNCAN MACKINNON,
Melbourne fashion house
1985–89

Alasdair MACKINNON designer
born Australia 1960

MANDY MURPHY MILLINERY,
Melbourne millinery house
est. 1987

Mandy MURPHY milliner
Australia 1959–2014

Brendan DWYER shoemaker
born Australia 1962

Karl MILLARD metalsmith
born Australia 1962

Patchwork of society
1989

wool, screenprinted silk, silk, polyester, leather, plastic,
screenprinted cotton, leather (buttons), copper (buttons)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2012

2012. 120.a-h

continued overleaf...

At the end of the 1980s independent design was an established force within Australian fashion. As a testament to this, the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, staged *Australian Fashion: The Contemporary Art* in 1989, an exhibition of more than fifty designers, milliners, jewellers, shoemakers and textile artists. The exhibition later travelled to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Included in *Australian Fashion: The Contemporary Art* was Alasdair MacKinnon's *Patchwork of society*, a collaborative work inspired by woollen 'waggas' – blankets made with tailors' swatches in Australia during the 1920s Depression. This suit is comprised of historical suiting samples produced by the Yarra Falls Mills in Abbotsford, Melbourne.

DESBINA COLLINS, Melbourne

fashion house

1979–93

Desbina COLLINS designer

born Australia 1950

Outfit

1984

silk (taffeta), nylon (tulle)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2012

2012.220.a-d

MARTIN GRANT STUDIOS, Melbourne

fashion house

1982–89

Martin GRANT designer

born Australia 1966, lived in France 1991–

Slash back coat dress

1986

linen, silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Rosslynd Piggott, 1999

1999.318

Martin Grant began his fashion career in Melbourne in the early 1980s, working out of a small studio on the fourth floor of Stalbridge Chambers, 443 Little Collins Street. A hub for creative practice, the building was home to designers, milliners, jewellers, magazines, a model agency and the newly formed Fashion Design Council. *Slash back coat dress* uses soft feminine tailoring to play upon the romantic revivalism of the mid 1980s. It features Grant's then-trademark signature of 'slashed' or open seams, which he used to give suggestive glimpses of flesh above the nipple or across the back.

STUDIBAKER HAWK, Sydney

fashion house

est. 1983

Wendy ARNOLD designer

born New Zealand 1956, arrived Australia 1971

Janelle MILES designer

born Australia 1956

David MILES business partner

Born Australia 1951

Medusa

1986 summer collection

satin, chiffon, cotton, metal, plastic, glass, ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of David and Janelle Miles Studibaker, 2003

2003.477

Studibaker Hawk was established in Sydney 1982 when fashion students Janelle Smith and Wendy Arnold began selling their 'street couture' through a stall at the Paddington Markets. After opening a small print studio in Rozelle, the pair began selling to boutiques and major department stores. The label's designs incorporated stylistic elements of 1950s fashions with innovative and bold textile prints. By 1985 Studibaker Hawk's designs had earned them a Fashion Industries of Australia award for eveningwear.

Medusa was favourite gown of Australian flautist Jane Rutter, who performed in it several times and wore it for one of her album covers.

Matthew FLINN

born the Netherlands 1958, arrived Australia 1964, died 2006

Fluorescent spirals, outfit

1984

cotton, screenprint

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1998

1998.57.a-b

'I couldn't just show rolls of fabric on stage. I was forced to do something with them.'

MATTHEW FLINN, 1998

The 1980s saw a renaissance in the production of hand-printed textiles in Australia, with artists Matthew Flinn under the Printintin label, Bruce Storch and Sara Thorn, and Gavin Brown experimenting with bold and vibrant imagery. Flinn established his first textile printing studio in 1981, and by 1983 his focus had broadened to encompass clothing as a vehicle to showcase his fabric designs. His aesthetic was characterised by large repeating motifs and pulsing colour; the result of using multiple screens.

CHRISTOPHER GRAF, Melbourne

fashion house

1983–2000

Christopher GRAF designer

born Australia 1964

PHILLIP RHODES, Melbourne millinery house

est. 1992

Phillip RHODES milliner

born Australia 1960

Requiem outfit

1994 spring

cotton, polyester, acetate, cotton (velvet), velcro, metal, spartre, silk, synthetic fabric

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2010

2010.293.a-c

After being told he could not undertake work experience with a funeral director, Christopher Graf left school and began a dressmaking apprenticeship at the upmarket South Yarra boutique TU. Only three years later, at age nineteen, Graf established his own womenswear label, was selling collections through Empire boutique and showing at the annual Fashion Design Council parades and exhibitions. By 1993 his Chapel Street boutique, memorable for its skewed Alice in Wonderland interior, was a key part of Melbourne's fashion landscape.

Requiem outfit typifies Graf's theatrical aesthetic with its rephrased classicism, bold colour, complex construction and precise finishing.

NIETZSCHE, Melbourne fashion house

1984–84

VICTORIA TRIANTAFYLLOU, Melbourne

fashion house

1985–2004

Victoria TRIANTAFYLLOU designer

born Australia 1964

Dress

1984

cotton, rayon

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

2015.160

Victoria Triantafyllou was still in her final year of fashion design at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) when she was invited to participate in the Fashion Design Council's *Fashion '84* parade at The Venue, Earls Court, St Kilda. Under her first short-lived label Nietzsche, established with fellow student Ellen Walker, Triantafyllou showed a collection of softly tailored works notable for their applied detailing, appliqué and pleating. *Dress*, which was included in the parade, was also featured on cover of the second issue of *Collection(s)* magazine.

PLAIN JANE, Melbourne fashion house

1984–87

Gavin BROWN designer

born Australia 1964

Indian snakes and ladders outfit

1985

screenprinted cotton, metal, plastic, wood

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, NGV Foundation, 2009

2009.15.a-c

Gavin Brown initially studied painting at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) before switching to screenprinted textile design in the mid 1980s. Producing fabrics that were unconventional, technically complex and vividly energetic, Brown injected irreverence and humour into his designs. Working under the ironically named Plain Jane label, Brown transformed his textiles into outfits which he then wore to nightclubs, parties and the flamboyant Fashion Design Council parades. *Indian snakes and ladders outfit* appeared in the *Fashion '85: Revolt into Style* parade.

Fashion weeks

In 1996 Simon Lock and his business, Australian Fashion Innovators Pty Ltd, launched the local industry's first Australian Fashion Week (AFW) in Sydney. With a mixture of corporate and government funding, AFW's aim was to insert Australian spring–summer collections into the international fashion week calendar. Lock hoped new opportunities would arise for emerging and established Australian designers as they presented to international fashion media and buyers.

The Melbourne Fashion Festival (MFF) also began in 1996 as an initiative to help profile local design, manufacturing and retail, with a clear commitment to nurturing emerging independent designers. Unlike AFW, which was for industry only, MFF made the public its primary audience, aiming to stimulate a vibrant fashion culture and community. Included in its remit were events such as Independent Runway, which supported experimental design, an annual sponsored Young Designer Award and a robust cultural program of exhibitions and events.

The runway has long provided a platform for the dissemination of Australian fashion. Since the 1990s Australian designers have regularly presented their collection as part of Paris, London and New York fashion weeks.

CLAIRE BEST HANDMADE, Melbourne

shoemaker

est. 2009

Claire BEST designer

born Australia 1983

Painted derby shoes

2013

ravel oil on veg tan upper, leather sole and stacked leather heel

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

2014.169.a-b

Claire Best completed a footwear course conducted by Brendan Dwyer before establishing her own practice in 2009. In shoemaking, artisanal skills are often passed from maker to maker in a generational master-to-apprentice system. Whereas in the past local shoemakers looked to European antecedents, more recent makers learn from established Australian shoemakers. Best is interested in surface treatment, and this pair of derby shoes features a handpainted design.

ANDREW McDONALD, Sydney

shoemaker

est. 1990

Andrew McDONALD designer

born Australia 1962

Boots

2002

leather, cotton, rubber

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 2002

2002.131.a-b

Andrew McDonald is an accomplished shoemaker who has completed several specialised certificates in footwear; studied in Paris with Michel Perry, and in London with bespoke shoemakers John Lobb; and worked for a company in Paris specialising in making shoes for the Moulin Rouge theatre and opera. More recently McDonald has designed shoes for film productions, including *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) and *Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace* (1999).

BRENDAN DWYER, Melbourne

shoemaker

est. 1993

Brendan DWYER designer

born Australia 1962

Topographic timber veneer boots

2013

timber veneer, cowhide, wood

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

2014.168.a-b

Brendan Dwyer first acquired skills as a shoemaker through informal study, working with Melbourne's traditional bootmaker John Ageli on Johnston Street, Collingwood. Dwyer later studied at Collingwood TAFE and travelled extensively throughout Europe and the Asia Pacific region visiting workshops and shoemakers. He makes custom shoes as well as footwear for performance, and has received commissions from Circus Oz, Victorian Opera and the Malthouse Theatre. Dwyer's interest in unusual materials and construction techniques inform this experimental pair of boots which reference the organic layering of bark on tree branches.

SIMON O'MALLON, Adelaide shoemaker

est. 1991

Simon O'MALLON designer

born Australia 1957

Milano

1997

leather, resin, cotton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, 1998

1998.107.a-b

Simon O'Mallon studied visual arts and sculpture in Canberra before studying footwear manufacture at Marleston TAFE in South Australia. The following year he completed several traditional handmade shoemaking workshops in Adelaide with master shoemaker George Koleff. He continues making, designing and teaching in Adelaide. In 1997 O'Mallon was granted a prestigious award to study at ARS Sutoria Institute for Footwear Art in Milan. The trip likely inspired the name of this shoe.

WOOTTEN, Prahan shoemaker

est. 2011

Jess CAMERON-WOOTTEN designer

born Australia 1983

Venice boots

2013

leather

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

2014.179.a-b

Jess Cameron-Wootten is a second-generation shoemaker. His father, Ross Wootten, began making bespoke footwear under the tutelage of Bulgarian master craftsman George Koleff. Cameron-Wootten undertook a shoe production course at RMIT University, Melbourne, after initially studying industrial design. He then bought a family-operated business, Custom Fit – known for its long history of bespoke shoemaking – and converted it into the studio and retail space Wootten, now located in Prahran.

ROBERTS & HASSETT, Melbourne

shoemaker

est. 2011

Theo HASSETT designer

born New Zealand, 1987, arrived Australia 2007

Ladies' brogues

2013

leather

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

2014.178.a-b

Theo Hassett studied shoemaking at RMIT University, Melbourne, but is largely self-taught. A chance meeting with shoemaker James Roberts in 2011 led to their joint enterprise at Captains of Industry and their bespoke footwear studio Roberts & Hassett. During the initial custom footwear fitting consultation, up to ten different measurements of the client's feet and legs can be made to ensure correct fitting. Roberts & Hassett's high-quality materials include locally sourced kangaroo leather.

DONNA-MAY BOLINGER, Sydney

shoemaker

est. 1987

Donna-May BOLINGER designer

born Canada 1960, arrived Australia 1983

Midnight boots

2003 spring-summer, *Objet trouvé* collection

leather, metal, cotton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, 2003

2003.14.a-d

Donna-May Bolinger completed a fashion design degree at Sydney College of the Arts in 1983. Frustrated with the limited styles of shoes available in Australia, she began making her own and by 1987 had established her own store. Bolinger combined tuition from European master shoemakers with trial and error to develop her skills, and produced a small range of custom-made shoes twice a year for a growing number of clients. Bolinger soon began collaborating with designers such as Akira Isogawa, Karen Walker, Wayne Cooper, Collette Dinnigan and Easton Pearson on the creation of shoes to accompany their collections.

JOHANNA PRESTON, Melbourne

shoemaker

est. 1994

VIXEN, Melbourne manufacturer

est. 1993

Johanna PRESTON designer

born Australia 1967

Petr ZLY designer

born Czechoslovakia 1961, arrived Australia 1968

Meredith ROWE designer

born Australia 1969

Georgia CHAPMAN designer

born Australia 1970

Platform mules

1998 spring-summer

leather, velvet, straw, resin

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, 1998

1998.110.a-b

JOHANNA PRESTON, Melbourne

shoemaker

est. 1994

Johanna PRESTON designer

born Australia 1967

Petr ZLY designer

born Czechoslovakia 1961, arrived Australia 1968

Mules

1996

wood, rubber, paper, plastic, leather, metal, silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased 1997

1997.62.a-b

In 1991 Johanna Preston set up a studio in North Fitzroy, and the following year began intensive training over two years with George Koleff, a Bulgarian master shoemaker based in Adelaide. She learned traditional design methods, including hand welting, sole stitching, hand blocking and upper stitching as well as wooden last making. This training has been the bedrock of her design practice. These mules combine traditional shoemaking techniques with an understanding of historic shoe forms, such as the boudoir slipper of the eighteenth century.

DONNA-MAY BOLINGER, Sydney

shoemaker

est. 1987

Donna-May BOLINGER designer

born Canada 1960, arrived Australia 1983

Edie

c. 1998

leather, silver and gold leaf, paint, rubber, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, 2002

2002.347.a-b

Contemporary fashion

Contemporary Australian designers respond to the country's landscape and reflect on the creative possibilities of cloth. While these designers have absorbed artistic, architectural, local and international influences, increasingly they are referencing Australian fashion history and the work of local designers of the past. Contemporary designers are projecting their visions in novel ways; through online digital platforms, on the runway, in art galleries and retail stores in which they create unique environments. Their designs show that Australian fashion embraces diversity, has an appreciation of the physical environment and a sense of humour.

In the twenty-first century, Australian fashion is a reaction to and revision of the existing fashion system. Today, as in its past, Australian fashion offers a rich landscape of possibility that each designer engages with in their own unique way.

ELLERY, Sydney fashion house

est. 2007

Kym ELLERY designer

born Australia 1983

Protégé wide sleeve top, Vienna sleeveless shirt and radical nude boot leg pant

2015 autumn-winter

Elastoemric cotton linen wool polyimide blend, cotton, synthetic fabric

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Ellery's collections have been described by critics as cool and unconventionally luxurious. This ensemble creates high-impact dressing without distorting the body or compromising comfort, and includes her signature retro-modern silhouette of flared sleeves and trouser legs.

DI\$COUNT UNIVER\$E, Melbourne

fashion house

est. 2009

Cami JAMES designer

born Australia 1986

Nadia NAPREYCHIKOV designer

born Australia 1987

Bodysuit

2011, remade 2015

synthetic fabric, plastic (sequins)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Nadia Napreychikov and Cami James named their label Di\$count Univer\$e as a facetious rejection of the luxury industry, and launched it in 2009 through their blog. 'The blog was fundamental for us in creating our own voice and also forming bonds with our customers', said Napreychikov and James in a joint interview. This tongue-in-cheek subversion of fashion and fashion systems embodies the archetypal spirit of the Australian larrikin. This *Bodysuit* mischievously hides body parts under strategically placed sequined motifs, and was the template for a later design commission for American singer Katy Perry.

PAM, Melbourne fashion house

est. 2000

Misha HOLLENBACH designer

born Australia 1971

Shauna TOOHEY designer

born Australia 1976

Outfit

2010 spring-summer *Garden of Earthly Delights* collection
2010–11

cotton, leather, rubber, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, Victorian Foundation for
Living Australian Artists, 2012

2012.121.a-g

PAM has embedded itself in a creative network outside of the traditional fashion scene, working with graphic designers, musicians, industrial and commercial designers to creatively explore clothing as a visual art form. The design house has Melbourne and Sydney stores, yet their work sees them travelling internationally for inspiration as well as commissioned projects. PAM silhouettes are based on streetwear staples and can be overprinted with collaged motifs from popular and surrounding cultures. This technique has provoked online debate about the ethics of cultural appropriation, but it has also led to commissions and projects abroad.

PAGEANT Melbourne fashion house

est. 2010

Amanda CUMMING designer

born Australia 1983

Kate REYNOLDS designer

born Australia 1983

Auto skivvy black oil and combat wide leg pant

2015 autumn-winter, *Ladies* collection 2015

polyvinyl chloride, synthetic fibre, elastic

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2016

Pageant's 2015 collection, with its strong minimal forms and subtle fabrications, won designers Kate Reynolds and Amanda Cumming the Tiffany & Co. National Designer Award. The carefully developed high-tech fabrics from Japan, in muted grey and black camouflage weave, have enabled them to communicate their designs and create unique pieces.

ROMANCE WAS BORN, Sydney

fashion house

est. 2005

Anna PLUNKETT designer

born Australia 1982

Luke SALES designer

born Australia 1981

Rainbow tartan feather suit

2015 spring *Coo-ee Couture* collection 2015

silk, plastic (sequins), feathers (ostrich)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Fashion and Textiles, 2015

2015.492.a-b

Since the inception of *Romance Was Born* in 2005, designers Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales have celebrated and referenced Australian landscape and motifs in their collections. *Coo-ee Couture* was an overt play on words, indicating that the collection was not couture but a handcrafted adoption of contemporary Australiana. For the collection, Plunkett and Sales collaborated directly with Linda Jackson, hand-printing and painting together. This ensemble references Jackson's early work in *Romance Was Born's* language. Her rainbow gingham tartan plaid from 1984 is translated by Sales and Plunkett in strips of coloured sequins over-decorated with sparse white feathers.

DION LEE, Sydney fashion house

est. 2009

Dion LEE designer

born Australia 1985

Arc coat dress

2013 *Utzon* collection

wool, plastic, metal, silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

2014.526

Sydney-based designer Dion Lee designed this work as part of a small collection for the finals of the International Woolmark Prize presented in London. The collection was inspired by the Sydney Opera House; Lee translated the Opera House's radical structure into a central spine of horizontal slashed and plaited plastic and wool. This slashed spine was included in Lee's subsequent ready-to-wear collections and demonstrates how details propel the possibilities of cloth and design.

DION LEE, Sydney fashion house

est. 2009

Dion LEE designer

born Australia 1985

Neo pleat interlock dress

2014 spring-summer, *Four seasons* collection 2014
silk (chiffon), synthetic fibre, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

2014.527

The tight accordion pleating featured in this dress is a nod to the pleating technique Parisian courtier Madame Grès devised in the 1930s. These snake-like bodices were popular in the 1970s, yet Lee's textile is inventively fused with the injection of fluorescent orange over the upper portion of the skirt. The combination is a contemporary ready-to-wear take on a well-regarded classic. In 2009 *Vogue Australia* wrote, 'It is a duality that seems to inform every aspect of Lee's work – modern versus classic, structured versus fluid, understated versus arresting'.

MATICEVSKI, Melbourne fashion house
est. 1999

Toni MATICEVSKI designer
born Australia 1976

**Phonetic sweater, cataclysm bodice
and serene pencil skirt**

2015

triacetate polyester, silk, nylon

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of the artist, 2015

Maticevski has translated his earlier softer silk silhouettes into modern architectural sculptures, bonding silk with structured soft spongy mesh in this ensemble. He has evolved his demi-couture techniques into modern ready-to-wear, while retaining individual identifiable characteristics. He describes his approach as 'mixing nature with tech to create a new sense of nature'. This work was presented at Australian Fashion Week in 2015.

LUI HON, Melbourne fashion house

est. 2009

Lui HON designer

born Malaysia 1974, arrived Australia 1999

Richard NYLON milliner

born Australia 1966

Outfit

2012 autumn-winter, *Liberty of Love* collection

wool, polyester, silk

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Yvonne Pettengell Bequest, 2014

2014.174.a-d

For Melbourne-based designer Lui Hon, the design process is a poetic reflection on the qualities of cloth, and his process engages in an open dialogue with his pattern-makers and makers. This textile-driven process manifests itself in Lui Hon's final garments which typically layer textures and shades of black, grey or cream in woollen, polyester or silk fibres. These draped ensembles track subtle seasonal changes, allowing wearers to build longevity in their wardrobe with enduring pieces. Adaptability is also inherent in his garments; invisible buttons or drawstrings allow the garments to be worn in various ways.

STRATEAS CARLUCCI, Melbourne

fashion house

est. 2012

Mario Luca CARLUCCI designer

born Australia 1985

Peter STRATEAS designer

born Australia 1984

Surgical blazer, wrap shirt and proto pin trousers

2015 autumn-winter *Transplant* collection

silk, wool

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2015

Creative duo Peter Strateas and Mario Luca Carlucci have been friends since high school, and founded successful streetwear label Trimapee (initially as a trio) before closing it to launch Strateas.Carlucci in a Paris showroom in January 2012. Their ambition to create a luxury label for a global market has already been partly achieved; in 2015 they were the first Australian designers to be invited to present in Paris Men's Fashion Week.

MATERIALBYPRODUCT, Melbourne

fashion house

est. 2004

Susan DIMASI designer

born Australia 1973

Chantal McDONALD designer

born Australia 1976

Benjamin ROSS decorator

born Australia 1976

Tattooed woven sleeves

2006–07 spring-summer, *Soft Hard* collection

leather (kangaroo), ink

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2007

2007.124

MATERIALBYPRODUCT, Melbourne

fashion house

est. 2004

Susan DIMASI designer

born Australia 1973

Chantal McDONALD designer

born Australia 1976

Dress prototype 1/1

2007 spring-summer, *Soft Hard* collection

cotton, leather, silk georgette, correction fluid, ink, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2007

2007.123

MaterialByProduct defines itself as a luxury fashion house of the twenty-first century with a reverence for artisanal hand processes. A template of dots is marked on the flat bolt of fabric of this dress, showing a system of making and joining cloth. These marks not only provide guides to tailor the garment and instructions for where to join the seams, darts and pleats, but also decorate the cloth, creating a unique textile. The system has been devised from a handcrafted method motivated by the hand-processes of haute couture.

ALPHA 60, Melbourne fashion house

est. 2005

Georgie CLEARY designer

born Australia 1976

Alex CLEARY designer

born Australia 1974

Jenna top and darcy skirt

2016 spring–summer, *Broken Flowers* collection 2016
polyester, cotton, metal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2016

Brother and sister design team Georgie and Alex Cleary of Alpha 60 regularly reference contemporary art journals, such as *Assemble Papers*, *Nowness* and *Contemporary Art Daily*, as creative influences. Ideas infuse their casual basics, informing silhouettes or print designs. These basics play with volume and androgyny by adding subtle detail – pleats, folds, pockets or incisions – to classic wardrobe pieces. This outfit presents Alpha 60's familiar bold aesthetic in pink-lined panels which expand from a navy blue shell top over a wide three-quarter skirt.

KARLA ŠPETIĆ, Sydney fashion house
est. 2008

Karla ŠPETIĆ designer

born Croatia 1983, arrived Australia 1993

Ruby, lust floating dress

2015 *If These Walls Could Talk* collection 2015

silk (crepe de chine), printed polyester (crepe), cotton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2016

Karla Špetić is a skilled Australian designer of ready-to-wear who embraces well-proportioned slip-dresses, silk satin and sheer panels. Her garments project energy, elegance, functionality and glamour from a highly personal standpoint, reflecting events of her life. Špetić developed this uncomplicated aesthetic through study at the Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE and Sydney Fashion Design Studio before launching her label in 2008.

DION LEE, Sydney fashion house

est. 2009

Dion LEE designer

born Australia 1985

Aperture

2016

laser-cut synthetic fabric (jersey), crystal

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Collection of the artist, 2016

This figurative light sculpture of laser-cut triple jersey fabric embellished with Swarovski crystals was especially commissioned for *200 Years of Australian Fashion*. *Aperture* is Dion Lee's response to the brief for a conceptual work that extended his artistic practice and which could hypothetically end a haute couture parade; a moment typically reserved for a monumental wedding dress. The work is inspired by the painter and sculptor Otto Piene and the artists of the Zero Art Movement, who conceptualised 'zero' as 'a zone of silence and of pure possibilities for a new beginning'. Reflections on aperture, piercing, extraction, eclipse and the elemental also inspired his autumn-winter 2016 collection.