

BRAVE NEW WORLD

AUSTRALIA 1930s

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Brave New World: Australia 1930s

The 1930s was a turbulent time in Australia's history. During this decade major world events, including the Depression and the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe, shaped our nation's evolving sense of identity. In the arts, progressive ideas jostled with reactionary positions, and artists brought substantial creative efforts to bear in articulating the pressing concerns of the period.

Brave New World: Australia 1930s encompasses the multitude of artistic styles, both advanced and conservative, which were practised during the 1930s. Included are commercial art, architecture, fashion, industrial design, film and dance to present a complete picture of this dynamic time.

The exhibition charts the themes of celebrating technological progress and its antithesis in the nostalgia for pastoralism; the emergence of the 'New Woman' and consumerism; nationalism and the body culture movement; the increasing interest in Indigenous art against a backdrop of the government policy of assimilation and mounting calls for Indigenous rights; the devastating effects of the Depression and the rise of radical politics; and the arrival of European refugees and the increasing anxiety at the impending threat of the Second World War. *Brave New World* presents a fresh perspective on the extraordinary 1930s, revealing some of the social and political concerns that were pertinent then and remain so today.

For kids

Lots of major events occurred in Australia in the 1930s. Many families were made poor during the Depression, a huge war started in Europe and people started painting in different ways. *Brave New World* includes many examples of art made at this time, including works of fashion, film, dance, architecture and painting. Artists used ideas about technology, the body and even buying things as inspiration for their work!

Frank Hinder

Australia 1906–92, United States 1927–34

Excavation for Wynyard

1935

pastel

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1981

NGA 81.1370

Harold Cazneaux

New Zealand 1878 – Australia 1953, Australia from 1886

No title (Powerlines and chute)

c. 1935

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria
with the assistance of the H. J. Heinz II Charitable
and Family Trust, Governor, 1993

PH93-1993

In 1934 BHP (Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited) commissioned leading pictorialist photographer Harold Cazneaux to record their mining and steel operations for a special publication to mark their fiftieth anniversary in 1935. Cazneaux's dramatic industrial images blended a soft, atmospheric focus with a modernist sense of space, form and geometry. In 1935–36 Australia exported close to 300,000 tonnes of iron ore to Japan; however, after Japan's invasion of China in 1937 fear of its expansionist aims in the Pacific increased and soon afterwards the federal government announced a ban on the export of all iron ore to Japan.

Ethel Spowers

Australia 1890–1947, England and France 1921–24

The works, Yallourn

1933

colour linocut, ed. 3/50

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
The Joseph Brown Collection.

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

2004.265

Ethel Spowers and Eveline Syme were leading figures in modern art in Melbourne. In the 1920s they studied with modernist Claude Flight at the Grosvenor School in London, where they learnt to make colour linocuts that followed Flight's principles of rhythmic design combined with flat colour. In April 1933 Spowers and Syme visited the Yallourn Power Station in Gippsland, which had been opened in 1928 and was the largest supplier of electricity to the state.

Sydney's Harbour Bridge

1933

black and white film transferred to media player, 7 min. 57 sec., sound (looped)

directed by Lyn T. Maplestone, produced by Commonwealth of Australia Cinema Branch

Courtesy of National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Canberra

When completed in 1932 the Sydney Harbour Bridge was the largest single-arch bridge in the world and a source of great pride to Australians. In the midst of the Great Depression, the construction of the bridge provided employment for hundreds of men, earning the nickname 'the iron lung', as it had kept many going through those difficult years. Yet sixteen men were killed while working on the bridge and workers fought for better working conditions, shorter hours and higher wages.

Grace Cossington Smith

Australia 1892–1984, England and Germany 1912–14,
England and Italy 1949–51

The Bridge in-curve

1930

tempera on cardboard

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented by the National Gallery Society of Victoria, 1967

1765-5

The slow rise of the Sydney Harbour Bridge above the city was recorded by numerous painters, printmakers and photographers, including Sydney modernist Grace Cossington Smith. Her iconic *The Bridge-in-curve* depicts the bridge just before its two arches were joined in August 1930, and conveys the sense of wonder, achievement and hope that was inspired by this engineering marvel. By painting the emerging, rather than the complete bridge, Cossington Smith also focuses our attention on the energy and ambition required to create it.

Charles Loneragan

England 1889 – Australia 1978, Australia from 1920s

Welders

1936

watercolour

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1981

NGA 81.1349

Margel Hinder

United States 1906 – Australia 1995, Australia from 1934

Man with jackhammer

1939

cedar

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the
assistance of J. B. Were & Son, Governor, 2001

(2001.557)

American-born Margel Hinder was one of Australia's leading modernist sculptors. She had studied art in Boston, where she met and married Sydney artist Frank Hinder. In 1934 they moved to Australia and became an important part of Sydney's small modern art scene. In *Man with jackhammer* Hinder has simplified and contained the figure within a square frame, the strong diagonal form of the jackhammer creating a sense of compressed energy and force. Man and machine have fused in this celebration of industry and progress.

Frank Hinder

Australia 1906–92, United States 1927–34

Jackhammer

1936

airbrush on black paper

Private collection, Sydney

Robert Emerson Curtis

England 1898 – Australia 1996, Australia from 1914,
United States 1922–28

Building the Bridge: twelve lithographs, with intro. and supplement 1933

book: 28 pages, lithographs and letterpress, cardboard
and embossed cover, quarter cloth binding
published by Simmons, Sydney

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

RARESF 624.67 C94

In the 1920s Sydney artist Robert Emerson Curtis worked as an architectural draughtsman in Chicago, where he witnessed the dramatic transformation of the city with the building of modern skyscrapers. On his return to Sydney in 1928 Curtis decided to document the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. He received permission to visit the site and returned every few weeks to make drawings, from which he produced a series of lithographs. These were published in a commemorative book when the bridge was opened in 1932.

Harold Cazneaux

New Zealand 1878 – Australia 1953, Australia from 1886

The bridge book

1930

book: 30 pages, photo-offset lithographs, stapled binding
published by Art in Australia Ltd, Sydney

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Shaw Research Library

Utopian cities

Modernity reflected what was new and progressive in Australian urban life. The image of the city became an allegory for this in art, and efficiency and speed became watchwords for modernity. Many artists celebrated the city and technological advancements in works utilising a modern style of hard-edged forms, flat colours and dynamic compositions. The engineering marvel of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, which opened in 1932, was an ongoing source of fascination for artists, as were images of building the city, industry and modern modes of transport.

The skyscraper was also a powerful symbol of modern prosperity, especially when the Great Depression cast doubt on the inevitability of progress; hence the advent of tall buildings in Australian cities was hailed with relief and optimism. In 1932, at the peak of the Depression, the tallest building in Melbourne was opened: the Manchester Unity Building at the corner of Swanston and Collins streets. With its ornamental tower and spire taking its overall height to 64 metres, the building was welcomed by *The Age* newspaper as 'a new symbol of enterprise and confidence, undaunted by the "temporary eclipse" of the country's economic fortune'.

For kids

Because of new technologies introduced in the 1930s, engineers were able to make very big skyscrapers and giant bridges, like the Manchester Unity Building on Swanston Street here in Melbourne and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Artists liked to draw and paint them.

How many tall buildings can you see in these pictures?
Have you ever been to the top of a skyscraper? Could you see your house or school from the top?

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Rush hour in King's Cross

1938, printed c. 1986

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria

with the assistance of Mr A.C. Goode, Fellow, 1987

PH14-1987

During the 1930s the city provided a rich source of imagery for artists working in modern styles, who celebrated the speed and efficiency of modern transport technology and expanding road and rail networks. Yet as car ownership increased during the 1930s, larger cities began to suffer congestion and the rush hour became part of urban life. Throughout the decade the pace and stress of modern life became a topic of public debate, with conservative commentators decrying this transformation of the Australian lifestyle.

Harald Vike

Norway 1906 – Australia 1987, Australia from 1929

Perth nocturne

1934

oil on canvas on board

Janet Holmes à Court Collection, Perth

Harald Vike's painting shows a street corner in Perth lit up with the brightly coloured neon advertising signs that by the 1930s had become synonymous with the modern city. New York's Times Square had led the way with its spectacular lighting displays, and around the world other cities followed suit, with the first appearing in Australia around 1927. Born in Norway, Vike settled in Perth in 1929 and was a founding member of the Communist Workers' Art Club in 1934. He actively engaged in their activities, designing and constructing sets, acting in plays, drawing cartoons, and painting banners for trade unions.

Clarice Beckett

Australia 1887–1935

Rainy evening, city

c. 1930

oil on board

Private collection

Clarice Beckett

Australia 1887–1935

Taxi rank

c. 1931

oil on canvas on board

Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth

Herbert Badham

Australia 1899–1961

George Street, Sydney

1934

oil on canvas on board

Laverty Collection, Sydney

After serving in the Royal Australian Navy during the First World War, Herbert Badham studied at the Sydney Art School and began exhibiting in 1927. In his paintings he was a keen observer of everyday urban life: streets with shoppers, city workers on their lunch break and drinkers in the pub were painted in a contemporary, hard-edged realist style.

Henri Mallard

Australia 1884–1967

Pedestrians

1930s

gelatin silver photograph

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Gift of Paul Mallard 1996

123.1996

Yvonne Atkinson

Australia 1918–99

The tram stop

1937

oil on cardboard

Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum, Castlemaine
Gift of the artist, 1977

500

Percy Trompf

Australia 1902–64

Seventh city of the Empire – Melbourne, Victoria

1930s

colour lithograph

printed by J. E. Hackett, Melbourne

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Mr Grant Lee, 2007

H2008.73/23

Percy Trompf's poster celebrates Melbourne's first skyscraper, the iconic Manchester Unity Building on the corner of Swanston and Collins streets. Designed by architect Marcus Barlow in the Art Deco 'Gothic' style, it was built at high speed between 1930 and 1932, and provided much needed employment during the Depression. At twelve storeys high and topped with a decorative tower it was Melbourne's tallest building and contained the city's first escalators. A powerful symbol of the city's modernity, it was often featured in images of Melbourne.

Vida Lahey

Australia 1882–1968

Sultry noon (Central Station Brisbane)

1931

oil on canvas on plywood

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

Purchased 1983 (1983.149)

Eveline Syme

England (of Australian parents) 1888 – Australia 1961,
England 1907–10, France 1922–23, England and France
1929–30

The tram line

1932

watercolour

Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum, Castlemaine
Gift of Beth Sinclair, 1995

Ivor Francis

England 1906 – Australia 1993, Australia from 1924

Speed!

1931

colour process block print

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
South Australian Government Grant 1986

867G20

Victorian Railways, Melbourne

publisher

Australia 1856–1976

The Spirit of Progress menu

c. 1937–63

letterpress and photolithograph on cardboard

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

Anonymous gift, 2012

H2012.76/1a-c

Victorian Railways, Melbourne

publisher

Australia 1856–1976

The Victorian Railways present The Spirit of Progress

1937

booklet: colour photolithographs and letterpress, 12 pages, cardboard cover

printed by Queen City Printers, Melbourne

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

RARELTP 625.26109945 V66S

Launched in November 1937, The Spirit of Progress express passenger train was a source of immense pride to Victorians. Built in Newport, Victoria, the train featured many innovations, including all-steel carriages and full air-conditioning. Designed in the Art Deco, streamlined style by architectural firm Stephenson & Turner, the passenger carriages were fitted out to a level of comfort not previously seen in Australia, and included a full dining carriage. The train ran between Melbourne and the New South Wales state border at Albury, the longest non-stop train journey in Australia at that time, at an average speed of 84 kilometres per hour.

Frank Hinder

Australia 1906–92, United States 1927–34

Wynyard triptych

1939

egg tempera and oil glazes on board

Janet Holmes à Court Collection, Perth

Frank Hinder was fascinated by the dynamism of the modern city, and in the late 1930s made a number of works that related to modern transport. The recently completed Wynyard Station was a central transport hub for Sydney, and Hinder made several works on the theme of commuters passing through its multi-level spaces. Hinder's cubo-futurist style of transparent and overlapping forms captures the movement and energy of the busy metropolitan station.

Frank Hinder

Australia 1906–92, United States 1927–34

Commuters

1938

tempera on paper on board

Private collection

Frank Hinder

Australia 1906–92, United States 1927–34

Trains passing

1940

oil on composition board

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1974

NGA 74.323

Frank Hinder was one of the first abstract artists in Australia. After living and studying in the United States, Hinder and his wife, the American sculptor Margel, returned to Sydney in 1934. There they became part of a small avant-garde group that included Grace Crowley, Rah Fizelle, Ralph Balson and the German sculptor and art historian Eleanore Lange, all of whom were interested in Cubist, Constructivist and Futurist art. Hinder later said that this work was inspired by seeing Lange, sitting next to him on a train, reflected in the windows of a passing train.

The Modern Woman

In the 1930s the new 'Modern Woman' made her appearance as a more serious and emancipated version of the giddy 1920s 'flapper'. A woman who worked, lived alone in one of the new city apartment buildings, visited nightclubs and showed less interest in traditional marriage and child rearing. A lean body type became fashionable and was enhanced by the lengthened hemlines and defined waists introduced by French couturier Jean Patou in 1929. This slender silhouette was supported by form-fitting foundation garments by manufacturers such as Berlei.

The Modern Woman became one of the most potent images of contemporary life, being celebrated in women's magazines such as the ultra-stylish *Home* and the *Australian Women's Weekly*, launched in 1933. While such magazines were congratulating her and promoting new consumer goods to the Modern Woman, at the same time she was criticised by conservative commentators. In 1937 photographer Max Dupain wrote: 'There must be a great shattering of modern values if woman is to continue to perpetuate the race ... In her shred of a dress and little helmet of a hat, her cropped hair, and stark bearing, the modern woman is a sort of a soldier ... It is not her fault it is her doom.'

For kids

Many young women started to have jobs, live alone and go to nightclubs in the 1930s. Even though this is common today, it was not so common at that time. A woman who lived this way was called a Modern Woman. Lots of magazines liked to celebrate her, and to sell her things.

How many pictures of Modern Woman can you find in this exhibition?

Unknown, Australia

Evening dress

c. 1935

silk

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

D29-1975

In the 1930s, extended lines and diagonal shards across art and design came to define the speed and movement of a machine aesthetic known as Streamline Moderne or Art Moderne. Applied to this dress, colourful stripes become sunburst sprays over the torso and severe chevrons down the skirt represent the dynamism of the 1930s. Such motifs also further lengthened the physique, to enhance the long, lean ideal of the Modern Woman.

Lina Bryans

Germany (of Australian parents) 1909 – Australia 2000,
Australia from 1910

The babe is wise

1940

oil on cardboard

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Miss Jean Campbell, 1962

1063-5

Lina Bryans's portrait of author Jean Campbell is titled after Campbell's 1939 novel *The Babe is Wise*, a contemporary story set in Melbourne and in which the main protagonists are European migrants. A well-known figure in Melbourne's literary circles, Campbell was noted for her 'quick and slightly audacious wit'. Bryans had begun painting in 1937 with the support of William Frater. In the late 1930s she lived at Darebin Bridge House, which became an informal artists' colony and meeting place for writers associated with the journal *Meanjin*.

Thomas Harrison, Melbourne millinery
house
1929–75

Thomas Harrison designer
Australia 1897–1981

Hat

1933–36
straw, viscose, cotton

Gift of Mrs Leonard Brooks, 1980

D217-1980

Moya Dyring

Australia 1908 – England 1967, France from 1937

Holly

1937

oil on canvas on plywood

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Bulleen, Melbourne
Gift of Barrett Reid, 1993

1993.12

After studies at the National Gallery School, Moya Dyring attended the modern-leaning George Bell School in Melbourne and the Crowley-Fizelle School in Sydney. She was the partner of Sam Atyeo, and together they were part of the first group of modernist artists and writers that formed around John and Sunday Reed at their property Heide in the mid 1930s. In 1937 Dyring held her first solo exhibition, which included this portrait. While the identity of the sitter is not known, a contemporary reviewer considered it to be an ‘uncompromising indictment of the “cocktail girl”’.

Peter Purves Smith

Australia 1912–49, England 1935–36, England and France
1938–40

Lucile

1937

oil on board

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Purchased 2011 with funds raised through
the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Appeal

2011.090

Thomas Harrison, Melbourne millinery
house
1929–75

Thomas Harrison designer
Australia 1897–1981

Hat

c. 1938
straw, feathers, cotton/silk (ribbon)

Gift of Mrs G. E. Leonard, 1980

D218-1980

Charles Bush

Australia 1919–89

Phyl Waterhouse

c. 1936

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Gift of June Davies from the estate of Charles Bush, 1993

NGA 93.553

This portrait is of the young artist Phyl Waterhouse, painted by her partner Charles Bush. Waterhouse had studied at the National Gallery School, where in 1935 she met fellow student Bush and they soon began living together. They were to form a lifelong partnership, with Bush becoming the more successful of the two artists.

Adrian Lawlor

England 1889 – Australia 1969, Australia from 1910

A sophisticated lady

c. 1935

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat

Purchased 1974

1974.42

Thomas Harrison, Melbourne millinery
house
1929–75

Thomas Harrison designer
Australia 1897–1981

Pillbox

1930–50

straw, viscose, feathers, glass, metal, acetate

Gift of Thomas Harrison, 1976

D246-1976

Thomas Harrison, Melbourne millinery
house
1929–75

Thomas Harrison designer
Australia 1897–1981

Hat

1934–37
wool (felt), cotton/silk (ribbon), cotton (netting)

Presented by Thomas Harrison, 1976

D264-1976

Sybil Craig

England 1901 – Australia 1989, Australia from 1902

Peggy

c. 1932

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1978

A3-1978

Peggy is a portrait of artist Peggy Crombie, painted by her good friend Sybil Craig. Crombie and Craig had both studied at the National Gallery School and throughout the 1930s often exhibited together. Craig's affectionate portrait presents Peggy as an emancipated modern woman. In the 1920s it was still considered risqué for middle-class women to smoke in public; however, by the 1930s smoking was actively marketed to women by associating cigarettes with glamour and sophistication. The geometric patterned textile in the background was often used as a backdrop in fashionable portrait photography and is another pointer to the sitter's modernity.

Albert Tucker

Australia 1914–99, Europe and United States 1947–60

Portrait of a girl

1939

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of Barbara Tucker 1989

NGA 89.1292

Peter Purves Smith

Australia 1912–49, England 1935–36, England and France 1938–40

Maisie

1938–39

gouache

National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
Bequest of Lady Maisie Drysdale 2001

2012.144

In 1937 the striking, auburn-haired Maisie Newbold was a student at the George Bell School in Melbourne, where she met fellow student Peter Purves Smith and his best friend Russell Drysdale. Maisie and Purves Smith were married in 1946, only three years before latter's premature death from tuberculosis. Purves Smith painted this portrait at the start of their relationship. It depicts Maisie as a stylish woman wearing the latest fashion, the angularity of her features contrasted by the soft fur of her collar and feathers of her hat. Many years later Maisie married Drysdale.

Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003, England and Italy 1934–37

Self-portrait

1932

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Acquired with the assistance of the

Masterpieces for the Nation Fund 2011

NGA 2010.923

During the first decade of her life as a professional artist, Nora Heysen completed numerous self-portraits. In many of these she depicts herself in the act of drawing or painting, holding a palette and brush or with other accoutrements of the artist, and thereby asserting her professional identity. Yet these are also highly charged works in which Heysen scrutinises herself (and the viewer) with an unflinching and unsmiling gaze.

A new generation of artists and designers

While modern art was a source of debate and controversy throughout the 1930s, modernism in architecture, interior design, industrial design and advertising became highly fashionable. In Melbourne a small group of designers pioneered modern design in Australia. Furniture designer Fred Ward first designed and made furniture for his home in Eaglemont, where he had established a studio workshop. It was admired by friends and he was encouraged to produce furniture for sale. In 1932 Ward opened a shop in Collins Street, Melbourne. There he offered his furniture, as well as linens and Scandinavian glass. The fabrics for curtains and upholstery were printed by Australian designer Michael O'Connell with bold designs that shocked some but were favoured by a new generation looking to create modern interiors.

In the 1930s art, design and architecture were closely integrated with the changing realities of contemporary life. It was a time when the last vestiges of the conservative art establishment were swept away by a new generation of artists and designers who were to drive Australian art in the second half of the twentieth century.

For kids

Furniture became very fashionable in the 1930s. A man named Fred Ward opened up a shop which sold modern furniture, which his friend Michael O'Connell made the fabric for. The fabrics he made were very bold and bright, and some people thought they were too colourful to put in a house!

Do you like the colourful fabrics?

Sam Atyeo

Australia 1910– France 1990, lived in France 1936–90

Album of designs: chairs

c. 1933– c. 1936

album: pencil, gouache, watercolour, blue pencil, 12 designs tipped into an album of 16 grey pages, card covers, tape and stapled binding

Gift of the artist, 1988

P13-1988

Sam Atyeo

Australia 1910– France 1990, lived in France 1936–90

Album of designs: sideboards and cupboards

c. 1933– c. 1936

album: pencil, watercolour, pen and ink, 3 designs tipped into an album of 16 grey pages, card covers, tape and stapled binding

Gift of the artist, 1988

P10-1988

Sam Atyeo

Australia 1910 – France 1990, France from 1936

Album of designs: tables

c. 1933 – c. 1936

album: watercolour, brush and coloured inks, coloured pencils, 14 designs tipped into an album of 16 grey pages, card covers, tape and stapled binding

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of the artist, 1988

P11-1988

Sam Atyeo was a leading figure in Melbourne's emerging modernist circles in the early 1930s, the partner of artist Moya Dyring and lover of Sunday Reed. He had studied at the National Gallery School, where he was a brilliant and rebellious student. Around 1932 Atyeo became friendly with Cynthia Reed, who managed Fred Ward's furniture shop and interior design consultancy on Collins Street. After she opened Cynthia Reed Modern Furnishings in Little Collins Street, Atyeo designed furniture for Reed, that was strongly influenced by Ward's designs.

Sam Atyeo

Australia 1910– France 1990, lived in France 1936–90

Album of designs: dressing tables and beds

c. 1933– c. 1936

album: pencil, watercolour and blue pencil, 5 designs
tipped into an album of 15 grey pages, cardboard covers,
tape and stapled binding

Gift of the artist, 1988

P14-1988

Art in Australia: Art and Architecture

Mercy Hospital

Third Series, Christmas ed., edited by Leon Gellert and
Sydney Ure Smith, published by *Sydney Morning Herald*,
Sydney, 15 November 1935, pp. 84–5
photo-offset lithograph

The Contemporary House

Third Series, no. 67, edited by Leon Gellert and Sydney
Ure Smith, published by *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney,
15 May 1937, pp. 68–9
photo-offset lithograph

Architecture section: Sanitarium Health Food Co., Warburton

Third Series, Christmas ed., edited by Leon Gellert and Sydney Ure Smith, published by *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney, 15 November 1938, pp. 72–3
photo-offset lithograph

City Mutual Building, Sydney

Third Series, no. 65 (20th Anniversary ed.), edited by
Leon Gellert and Sydney Ure Smith, published by *Sydney
Morning Herald*, Sydney, 16 November 1936, pp. 90–1
photo-offset lithograph

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Illustration for Kelvinator advertisement

1936

gelatin silver photograph

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Purchased with funds provided by the Photography
Collection Benefactors' Program 2000

541.2000

In the interwar period, women gained greater influence in the market due to their increased visibility, the instability of the market and increased mass production. Greater numbers of women were also working, either due to necessity or choice, resulting in greater financial emancipation. The 1930s saw the development of affordable, mass-produced whitegoods, which were advertised to women through appeals to domesticity, romance and modernity. Max Dupain's photograph for a Kelvinator advertisement combines all three, and the cinematic angles, exaggerated lighting and glamorous models make it appear like a scene from a Hollywood romance.

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

A lovely swami nightgown by Lustre

published in *The Home*

Volume 19, No. 4, April 1, 1938

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Shaw Research Library

Arthur Challen

Australia 1911–64

Miss Moira Madden

1937

oil on canvas

State Library Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mrs S. M. Challen, 1966

H28383

With her evening dress and stole, sharply arched eyebrows and red painted nails and lips, the subject of this work, Moira Madden, epitomises glamorous 1930s Hollywood style. With the advent of the 'talkies', cinema-going became a highly popular pastime, and Katherine Hepburn, Bette Davis, Joan Crawford and Marlene Dietrich were some of the biggest stars of the day. Madden was a member of a wealthy Melbourne family; soon after this portrait was painted she married Albert Hallenstein, a brother of the artist Lina Bryans.

Michael O'Connell designer

England 1898–1976, Australia 1920–37

Fabric length

c. 1934

block printed linen

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Kathleen Montgomery, 1994

CT389-1994

Fred Ward designer

Australia 1900–90

E. M. Vary, Fitzroy, Melbourne

(attributed to) manufacturer

active 1920s–40s

Armchair

c. 1932

blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), mountain ash (*Eucalyptus sp.*), silk, cotton, foam (other materials)

Proposed acquisition

This armchair, the sideboard and occasional tables were designed by Fred Ward and purchased by Maie Casey in the early 1930s. The wife of R. G. Casey, federal treasurer in the Lyons Government, Maie was a prominent supporter of modern art and design. Moving to Canberra in 1932, she furnished her house at Duntroon in a modern style with furniture by Ward and textiles by Michael O'Connell. The design of Ward's armchair closely resembles a 1920s armchair by German Bauhaus furniture designer Erich Dieckmann, who was known for his standardised wooden furniture based on geometric designs.

Fred Ward designer

Australia 1900–90

E. M. Vary, Fitzroy, Melbourne

(attributed to) manufacturer

active 1920s–40s

Tray table

c. 1932

mountain ash (*Eucalyptus sp.*), blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), steel

Proposed acquisition

Fred Ward designer

Australia 1900–90

E. M. Vary, Fitzroy, Melbourne

(attributed to) manufacturer

active 1920s–40s

Side table

c. 1932

mountain ash (*Eucalyptus sp.*), jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), steel

Proposed acquisition

Fred Ward was one of the first and most important designers of modern furniture in Australia. He began making furniture around 1930, and in 1932 opened a shop in Collins Street selling his furniture, as well as textiles by Michael O'Connell and other modern design pieces. In 1934 Ward went into partnership with Myer Emporium and established the Myer Design Unit, for which he designed a line of modular 'unit' furniture for commercial production. Ward's simple, functional aesthetic and use of local timbers with a natural waxed finish was in contrast to the luxurious materials and decorative motifs of the contemporary Art Deco style.

Fred Ward designer

Australia 1900–90

E. M. Vary, Fitzroy, Melbourne

(attributed to) manufacturer

active 1920s–1940s

Sideboard

c. 1932

mountain ash (*Eucalyptus sp.*), painted wood, painted plywood, steel

Proposed acquisition

Above

Klytie Pate

Australia 1912–2010

Covered jar

1939

earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1977

D117.a-b-1977

Klytie Pate

Australia 1912–2010

Covered jar

1937

earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1977

D116.a-b-1977

Below

Klytie Pate

Australia 1912–2010

Bottle-brush, vase

c. 1939

earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with the assistance of the Crafts Board
of the Australia Council, 1980

D357-1980

Klytie Pate studied at the National Gallery School, and later enrolled in the pottery course offered at the Working Men's College (now RMIT) and took modelling lessons with sculptor Ola Cohn. Pate was the niece of artist Christian Waller, whose Art Deco style was influential in the geometrical and stylised designs of natural motifs that were a feature of Pate's carved and pierced pots. From the late 1930s the National Gallery of Victoria's collection of Oriental ceramics provided further inspiration, and Pate began making vessels with smooth forms and lustrous glazes.

Ethel Blundell

Australia 1918 – Switzerland 2010, Switzerland from 1946

Vase

1936

earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Margaret Howie, Governor, 1999

1999.277

Allan Lowe

Australia 1907–2001

Vase

1937

earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with the assistance of the Crafts Board
of the Australia Council, 1979

D129-1979

Ceramic art as a means of personal expression grew in popularity in the 1930s, and in Melbourne artist potters included Allan Lowe, Klytie Pate, Merric Boyd and Margaret Mahood. The Primrose Pottery Shop in Little Collins Street, which had been established in 1929 by Edith and Betty McMillan, was an important outlet for studio pottery, as were the fashionable department stores Georges and Myers. In the 1930s Lowe had become interested in Aboriginal art and began incorporating it into his designs, an interest that strengthened through his subsequent friendship with Indigenous artist Bill Onus.

Michael O'Connell designer

England 1898–1976, Australia 1920–37

Textile

c. 1933

block printed linen

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1988

CT49-1988

Michael O'Connell pioneered modernist textiles in Melbourne and was an influential advocate of modern design. Working with his wife Ella from his studio in Beaumaris, O'Connell used woodblocks and linocuts to hand print onto raw linens and silks, which were used for fashion garments and home furnishing. O'Connell's boldly patterned and highly stylised designs were considered startlingly modern. Some of his early fabrics featured 'jazz age' scenes of nightclubs and dancing, while later motifs were based on Australian flora and fauna, or derived from Oceanic and Aboriginal art.

It isn't done

1930

black and white film transferred to media player, 2 min.
25 sec., sound (looped)

Courtesy of National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Canberra and Berlei Australia

This was a pre-screening cinema advertisement and educational film highlighting the importance in being fitted with the right undergarment in order to correct 'figure faults'.

Randille, Melbourne maker

active 1930s

Night gown

c. 1938

silk

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

CT187.a-b-1982

When *Table Talk* reported on Randille's collections on 21 November 1935, they called them 'the most ravishing nightgowns, pyjamas and negligees ... effective enough to take its place almost as a ballroom gown'. Such night gowns recalled the Hollywood figure of the femme fatale, one of the most extreme manifestations of the Modern Woman. The archetype often exhibited defiant behaviour while dressed in floor-length gowns or fitted black silhouettes.

Australia tunes into the world

These radios comprise a selection of Australian designed and manufactured tabletop models from the 1930s – a time when this new method of communication became an integral part of every home. They reflect the rapid spread of the streamlined style to Australia from the United States, England and Europe, where industrial designers applied machine-age styling to everyday household appliances. The use of new synthetic plastics (Bakelite) and mass production helped to make radios affordable for ordinary people, even in the depths of the Depression, and radio transmission brought the world into every Australian home. As cheap alternatives to the expensive wooden console in the lounge room, these small, portable radios allowed individual family members to listen to serials, quizzes and popular music in other rooms such as the kitchen, bedroom and verandah, as well as in the workplace.

Radios of the 1930s are now appreciated as quintessential examples of Art Deco styling, and one of the first expressions of art meeting industry. These colourful and elegant radio sets were one of the first pieces of modern styling in the Australian home. They were also a symbol of modern technology and a new future.

For kids

In the 1930s there were no televisions, no iPhones and no internet! Can you imagine that? Instead, people listened to stories, music and the news on radios. Radios were made in lots of different shapes and sizes.

Can you find one shaped like Mickey Mouse?

1. Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd., Sydney manufacturer est. 1913

AWA Egg crate (cream, green, pink, red, blue, dark green)

1938

bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

The AWA Egg crate was a successful model that carried over from the late 1930s to the mid 1940s. The advertising claimed that these radios were: 'Incomparable in performance, beauty and value. They are ideal for those who desire to enjoy the advantages of a second set in the home'. The advertisement continued: 'The strikingly beautiful cabinet, designed by an artist of distinction has exquisitely graceful lines and is a masterpiece of modern streamlined simplicity'. The red, pink and blue examples are extremely rare, with only a couple of each known to exist.

**2. Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia)
Ltd, Sydney** manufacturer
est. 1913

**AWA Radiolette 'Empire State'
(speckled blue/green)**
1934
Bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd, Sydney manufacturer est. 1913

AWA Radiolette 'Empire State' and cigarette box (brown, speckled white, black, green, white)

1934

bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

The bakelite AWA Radiolette 'Empire State' of 1934 is the most famous of Australian radios. Offered in a range of five colours, the 'Empire State' introduced into the Australian home a radio with modern styling. The speckled blue/green Radiolette was a one-off example and is the only one known in this colour. The green version is the most sought-after Australian radio by collectors here and overseas, with perhaps some twenty-five examples still remaining and only a few in mint condition. In 1936 the company produced miniature bakelite cigarette boxes in the same colours as the radios, as promotional material for favoured retailers. These ephemera are extremely rare and collectable.

3. Airzone Ltd, Sydney manufacturer

1928–55

Airzone Symphony leader

1938

bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

Airzone was a major manufacturer of radios in Australia; starting with crystal sets in 1925 and producing radios until 1955. In the 1930s, the factory floor area in Sydney was over 3400 square metres and the company had 750 employees. The imposing Symphony leader is one of the largest Australian bakelite radios, and is unusual in black and white. The circular press-button dial for major radio stations was very avant-garde for the time. In this example the five prefix indicates the radio was manufactured for a South Australian audience. This feature was a special addition at the time and very few examples exist today.

4. Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd, Sydney manufacturer est. 1913

AWA Fisk Radiolette Fret n Foot (green, black and green, white, black and white)

1935

bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

The AWA Fisk Radiolette Fret n Foot is a design unique to Australia. The bulky, square block of Bakelite, with its Art Deco lines, is softened by curved edges with stepped ridges on the sides. The decorative bakelite fretwork on the front of the cabinet is asymmetrical and has an Asian influence. Egyptian motifs were popular additions to the Art Deco style at the time, and the attached feet resemble lions' paws that allude to those of the Sphinx. The radios are enhanced visually with the fretwork and feet being a different colour to the cabinet.

5. Radio Corporation, South Melbourne manufacturer 1926–60s

Astor Mickey (yellow, blue and white, pink, red, green) 1939–49 bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

The louvered Astor Mickey was Australia's most popular radio of all time. It was produced for fourteen years and in more colours (at least twenty-two) than any other radio model in the world. The rarest of these are the red and pink versions, with only three examples of each known to exist. There were at least five different blues, some with white clouds drifting through the sky-blue background. Astor made the same cabinets for other resellers, rebadged as Monarch, Kingsley and Teletone brands.

6. Briton Electrical & Radio Pty Ltd, Sydney manufacturer 1934–38

Briton Theatrette (green) 1938 bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

Philips originally manufactured the Theatrette in the United Kingdom, but in Australia the cabinets were pressed and the radios assembled and sold by Briton Electrical & Radio. Normally only available in brown bakelite, this green version was probably made as a sample and is the only one known.

7. Airzone Ltd, Sydney manufacturer 1928–55

Mullard (white, speckled green, black) 1938 bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

Airzone manufactured identical cabinets for both the Mullard model and the Airzone Radiostar, but with different grills and logos. The Mullard fretwork is a combination of curves, circles and parallel lines, which are common motifs in the Art Deco style. Normally available in brown, white and black, the speckled green version is a unique example that was never offered to the public.

8. Targan Electric Pty Ltd, Brunswick, Melbourne manufacturer 1930–37

Airmaster

1934

veneered wood, bakelite, glass

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

The Airmaster is an example of Art Deco design in a wooden tabletop radio. The cabinet is made up of various wood veneers (Queensland maple and walnut), ebony painted features and stylish cut-outs. The front is punctuated by bakelite knobs and a glass dial with a bakelite surround, all combining to offer a very stylish modern radio for the 1930s Australian home. Even the graphics in the dial are subtle and elegant.

9. British General Electric Company Ltd, Sydney manufacturer 1932–52

Genalex Dapper 1938 bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

The bakelite Genalex Dapper was advertised as ‘the choice of the man who knows the difference’. This bulky, square radio came in walnut, mahogany and ebony colours. It is one of the few radios with a speaker on the top, and this allows for a very large and accessible dial on the front. Also unusual is the rural scene woven into the grill cloth on the top of the radio, which softens the rather stolid aesthetics.

10. Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd., Sydney manufacturer est. 1913

AWA Radiolette C87

1932

bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

AWA (Amalgamated Wireless Australasia) was Australia's largest and most prominent electronics organisation through the first half of the twentieth century. The AWA Radiolette C87 (1932) and C104 (1933) were Australia's first bakelite radios, and at the time the largest bakelite cabinet mouldings in the world. These majestic radios straddle the evolutionary interface between the contoured curved lines of art nouveau and the simpler and more geometric outlines of the subsequent streamlined Art Deco style.

**11. Radio Corporation, South
Melbourne** manufacturer
1926–60s

Astor Mickey Mouse BP
1939
bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

Radio Corporation, South Melbourne
manufacturer
1926–60s

Astor Mickey Mouse EC (white, black)
1937
bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

The first bakelite Astor Mickey Mouse model in 1937 was the subject of a legal battle with RCA (Disney Corporation) in the United States over the use of the Mickey Mouse character. In the 1939 BP model with the red dial face, Mickey Mouse featured as the central logo; subsequent models retained the name Mickey but the image of Mickey Mouse was not used.

12. Bloch & Gerber Ltd, Sydney

manufacturer

1930–53

Weldonette

1938

bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

Manufactured in Sydney, the Weldonette is one of the rarest Empire State–style radios made in Australia, with only four examples known to exist. Although similar in general shape to the AWA Radiolette of 1934, the steps and ridges are more subdued and delicate. The Australian rural sunrise is quite unique as a bakelite grill decoration, and the moulding would have been difficult to produce.

13. The Gramophone Company (His Master's Voice), Sydney manufacturer

1936 – c. 1968

HMV Tower (brown, ebony)

1938

bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

His Master's Voice offered the HMV Tower as the 'smartest, livest, handsomest small sets ever made'. Retailers were encouraged to sell them 'for the living room, bedroom, porch or kitchen'. These stately bakelite radios came in three standard colour combinations (walnut, alnut and ivory, and rosewood and ivory), reflecting the desire to simulate natural materials and match the general style of home furnishing in the 1930s. The ebony and ivory version was offered as a special order, and quite clearly was not popular, as only two examples are known to exist today.

14. Radio Corporation, South Melbourne manufacturer

1926–60s

Astor Mickey and Minnie

1933

veneered wood

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

The Astor Mickey and Minnie radio of 1933 was Astor's first tabletop radio. It was designed to be small, lightweight and very portable, and could be attached to a light socket as well as a normal power outlet. It came with an optional outdoor carrying cover. The Minnie Mouse was a remote auditorium speaker intended to be sited distant from the radio in the same room but with the volume able to be controlled from the radio itself. The grill on the speaker is arguably one of the most beautiful Art Deco designs in the world, and appears to be locally created by Astor in Melbourne.

**15. Amalgamated Wireless
(Australasia) Ltd, Sydney** manufacturer
est. 1913

AWA Radiolette C104

1933

bakelite

Collection of Peter Sheridan and Jan Hatch

The following selection of tracks can be heard accompanying this display:

Episode 1 of *Dad and Dave from Snake Gully* 1937

Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia and Grace Gibson Productions

Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers with the Leo Reisman Orchestra, *Cheek to Cheek* c. 1935

Artie Shaw & His Orchestra, *Begin the Beguine* c. 1938

***Mortein* advertisements from the *Yes, what?* radio comedy c. 1938**

Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia and Grace Gibson Productions

Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, *Night and Day* c. 1934

Tommy Dorsey & His Orchestra, *All the Things You Are* c. 1939

Fred Astaire, *Puttin on the Ritz* c. 1930

Judy Garland, *Over the Rainbow* c. 1939

Art Tatum, *Tea for Two* c. 1939

Rudy Vallée, *As Time Goes By* c. 1931

Red Nichols & His Five Pennies, *I Got Rhythm* c. 1930

Ella Fitzgerald with Chick Webb & His Orchestra,
A-Tisket, A-Tasket c. 1938

Billie Holiday, *Strange Fruit* c. 1939

Jim Davidson's Dandies, *Along The Road To Gundagai*
c. 1938

Body culture

The terrible physical losses and psychological traumas of the First World War changed Australian society and prompted anxious concerns about the direction of the nation. For some this meant an inward-looking isolationism, a desire that Australian culture should develop independently and untouched by the 'degenerate' influences of Europe.

The search for rejuvenation frequently involved explorations of the capabilities and vulnerabilities of the human body. In the hands of artists, corporeal forms came to symbolise nationhood, most often expressed through references to the art of Classical Greece and mythological subjects. The evolution of a new Australian 'type' was also proposed in the 1930s – a white Australian drawn from British stock, but with an athletic and streamlined shape honed by time spent swimming and surfing on local beaches.

This art often has a distinctive quality to it, which in the light of history can sometimes make for disquieting viewing. With the terrible knowledge of how the Nazi Party in Germany subsequently used eugenics in its systematic slaughter of those with so-called 'bad blood', the Australian enthusiasm for 'body culture' can now seem problematic. Images of muscular nationalism soon lost their cache in Australia following the Second World War, tainted by undesirable fascistic overtones.

For kids

Lots of people were thinking about how the body should look in the 1930s. Some thought bodies should be athletic and strong.

Do you do running and swimming at your school?
What sort of activities can you see people doing in these pictures?

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Hot rhythm!

1936

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
William Kimpton Bequest, 2016

2016.397

In this work, Max Dupain has the shadow of a slide trombone seemingly bisect the naked body of a woman in a photograph that, in the context of his known views, is less an erotic celebration of modern jazz culture and nightlife than a comment on the disruptive nature of modernity.

Olive Cotton

Australia 1911–2003

Max after surfing

1939, printed 1998

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of Optus Communications Pty Limited,
Member, 1998

1998.251

Olive Cotton was a pioneering Australian modernist photographer of the 1930s and 1940s. After completing her university studies in 1934 she pursued her interest in photography and began working as an assistant in Max Dupain's commercial photography studio. This sensual portrait of Dupain was taken around the time of their brief marriage. Her use of dramatic contrasts of light and shade focus attention upon Dupain's toned torso, which resembles a truncated classical sculpture.

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Birth of Venus

1939

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1983

NGA 83.1345

In 1938 Australian author William Baylebridge disparagingly wrote that the 'modern woman' was neglecting her role as a 'sacred vessel of maternity' by spending time in nightclubs rather than childrearing. Dupain seems to have endorsed this (not uncommon) criticism by creating an allegorical image showing a heavily pregnant woman alongside busts of the Venus of Melos, in a photograph that suggests the 'proper' role of Anglo-Celtic women in continuing the genetic continuance of the Classical inheritance.

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Night with her train of stars and her gift of sleep

1936–37

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

William Kimpton Bequest, 2016

2016.398

Referring to Edward Hughes's 1912 Symbolist work of the same name, Max Dupain has replaced the painter's dark-winged goddess of the night, who tries to calm the putti (or 'stars') that cling to her, with an updated modern version in which city lights replace starlight. The symbolism of the giant breast that towers over the electric lights of the urban landscape suggests an inversion of the natural for the man-made. The personification of night refers to the Greek goddess Nyx, a powerful force born of Chaos, and the mother of children including Sleep, Death and Pain. Given his often gloomy assessment of modernity, Dupain's invocation of Nyx seems appropriate in the context.

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Impassioned clay

1936, printed 1970s

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

William Kimpton Bequest, 2016

2016.396

‘This real meaning, emotional stirring, this something in the dark subconscious of man ... I believe that “all” is there in the dark, powerful unknown of man and art to be the expressed release of this power.’

MAX DUPAIN, 1937

Dorothy Thornhill

England 1910 – Australia 1987, New Zealand 1920–29,
Australia from 1929

Neo-classical nudes

1932

oil on canvas

Collection of Fred and Elinor Wrobel, Sydney

Dorothy Thornhill

England 1910 – Australia 1987, New Zealand 1920–29,
Australia from 1929

Resting Diana

1931

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1977

NGA 77.640

The invocation of the Classical body as a modern prototype was a powerful idea in the 1930s. The Graeco-Roman goddess Diana, the virgin patron goddess of the hunt, was popularly invoked as an ideal of female perfection, and represented with a slender and athletic physique. Dorothy Thornhill's Diana is a remarkable visualisation of such a 'modern Diana', her angular body and defined musculature reflecting the masculinisation of female bodies at this time. She is a formidable presence, the quiver of arrows slung nonchalantly across her shoulders a trophy of her victory over the male gender.

Daphne Mayo

Australia 1895–1982, England 1919–23, France 1923–25

A young Australian

1930, cast 1931

bronze, marble

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Purchased 1930

701.a-b

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Souvenir of Cronulla

1937

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria
with the assistance of National Australia Bank Limited,
Honorary Life Benefactor, 1992

PH11-1992

In the 1930s Max Dupain responded to Henri Bergson's book *Creative Evolution* (1907) in which he considered creativity and intuition as central to the renewed development of society, and the artist as prime possessor of these powers. Vitalism, as this philosophy was termed, was believed to be expressed through polarised sexual energies. In this work Dupain focuses on the sexually differentiated 'energies' of men and women, associating women with the forces of nature.

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Discus thrower

1937, printed c. 1939

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 2003

2003.455

Jean Broome-Norton

Australia 1911–2002

Hippolyta and the Amazons defeating Theseus

1933

patinated plaster, wood

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of the Helen M. Schutt Trust, Governor, 2000

2000.52.a-c

One of the most talented of the 'Hoff school' of sculptors was Jean Broome-Norton, who studied with Rayner Hoff between 1929 and 1934, and subsequently worked as Hoff's studio assistant. In Greek mythology Hippolyta was a queen of the Amazons, a race of fierce and independent female warriors. With her proud bearing and athletic physique, Broome-Norton's female nude is strong and in control, a radical departure from the soft, passive nudes of earlier eras. This work is a celebration of female strength, created at a time when women were gaining social freedoms and their place in society was changing.

Arthur Murch

Australia 1902–89, Europe 1936–40

The idle hour

1933

oil on canvas on hardboard

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Purchased 1933 (1933.873)

With the rise of the eugenic movement in the interwar period, the emphasis on woman as a child bearer returned. The supposed sanctity of motherhood is alluded to by Arthur Murch, whose image of a mother and her children makes direct reference to depictions of the Madonna and Child. During the 1930s Murch developed a style in which he incorporated the classical tradition of European art into his depictions of contemporary life. The unusual circular or 'tondo' format of this painting reflects his admiration of early Renaissance art.

Arthur Murch

Australia 1902–89, Europe 1936–40

Beach idyll

1930

tempera on canvas on plywood

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Purchased with assistance from the Visual Arts
Board Australia Council Contemporary Art
Purchase Grant 1975

57.1975

Marjorie Fletcher

Australia 1912–88

Lewis

1934

synthetic polymer paint on plaster

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Gift of Margaret Bennett, Ranald McGregor and Ken Price
through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation
Collectors Club 2002

20018S7

During the interwar years, sculpture in Sydney was dominated by English immigrant artist Rayner Hoff, whose work was based on a blend of Neoclassicism and Art Deco stylisation. At the East Sydney Technical College Hoff was an inspiring and influential teacher, around whom a school of predominately female students formed, including Marjorie Fletcher, Barbara Tribe and Jean Broome-Norton. Through their depiction of youthful and healthy bodies, their works reflected Hoff's interests in Vitalism – a doctrine that rejected the intellect in favour of 'life forces'.

Keast Burke

New Zealand 1896 – Australia 1974, Australia from 1904

Harvest

c. 1940

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gerstl Bequest, 2000

2000.188

Keast Burke

New Zealand 1896 – Australia 1974, Australia from 1904

Husbandry 1

c. 1940

gelatin silver photograph

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Gift of Iris Burke 1989

95.1996

Jean Broome-Norton

Australia 1911–2002

Abundance

1934

plaster, bronze patination

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of ICI Australia Limited, Fellow, 1994

S4-1994

Marjorie Fletcher

Australia 1912–88

Kathleen

1933, cast 2001

bronze

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Gift of Margaret Bennett, Ranald McGregor and Ken Price
through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation
Collectors Club 2002

20028S6

Christian Waller

Australia 1894–1954, England and Europe 1929–39,
United States 1939–40

The Great breath – a book of seven designs

1932

Artist's book: linocut, 12 leaves, cloth over cardboard cover, silk cord binding, ed. 2/150
printed and bound by the artist

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Ms Klytie Pate, Member, 1999

(1999.151)

Christian Waller was profoundly influenced by Theosophy, a quasi-religious spiritualist movement that synthesised elements of science, religion and philosophy with mysticism and the occult. Founded in the late nineteenth century, Theosophy enjoyed considerable popularity in Australia after the First World War. The seven linocuts in Waller's *Great Breath* represent stages of the spiritual evolution of humanity according to Theosophical belief: from the earthly materialist origins to a transcendent future of spiritual enlightenment. Waller was best known for her stained-glass windows and printmaking, her works combining medieval imagery with an angular Art Deco style.

Christian Waller

Australia 1894–1954, England and Europe 1929–39,
United States 1939–40

The Gates of Dawn: a book made for the young

1932, re-published 1977

book: 50 pages plus endpapers, linocuts and letterpress
printed in red and black ink on buff paper, cloth over
cardboard cover, stitched binding, ed. 601/1000
originally published by The Golden Arrow Press,
Melbourne; this edition designed by William Pate, printed
by Brown Prior Anderson, published by Richard Griffin,
Gryphon Books, Melbourne

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Shaw Research Library

Sun and surf

The beach was a complex location in the Australian creative imagination. It was a democratic site in which the trappings of wealth and position were abandoned as people stripped down to their bathers. It was a place of hedonistic pleasures that offered sensuous engagement with sun and surf, and a primitive landscape where natural forces restored the bodies of those depleted by modern life. It was a playground for the tourist that was considered distinctively Australian. As war loomed again in the late 1930s, it was also a pseudo-militaristic zone in which the lifesaver was honed for 'battle' in the surf.

The lifesavers that helped protect the beach-going public were regularly praised as physical exemplars who could build the eugenic stock of the nation. As the Second World War approached, the connection of these trained lifesavers to military servicemen also became painfully apparent.

Male lifesavers were used by artists in promoting Australia to tourists: a poster commemorating the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932 positioned the lifesaver as the quintessential representative of Australian manhood. Douglas Annand and Arthur Whitmore's virile lifesaver proudly gestures towards the new bridge, his muscles as strong and protective as the steel girders that span the harbour.

For kids

Lifesavers, who looked after people at the beach, were admired for their athletic bodies. They were often painted and photographed by artists, and the pictures were used to encourage people from other countries to visit Australia.

Do you go to the beach with your family?

Can you find a window with a woman lifesaver in it?

Douglas Annand

Australia 1903–76

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Australia

c. 1937

colour and process lithograph

Australian National Maritime Museum

Purchased, 1991

00015603

Douglas Annand was at the forefront of modern graphic design in the 1930s. He collaborated with photographer Max Dupain on numerous occasions, incorporating Dupain's photographs into his innovative modernist posters which featured photomontage, geometric design and bold typefaces. Beginning his career in Brisbane, in 1931 Annand relocated to Sydney, where he worked for leading publications. He designed the ceiling for the Australian Pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Exhibition, and in 1939 was art director of the Australian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair.

Douglas Annand

Australia 1903–76

Arthur Whitmore

Australia 1910–65

Sydney Bridge celebrations

1932

colour lithograph

Australian National Maritime Museum

Purchased, 1991

00009341

J. Noel Kilgour

Australia 1900–87, England 1932–39

Manly lifesavers

c. 1940

oil on canvas

Collection of Fred and Elinor Wrobel, Sydney

Tom Purvis

England 1888–1959

**Australia's 150th Anniversary
Celebrations**

c. 1938

colour lithograph

Courtesy of Josef Lebovic Gallery, Sydney

Proposed acquisition

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

The carnival at Bondi

1938

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Purchased 1982

NGA 82.1107

‘The lifesaving teams ... are splendid examples of the physique, resourcefulness and vitality of our youth and manhood. They are typical of the outdoor life which Australians lead and they are living testimonies to the value of surfing and the vigor and stamina of our race.’

DAILY EXAMINER, JULY 1935

Unknown, Melbourne

Female lifesaver, window

c. 1935

stained glass, lead

Williamstown Swimming and Life Saving Club, Williamstown
Donated by Councillor R. T. Bell

Although much was made of the 'gods of the golden sand', as one poet glowingly described lifesavers, lifesaving clubs were not entirely male in membership. Women lifesavers also made their mark, albeit in more limited numbers and with much less recognition. At the Williamstown Lifesaving Club in Melbourne a woman lifesaver was included in this fine and very rare stained-glass window that, along with its counterpart featuring a male lifesaver, graced the newly established clubhouse around 1935.

Unknown, Melbourne

Male lifesaver, window

c. 1935

stained glass, lead

Williamstown Swimming and Life Saving Club, Williamstown
Donated by Councillor J. Dennis

'On golden and milky sands, bodily excellence is displayed the year round, clearly defined by the sun in an atmosphere as viewless and benign as the air of Hellas as described by Euripides.'

J. S. MACDONALD, 1931

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Manly

1938, printed c. 1986

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased from funds donated by Hallmark Cards

Australia Pty Ltd, 1987

PH193-1987

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

On the beach. Man, woman, boy

1938

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Purchased 1982

NGA 82.1104

Showing a naked family on the beach, Max Dupain's work is a perfect illustration of social concerns of the times. As Australia moved closer to engagement in another world war, fears about the poor physical fitness of the population were debated, with a 'national fitness' campaign instituted by the government in 1938. Dupain's father, George, was one of the country's first physical educationalists, opening the Dupain Institute of Physical Education and Medical Gymnastics in 1900 and writing extensively on the subject of health and fitness. Max Dupain attended the gym and was well versed in contemporary concerns about fitness.

Eric Wilson

Australia 1911–46, England 1937–39

Self-portrait as a bather posing ready to dive

1937

black pencil

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1977

NGA 77.350.2

This was one of six works submitted by twenty-six-year-old Eric Wilson for the New South Wales Travelling Art Scholarship in 1937. The unusual pose was intended to demonstrate Wilson's abilities in foreshortening and knowledge of anatomy, and fulfilled the competition's requirement to submit a drawing from life. Wilson's attire, however, does not represent contemporary swimwear. In the 1930s government regulations still promoted the one-piece swimsuit for men, although by the end of the decade trunks had increased in popularity and men would appear topless on beaches.

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Sunbaker

1938, printed c. 1975

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with the assistance of the

Visual Arts Board, 1976

PH216-1976

Taken on a camping trip near Culburra, on the Shoalhaven River in New South Wales, in January 1938, Max Dupain's original version of the *Sunbaker* was a much darker image that existed at the time only in an album gifted to his friend Chris Van Dyke. Dupain lost the original negative and printed this variant version in 1975 for an exhibition. It is an image that is now considered an icon in Australian photography, and has come to represent key values of the interest in 'body culture', celebrating health and fitness in the context of the beach.

Gert Sellheim

Russia (of German parents) 1901 – Australia 1970,
Australia from 1926

The seaside calls – go by train – take a Kodak

1930s

colour lithograph

printed by F. W. Niven, Melbourne

State Library Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mr Grant Lee, 2007

H2008.73/50

Gert Sellheim was born to German parents in Estonia, at that time part of the Russian Empire. After studying architecture in Europe he travelled to Western Australia in 1926, before settling in Melbourne in 1931, where he began working as an industrial and commercial designer. Working for the Australian National Travel Association, Sellheim created a series of posters promoting beach holidays, which incorporated Art Deco motifs and typography. His most famous design is the flying kangaroo logo for Qantas, which he created in 1947.

Douglas Annand (attributed to)

Australia 1903–76

Follow the sun – Australia's 150th Anniversary celebrations

1938

colour lithograph and photolithograph

Courtesy of Josef Lebovic Gallery, Sydney

The 1930s were the heyday of the travel poster. Posters were commissioned by railway and tourism groups or shipping companies and airlines to promote Australian holiday destinations, both at home and overseas. The Australian National Travel Association was formed in 1929 to promote Australia to overseas markets. As part of its strategy it commissioned posters from leading graphic artists, such as Percy Trompf, James Northfield and Douglas Annand. From the late 1920s Australia began to actively promote itself to the world by using the beach, sun and surf as motifs.

Twenty-seven teams line up in spectacular surf carnival

1936

black and white film transferred to media player, 1 min. 33
sec. silent (looped)

Courtesy of National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Canberra and Cinesound Movietone
Productions

Pastoral landscapes

Along with the beach, another national myth evolved around the Australian bush. Although most Australians lived in cities, in the years following the First World War the nation became increasingly informed by a mythology centred on the bush and the landscape. For those who considered the modern city a profoundly depleting force, the bush was a touchstone of traditional 'values'. It was nostalgically conceived of as an idyllic natural realm whose soil, literally and metaphorically, sustained its people. Both the classical Pastoral ideal of a land in which only sheep and cattle roam, and the Georgic tradition, which celebrated the achievements of agriculture, became dominant themes in landscape art.

Pastoral landscapes were admired above all as representing the antithesis of 'decadent' modern life. As art critic and gallery director J. S. Macdonald wrote, such art would 'point the way in which life should be lived in Australia, with the maximum of flocks and the minimum of factories'. With their emphasis on farming and pastoral industries, such works affirmed white landownership, with Indigenous people largely absent.

For kids

Many artists painted pictures of farms and the countryside. Sometimes their paintings included images of animals.

What sorts of animals can you see?

Do you have any animals at your house?

Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003, England and Italy 1934–37

Ruth

1933

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
South Australian Government Grant 1934

0.810

Nora Heysen grew up in Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills. In 1933 she held her first exhibition, which included several portraits modelled by a young girl from a neighbouring farm. Titled *Ruth*, after the Old Testament figure who was closely associated with the barley harvest, Heysen's painting constructs a feminine presence in the Australian pastoral landscape. In the figure's pose and arid landscape setting, *Ruth* also makes reference to George Lambert's famous portrayal of an Anzac soldier *A sergeant of the Light Horse*, 1920, considered an icon of Australian masculinity.

John Rowell

Australia 1894–1973

Blue hills

c. 1936

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1936

322-4

The Squatter's Daughter

1933

black and white film transferred to media player, 104 min.,
sound (excerpts, looped)

directed and produced by Ken G. Hall for Cinesound
Productions

Courtesy of National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Canberra and Cinesound Movietone
Productions

The Squatter's Daughter was an Australian melodrama starring Jocelyn Howarth. It was based on a 1907 play by Bert Bailey and Edmund Duggan, which was originally adapted for the screen in 1910. A story of rival sheep stations and the strong-willed squatter's daughter who wants to unite them, this was one of the most popular Australian films of the 1930s.

Hilda Rix Nicholas

Australia 1884–1961, Europe 1911–18

The shepherd of Knockalong

1933

oil on canvas

Collection of Peter Rix, Sydney, courtesy of Deutscher & Hackett

Depicting the artist's husband and young son, *The shepherd of Knockalong* is a reminder of the traditional importance of the wool industry to the nation's economy. With his legs firmly connected to the ground and pictured as a large figure dominating the landscape setting, the farmer is the benign owner and 'shepherd' of the land spreading out behind him, the presence of his young son ensuring dynastic succession. At a time when Aboriginal people were confined to reservations and denied citizenship, Hilda Rix Nicholas's painting can also be considered as an assertion of the British colonisers' right to ownership of Australia.

Percy Trompf

Australia 1902–64

Western Australia

c. 1936

colour lithograph

Courtesy of Josef Lebovic Gallery, Sydney

Hilda Rix Nicholas

Australia 1884–1961, Europe 1911–18

The fair musterer

c. 1935

oil on canvas

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Purchased 1971

1:1178

As a young artist Hilda Rix Nicholas had a successful career in France before returning to Australia after the First World War. In 1934, several years after the birth of her son, Rix Nicholas returned to painting and depicted her new life living on the family property Knockalong, on the Monaro Plains in New South Wales. Depicting the governess of her young son holding the reins of her horse, dog at her feet, and sheep in the distance, in *The fair musterer* Rix Nicholas claims for women an active role in the masculine world of pastoral Australia.

Freda Robertshaw

Australia 1916–97

The picnic

1938

oil on canvas

Benalla Art Gallery, Benalla
Bennet Bequest, 1998

1998.12

While the most successful painters of pastoral landscapes were predominately male artists, there were some prominent exceptions, including Hilda Rix Nicholas, Nora Heysen and Freda Robertshaw. After completing her studies at East Sydney Technical College in 1937, Robertshaw worked as a studio assistant to Charles Meere. While her paintings closely resemble Meere's hard-edged, Neoclassical style, Robertshaw invariably made women the central focus of her scenes from contemporary life. Here she depicts the Australian landscape as a place of leisure for mothers and their children, the labour of the male figure having made the land bountiful.

William Rowell

Australia 1898–1946

Evening landscape

1938

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Bequest of Thelma Rowell, widow of the artist
William Rowell, 1996

2010.506

From the late 1920s onwards there was growing interest in the landscapes of central Australia, and an increasing number of artists made painting trips to the area. In June 1938 Melbourne artist William Rowell was a member of an expedition that included Albert Namatjira, fellow Melbourne artists Rex Battarbee and John Gardner, and the writers Charles Jarrett and R. H. Croll. The group travelled for several weeks in the country around Hermannsburg. *Evening landscape* shows the two camels that carried the group's supplies and was included in Rowell's exhibition in Melbourne in October 1938.

Elioth Gruner

New Zealand 1882 – Australia 1939, Australia from 1883

Bellinger pastoral

1937

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1940

1079-4

In the interwar period pastoral painting was the most highly regarded genre within Australian art, championed by conservative critics and supported by the art establishment. Sydney artist Elioth Gruner was among the most successful landscape artists of his time, winning the prestigious Wynne Prize for landscape painting in 1934, 1936 and 1937. With few exceptions, public galleries, including the National Gallery of Victoria, did not collect modern works. They instead preferred to acquire traditional works, such as Gruner's *Bellinger pastoral* and John Rowell's *Blue hills*.

Gert Sellheim

Russia (of German parents) 1901 – Australia 1970,
Australia from 1926

Spring in the Grampians

1930s

colour photolithograph

State Library Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased 2000

H2000.209

Robert E. Coates

United States born 1939

Photographs of Australian Pavilion at New York World's Fair

1939

digital images, looped

Courtesy of Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney

The Australian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair projected an image of Australia as a young and healthy nation, a place of industry, sport and tourism. Designed by John Oldham of Sydney architectural firm Stephenson & Turner, the modern design of the building was complemented by Douglas Annand's interior displays featuring the latest graphic design, and audio-visual and photomontage techniques. These photographs of the Australian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair were taken by commercial photographer Robert E. Coates.

The expressive body: dance in Australia

If modern art encapsulated the ideals and conflicting forces of the early twentieth century, then modern dance embodied its restless vitality and the quest for a different kind of subjectivity and expression. To many, modern dance is the pivotal art form for a mid twentieth century concerned with plasticity, the expressive body and tensions between the individual and its collective formation.

The decade of the 1930s is framed by the 1928–29 tour of Anna Pavlova's dance company and the three tours of the remnant Ballets Russes companies (1936–37, 1938–39, 1939–40) that excited many aspiring modernist artists. These tours sowed the seeds for subsequent ballet narratives in Australia, because the eruption of war in 1939 meant that Ballets Russes dancers, including Helene Kirsova and Edouard Borovansky, stayed in the country and established ballet companies. While trained in Russian dance technique, these artists were also influenced by the aesthetics of change in European art and dance that included new bodily techniques, dynamic movement patterns and modern technologies. It was the individual dancers of modern dance, however, including Louise Lightfoot and Sonia Revid, who produced the expressive intensity of a more autonomous art of movement.

For kids

Modern dancing was a very popular way to tell stories. Dancers and important ballet groups visited Australia from overseas, and this was very exciting for lots of artists. When the Second World War started in 1939, many of the ballet dancers who were in Australia decided to stay here and open up their own dance schools.

Do you like to dance? Have you ever been to a dance class?

Dickinson – Monteath Studio, Melbourne

Australia 1920–54

Sonia Revid in a white dress, posing against a fabric panel

1933

gelatin silver photograph

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
Gift of Rosa Ribush, 1978

1978.002.001

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

**Ballet (Emmy Towsey and Evelyn
Ippen, Bodenwieser Dancers
performing Waterlilies)**

1937, printed c. 1939

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 2003

2003.456

Andre, Melbourne

active 1930s–40s

Sonia Revid posing against a wall

1934

gelatin silver photograph

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
Gift of Edward H. Pask, 1984

1984.010.042

Roger Kemp

Australia 1908–87

Ballet painting

c. 1936–40

oil and pencil on cardboard

Private collection, Melbourne

Like many others, as a young artist Roger Kemp was enthralled by the productions of Wassily de Basil's Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo when it toured Australia in 1936. He attended numerous performances and rehearsals, and made drawings in his sketchbook. In Kemp's highly energised ballet paintings the bodies of the dancers merge with their surroundings to create a dynamic fusion of colour and rhythmic forms. It is some of the most advanced painting produced in Melbourne at that time.

Nanette Kuehn

Germany 1911 – Australia 1980, Australia from 1937

Borislav Runanine and Tamara Grigorieva in Jeux D'Enfants, original Ballets Russes, Australian tour

1939–40

gelatin silver photograph

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
The Australian Ballet Collection.
Gift of The Australian Ballet, 1998

1998.023.2075

Nanette Kuehn

Germany 1911– Australia 1980, Australia from 1937

Roman Jasinsky in Le Mariage d'Aurore (Aurora's Wedding), original Ballets Russes, Sydney

1939–40

gelatin silver photograph

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
The Australian Ballet Collection.
Gift of The Australian Ballet, 1998

1998.023.1248

Nanette Kuehn

Germany 1911 – Australia 1980, Australia from 1937

Tatiana Riabouchinska and dancers in Le Coq d'Or, Covent Garden Russian Ballet 1938–39

1938–39

gelatin silver photograph

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
The Australian Ballet Collection.
Gift of The Australian Ballet, 1998

1998.023.2954

Hugh P. Hall

Australia 1899–1967

**Roman Jasinsky and Dimitri Rostoff in
Icare, original Ballets Russes**

1940

platinum photograph

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
The Australian Ballet Collection. Gift of
The Australian Ballet, 1998

1998.023.1073

Choreographed by Serge Lifar in 1935, *Icare* arrived with the second Ballets Russes company to tour Australia, from 1939 to 1940, the Colonel de Basil's original Ballets Russes. For the Australian tour a new production was created and a young Australian artist, Sidney Nolan, was chosen to create the sets and costumes. The linear designs on the Grecian costumes and the cut-out wings suggest the inspiration of Surrealist artist Giorgio de Chirico, who also created designs for the Ballets Russes. At only twenty-three, this opportunity for Nolan to create theatrical imagery that was part symbolic and part human perhaps established his future search for Australian symbolic landscapes.

Jack Cato

Australia 1889–1971, England 1909–14, South Africa
1914–20

Helene Kirsova and Igor Youskevitch in *Les Presages*, Monte Carlo Russian Ballet

1936–37

gelatin silver photograph

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
The Australian Ballet Collection.
Gift of The Australian Ballet, 1998

1998.023.2241

Choreographed by Léonide Massine in 1933, *Les Presages (Destiny)* was a popular and avant-garde work during the Ballets Russes tours to Australia in 1936–37. It was one of the first contemporary ballets to be choreographed to an existing musical score, Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*. Portrayed in this picture are two principal dancers from the Monte Carlo Ballets Russes: Hélène Kirsova, who remained in Australia and formed her own ballet company in Sydney in the early 1940s, and Igor Youskevitch, who became a leading American ballet dancer, appearing here in the role of the Hero.

Max Dupain

Australia 1911-92

Irina Bondireva in Midnight Sun

Tamara Tchinarova in Presages

published in Art in Australia, February 15, 1937

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Shaw Research Library

Do slum children distinguish light from dark?

c. 1936

written by Sonia Revid, printed and published by Ruskin Press, Melbourne

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
Gift of Edward H. Pask, 1984

1984.010.032

Programme for Lady Capricious and her moods, Portrayal of Human Experience, Bushfire Drama, and Fantasia

1940

for the suite of dances choreographed and performed by
Sonia Revid, Little Theatre,
Melbourne, April 1940

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
Gift of Edward H. Pask, 1984

1984.010.030

Fighting occupational fatigue

c. 1938

written by Sonia Revid, printed and published by Ruskin Press, Melbourne

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
Gift of Edward H. Pask, 1984

1984.010.031

Ewan Murray-Will

active 1930s

Ballets Russes in Australia

c. 1939

black and white film transferred to media player, 57 sec.,
silent (looped)

Courtesy of National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Canberra

The aesthetic appeal of the Ballets Russes dancers included their svelte and eloquent bodies as well as their sophisticated social tastes. As a result the company attracted many admirers, not only among artists such as Sidney Nolan and Roger Kemp or photographers such as Max Dupain, but also local intellectuals, philanthropists and business people. The Sydney dermatologist Ewan Murray-Will formed a close friendship with several members of the Ballets Russes, and recorded invaluable home-movie footage of their performances and of informal occasions, such as this film clip showing visits to the beach.

Evelyn Ippen designer and maker
active in Australia 1930s

Dress for Slavonic Dances

1939

cotton, silk (velvet) (appliqué), elastic, metal (zip)
for a production of the Bodenwieser Ballet,
choreographed by Gertrud Bodenwieser

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
Bodenwieser Collection. Gift of Barbara Cuckson, 2000
2000.004.013

The Slavonic Dances were choreographed by Gertrud Bodenwieser to represent what she described as the 'vigour and passionate feelings of the Slavonic people', and toured with her first company in Australia in 1939. Loosely using folk-dance motifs, this ensemble work would have been a stylish crowd-pleaser in contrast to more serious dances. The appliqué and colourful flower motifs on this dress are similar to designs by Natalia Goncharova for the Ballets Russes, although the simplified appeal of its 'red bodice, long, swirling skirt, and gathered white sleeves' were probably designed by one of the company dancers, Evelyn Ippen.

Alfred Kunz designer and maker
active in Australia 1930s

Top and Pants for The Masks of Lucifer 1936

cotton, elastic, metal (fasteners)
for a production of the Bodenwieser Ballet,
choreographed by Gertrud Bodenwieser

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
Bodenwieser Collection. Gift of Barbara Cuckson, 2000
2000.004.016, 2000.004.036

The Masks of Lucifer was a full-length dance-drama choreographed by Gertrud Bodenwieser in 1936, in response to the rise of fascism in Europe. The figures of 'Intrigue', 'Terror' and 'Hate' appear in succession as Satan in this choreography danced to original music by composer Marcel Lorber. Its graphic, asymmetric costumes allowed the dancers to give full force to their interlocking gestures, and the precise rhythmic lines of movement. Notably, Bodenwieser's dancers were all women, and yet the costumes regularly included revealing shorts and shape-fitting trousers.

Demon Machine

choreographed by Gertrud Bodenwieser, excerpt from *Spotlight on Australian Ballet*, written, edited and directed by Doc K. Sternberg, and produced for the National Film Board

1948

black and white film transferred to media player, 1 min. 22 sec., sound (looped)

Courtesy of National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Canberra

The endeavour to portray mechanical motion through human movement connects to a widespread vogue during the 1920s of fascination and horror about the way in which machines were taking over the modern world. Choreographed by Gertrud Bodenwieser, the dominating power of *Demon Machine* (1924) was performed by an all-women ensemble and regarded by critics, such as Arnold Haskell, as 'awesome and terrifying'.

For Bodenwieser, the liberatory potential of dance involved discovering both harmony and dissonance, beauty and the grotesque. In *Demon Machine*, the thrust of the dancers' expressive potential is captured within the dynamics of a rhythmic structure that overwhelms human beings through its enforced synchronicity.

When *Demon Machine* was commissioned from the London Casino Revue by J. C. Williamson, one troupe of Bodenwieser dancers was given a lifeline out of Austria, annexed by Hitler. This work and a set of Viennese waltzes toured Australia from 1930 to 1940; however, *Demon Machine* remained in repertoire throughout Bodenwieser's Australian career (1939–59) and was reconstructed by the Vienna State Opera in 1989–90.

Australia, Unknown photographer

Sonia Revid dancing on Brighton beach

c. 1935

Courtesy of State Library Victoria, Melbourne

Sonia Revid was one of the leading proponents of modern interpretative dance in Melbourne. Born in Latvia, she studied with the great dancer Mary Wigman in Germany before coming to Australia in 1932. Revid is credited with introducing the 'German Dance' to Australian audiences, and in the mid 1930s established the Sonia Revid School of Art and Body Culture in Collins Street. She composed her own dances, one of the best known being Bushfire drama (1940), based on the 1939 Victoria Bushfires.

Indigenous art and culture

During the 1930s Aboriginal people were often pejoratively referred to as a 'dying race'. The Australian Government continued to enforce a 'divide and rule' assimilationist policy. Determined by eugenics, this entailed removing Aboriginal people of mixed descent from their families and reserves, and absorbing them into the dominant society, with consequent loss of their own language and customary ritual practices. Increasingly during this period, Aboriginal people formed their own organisations and agitated for full citizenship rights.

This was also a decade that saw increasing awareness of, and interest in, Indigenous art. Albert Namatjira astonished Melbourne audiences at his first solo exhibition at the Athenaeum Gallery in 1938. Comprising forty-one watercolour paintings, all of his works sold within three days of the opening. The following year the Art Gallery of South Australia purchased one of Namatjira's works. Indigenous art also inspired non-Indigenous artists, including Margaret Preston and Frances Derham who appropriated design elements in their works. The idea of 'Aboriginalism', in which settlers sought an Australian identity in the context of Britishness and the Empire, saw artists travelling to the outback to paint and sketch subjects they believed connected them to Indigenous history.

For kids

During the 1930s Aboriginal people were treated badly by the government, so they formed groups and defended their rights. Many people became aware of Indigenous art, and an artist named Albert Namatjira had a big exhibition of watercolour paintings. All of his paintings sold in three days!

Albert Namatjira

Arrernte 1902–59

Haasts Bluff Range

c. 1937

watercolour

Museums Victoria, Melbourne
Harry R. Balfour Collection

X088325

In the past some critics considered Albert Namatjira's European-style landscapes derivative and evidence of the loss of his own culture. It is now recognised that his watercolours are an affirmation of his connection to Country. Gumatj leader Galarrwuy Yunupingu has written that Namatjira's paintings demonstrate to the rest of the world 'the living title held by his people to the lands they had been on for thousands of years'.

Albert Namatjira

Arrernte 1902–59

**Boomerang, Koporilya Springs
pipeline**

c. 1935

pokerwork on mulga wood

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Dimity Reed, 2010

2010.27

Albert Namatjira

Arrernte 1902–59

Mt Giles

1936

synthetic polymer paint on beanwood (*Erythrina
vespertilio*)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Kevin Grover in memory of his father
Montague Grover, 2006

2006.20

Albert Namatjira

Arrernte 1902–59

**Ajantzi waterhole, south of Mt Liebig,
Western MacDonnell Ranges**

c. 1937

watercolour over pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Helen Carnegie, 1995

1995.654

Albert Namatjira

Arrernte 1902–59

Central Mount Wedge from MacDonnell Ranges

c. 1937

watercolour over pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Helen Carnegie, 1995

1995.653

Albert Namatjira was born on Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission in central Australia in 1902 and was the first Aboriginal artist to achieve widespread renown. In 1935 he began painting in watercolours following his contact with visiting Melbourne artists Rex Battarbee and John Gardner. Namatjira quickly became well known after he began exhibiting his watercolours in the late 1930s. In 1957 he and his wife were granted conditional citizenship, a right denied to Indigenous Australians at the time. Yet Namatjira encountered discrimination throughout his life and he was prevented from purchasing land.

Albert Namatjira

Arrernte 1902–59

**Woomera, Mount Sonder, MacDonnell
Ranges**

1937

watercolour on wood, spinifex resin, sinew

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through the NGV Foundation in memory
of Mr and Mrs F. A. McLaughlin by Maurine Fraser,
Member, 2006

2006.19

Albert Namatjira

Arrernte 1902–59

**Mereenie Bluff Range, Western
MacDonnell Ranges**

c. 1937

watercolour over pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Helen Carnegie, 1995

1995.652

Catalogue for the exhibition of watercolours by Albert Namatjira, an Australian Aboriginal of the Arunta tribe, Central Australia

1938

held at the Fine Arts Society, Exhibition St, Melbourne

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

RARELTP A821.2 C879CAL

In December 1938 Albert Namatjira held his first solo exhibition at the Fine Art Society Gallery in Melbourne which was opened by the wife of the Governor of Victoria. The exhibition was hugely successful, with all forty-one watercolours (including this work) sold in the first week. The following year the Art Gallery of South Australia purchased a watercolour from Namatjira's next solo exhibition in Adelaide.

Nora Heysen illustrator

Australia 1911–2003, England and Italy 1934–37

Woggheeguy: Australian Aboriginal Legends

collected by Catherine Stow (K. Langloh Parker),
published by F. W. Preece, Adelaide 1930
1930

book: 98 pages, offset lithographs from original pen,
ink and wash drawings, and letterpress

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

RAREJKP 398.20994 P22W

William Ricketts

Australia 1899–1993

Kangaroo men

late 1930s

earthenware

Collection of John Stephens, Coffs Harbour

During the early 1930s Melbourne ceramic artist William Ricketts was introduced to F. J. Gillen's book *The Arunta* (1927) and thereafter made Aboriginal people his principal subject. An ardent conservationist, Ricketts developed a personal mysticism based upon his understanding of Aboriginal spirituality and connection with the land. In 1934 he held his first exhibition of ceramics, including his totemic 'kangaroo-man' figures, which he intended to represent the unity of all life. The following year Ricketts purchased land in the Dandenong Ranges, where he established a nature reserve that he populated with terracotta sculptures of Aboriginal people.

William Ricketts

Australia 1899–1993

Jug

c. 1934

porcelain

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with
the assistance of Mobil Oil Australia Limited, Fellow, 1991

D13-1991

William Ricketts

Australia 1899–1993

Bowl

1937

earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1980

D382-1980

Margaret Preston

Australia 1875–1963, Germany and France 1904–07,
France, England and Ireland 1912–19

Shoalhaven Gorge, New South Wales

c. 1940–41

oil and gouache on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with funds donated from the
Estate of Dr Donald Wright, 2008

2008.19

During the 1920s Margaret Preston considered Aboriginal art a source of good design in the decoration of household items. In the 1930s her study of Aboriginal culture intensified, as she developed a greater interest in its anthropological and cosmological elements. In 1940 Preston travelled to the Northern Territory to study Aboriginal art. On her return she developed a more explicit Aboriginal style in paintings featuring earthy tones, strong black outlines and patterns of dots and lines.

Frances Derham

Australia 1894–1987, New Zealand and Ireland 1902–08

Kangaroo (at the zoo)

c. 1931

linocut printed in brown ink on Chinese paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mr Richard Hodgson Derham, 1988

P54-1988

Frances Derham

Australia 1894–1987, New Zealand and Ireland 1902–08

Aboriginal hunter

1930

linocut printed in brown ink on tissue paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mr Richard Hodgson Derham, 1988

P63-1988

Frances Derham

Australia 1894–1987, New Zealand and Ireland 1902–08

Kangaroo and Aboriginal motifs

1925–40

linocut printed in brown ink on buff paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mr Richard Hodgson Derham, 1988

P56-1988

Best known as a progressive educator and advocate of children's art, Frances Derham was also an active member of the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria, and with potter Allan Lowe shared Margaret Preston's interest in the appropriation of Indigenous art. From the mid 1920s Derham began to incorporate Aboriginal motifs into her linocuts and in 1929, synchronous with the exhibition *Australian Aboriginal Art* at the Museum of Victoria, Derham presented a lecture to the Arts and Crafts Society, entitled 'The Interest of Aboriginal Art to the Modern Designer'.

Frances Derham

Australia 1894–1987, New Zealand and Ireland 1902–08

The Aboriginal artist

1931

colour linocut on Japanese paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mr Richard Hodgson Derham, 1988

P59-1988

Gert Sellheim

Russia (of German parents) 1901 – Australia 1970,
Australia from 1926

Corroboree Australia

1934

colour lithograph

printed by F. W. Niven, Melbourne

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of the Australian National Travel Association, 1934

H94.61

Margaret Preston

Australia 1875–1963, Germany and France 1904–07,
France, England and Ireland 1912–19

Aboriginal design – The hunt

1940

woodcut hand coloured with gouache

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with funds donated from the
Estate of Dr Donald Wright, 2008

2008.115

Interest in Aboriginal art increased significantly throughout the 1930s, culminating in 1941 with its inclusion in an important survey exhibition of Australian art that toured the United States and Canada. Sydney artist Margaret Preston was a prominent supporter of Aboriginal art, arguing that it should be the basis of a distinctively Australian modern art. While Preston helped to change perceptions, her advocacy of the appropriation of Aboriginal art by others did not take into consideration the often sacred nature of these images or Aboriginal peoples' rights to the authorship and use of their works.

Arthur Murch

Australia 1902–89, Europe 1936–40

Visit to central Australia

1934

35 mm film transferred to DVD, silent, 16 min. 4 sec.
(excerpt)

Courtesy of National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Canberra and the Estate of Arthur Murch

Following his first trip to central Australia in early 1933, Arthur Murch undertook a second visit, with Professor Davies, for a period of three months in the summer of 1933–34. On this expedition he took a hand-cranked 35 mm camera and filmed life in and around Hermannsburg Mission, which is located in Western Aranda Country, approximately 125 kilometres from Alice Springs. The film was later screened at various venues across Victoria and proceeds from ticket sales were used to raise funds for the construction of a water pipeline to the mission.

Arthur Murch

Australia 1902–89, Europe 1936–40

Walila, Pintupi tribe

1934

pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1934

131-4

In 1933, on the invitation of Professor H. Whitridge Davies, Sydney artist Arthur Murch accompanied a research team from Sydney University to Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission, south-west of Alice Springs. Murch remained there for six weeks painting the landscapes and making portraits of Indigenous people. These were exhibited in Sydney soon after his return.

Arthur Murch

Australia 1902–89, Europe 1936–40

Luritja boy

1934

red and white crayon on grey paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1934

133-4

Percy Leason

Australia 1888 – United States 1959, United States from 1938

Mrs Clara Hunt

1934

oil on canvas

State Library Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mrs Isabelle Leason, 1969

H32096

Mrs Clara Hunt was born at Ramahyuck Station in 1872, the daughter of William Bull, known as Billy the Bull of Cunningham, and Emily Clark. A senior woman and noted weaver, Mrs Hunt was described by Percy Leason as both 'reluctant and shy'. Due to her seniority and position, Mrs Hunt remained fully clothed while sitting for Percy Leason, making her portrait unique. All other paintings in this series depict Aboriginal men and women in a state of undress.

Percy Leason

Australia 1888 – United States 1959, United States from 1938

Thomas Foster

1934

oil on canvas

State Library Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mrs Isabelle Leason, 1969

H32094

Thomas Foster was born at Coranderrk Station in 1882, the son of Edward Foster and Betsy Benfield. Foster's was one of the last portraits painted by Leason as part of the unfortunately titled exhibition *The Last of the Victorian Aborigines*. These portraits were debuted on 11 September at the Athenaeum Gallery in Collins Street, Melbourne, to great public acclaim. Foster, like most of Leason's subjects, appears shirtless, his arms folded behind his back, pushing forward his chest and clearly showing his scarification marks.

Makani Wilangarr (attributed to)

Mildjingi active 1930s

Djarrapung rarrk (Monsoonal Cloud design)

1937

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

The Donald Thomson Collection

Donated by Mrs Dorita Thomson to the University of Melbourne and on loan to Museums Victoria, Melbourne

DT000088

In 1935 Melbourne anthropologist Donald Thomson travelled to Eastern Arnhem Land to act as a mediator between the local Yolngu people and the government, following the killing of five Japanese fishermen and a local policeman in the Caledon Bay crisis of 1932. While undertaking fieldwork in Arnhem Land from 1935 to 1937, and again in 1940, Thomson collected approximately seventy bark paintings. These were specifically painted and gifted to him by the Yolngu as a means to communicate with non-Indigenous people about their culture and deep connection to Country.

Unknown

Walamangu active 1930s

Dhukurra dhaawu (Sacred clan story)

c. 1935

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*), resin

The Donald Thomson Collection

Donated by Mrs Dorita Thomson to the University of
Melbourne and on loan to Museums Victoria, Melbourne

DT000084

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, segregation was the main government policy regarding Aboriginal people. It was re-enforced by the 1909 *Aborigines Protection Act*, which gave the Aborigines Protection Board the power to control where Aboriginal people lived in New South Wales. In 1937 the Commonwealth Government adopted a policy of assimilation, whereby Aboriginal people of mixed descent were henceforth to be assimilated into white society, while others were confined to reserves. In 1931 Arnhem Land was declared an Aboriginal Reserve by the government and non-Indigenous entry into the region was restricted.

Tjam Yilkari Katani

Liyagalawumirr active 1930s

Wagilag dhaawu (Wagilag Sisters story)

1937

earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus sp.*)

The Donald Thomson Collection

Donated by Mrs Dorita Thomson to the University of
Melbourne and on loan to Museums Victoria, Melbourne

DT000058

For Yolgnu people, painting on bark or objects is intimately connected with painting on the body, and the Yolgnu term *barrawan* means both 'skin' and 'bark'. These paintings are transcriptions of the sacred designs that were painted onto men's bodies and convey the power of the Yolgnu ancestors whose actions created their world. The Wagilag Sisters Dreaming story chronicles the creative acts of the sisters as they travelled across Arnhem Land. Such stories pass on important knowledge, cultural values and belief systems to later generations.

Dystopian cities

Australia was hit hard by the Great Depression. The worst year was 1932, when unemployment reached nearly thirty-two per cent, and by the following year almost a third of all unemployed men had been without work for three years. With wages cut and unemployment rising, many families were left struggling to survive and this poverty was most evident in run-down, inner-city areas. Two émigrés, Danila Vassilieff and Yosl Bergner, were the first Australian artists to turn their attention to the plight of the urban poor and the dispossessed. Their powerful, expressive style was influential upon young artists, including Arthur Boyd and Albert Tucker.

Economic hardship fostered bitterness and political unrest, and membership of radical groups on both the left and right increased. Boundaries between political agendas and art production became porous in this decade, and many artists believed, like Bergner, 'that by painting we would change the world'. The complex enmeshment of the creative and political became a defining feature of the decade, and art in Australia became increasingly political, with the political realm involving itself with art.

By the end of the decade the worsening political situation overseas and a sense that another world war was inevitable contributed to a growing sense of unease. Many artists expressed this anxiety and foreboding in their works.

For kids

Many people in Australia were made poor during the Depression. Lots of people lost their jobs and did not have enough money to feed their families. Some even lost their homes. Families made their own furniture out of empty containers.

Have you ever tried to make your own furniture?

Herbert Badham

Australia 1899–1961

Self-portrait with glove

1939

oil on canvasboard

National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
Purchased 1999

1999.3

Herbert Badham was a prolific self-portraitist, and his precisely rendered paintings often containing enigmatic vignettes of domestic life. Badham's matter-of-fact style and unremarkable locations emphasise the prosaic aspects of modern life. His paintings can be seen as a local manifestation of the worldwide revival in realist painting in the interwar years, such as American Scene painting and German New Objectivity, which was marked by a cool, emotionally detached manner and focus upon the external appearance of the subject.

Herbert Badham

Australia 1899–1961

Paint and morning tea

1937

oil on cardboard

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1937

421-4

Albert Tucker

Australia 1914–99, Europe and United States 1947–60

Self-portrait

1937

oil on paperboard mounted on composition board

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1983

NGA 83.3707

In the late 1930s Albert Tucker's contact with émigré artists Yosl Bergner and Danila Vassilieff was to provide important encouragement for him to pursue his artistic vocation and to make art that was responsive to the issues of his time. In 1938 Tucker was a founding member of the Contemporary Art Society, and he became one of the most articulate voices in the often bitter debates between modernists and conservatives. In the 1940s, together with his partner Joy Hester, Tucker was a key member of the group of artists and writers that formed around John and Sunday Reed at Heide.

Albert Tucker

Australia 1914–99, Europe and United States 1947–60

Self-portrait

c. 1939

oil on canvas

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Bulleen, Melbourne
Albert Tucker Archive, Gift of Barbara Tucker, 2011

Albert Tucker

Australia 1914–99, Europe and United States 1947–60

Self-portrait

1939

oil on cardboard on composition board

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Bulleen, Melbourne
Gift of Barbara Tucker, 2008

2000.304

Albert Tucker

Australia 1914–99, Europe and United States 1947–60

Self-portrait

1939

black crayon and black pencil

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of Barbara Tucker 1979

NGA 79.2356

From 1936 until the early 1940s Albert Tucker chronicled himself with numerous painted and drawn self-portraits. In these works we witness a harrowing disintegration of his physical self, which mirrored the artist's overwrought emotional state. He recalled: 'It was a period when the whole world, and all the people I knew, seemed to be seething with ideas and energies and experiences; and my own mind was a seething mess ... The highly emotional, overwrought expressionist paintings suited my state at the time'.

Albert Tucker

Australia 1914–99, Europe and United States 1947–60

Self-portrait

c. 1940

black pencil and white chalk

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of Barbara Tucker

NGA 79.2360

Nora Heysen

Australia 1911–2003, England and Italy 1934–37

A portrait study (Self portrait)

1933

oil on canvas

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart

Purchased by funds provided by the Art

Foundation of Tasmania, 1986

AG5025

Nora Heysen was the daughter of Hans Heysen, who in the 1930s was one of Australia's most successful and famous artists. While her father was best-known for his landscapes, Nora quickly forged a successful career as a portraitist. In 1933 *A portrait study* won the Melrose Prize for portraiture and in 1938 Heysen became the first woman to be awarded the prestigious Archibald Prize. During the Second World War she was the first woman to be appointed as an official war artist by the Australian War Memorial.

Arthur Boyd

Australia 1920–99, England and Australia from 1959

Self-portrait

1938

oil on composition board

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
The Arthur Boyd Gift, 1975

NGA 75.3.56

Arthur Boyd

Australia 1920–99, England and Australia from 1959

Three heads (or The brothers Karamazov)

1938

oil on canvas on composition board

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
The Arthur Boyd Gift, 1975

NGA 75.3.23

In 1937 seventeen-year-old Arthur Boyd met recently arrived Jewish refugee Yosl Bergner. Although they were the same age, Bergner's expressionist style and social and political radicalism initiated a new direction in Boyd's work. Soon after their meeting, Boyd began a series of roughly painted portraits and head studies in which he explored psychological states and moods. Boyd's reading of the works of Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky was also important, and in this painting, named after Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), the artist depicts himself with his brothers Guy and David.

Danila Vassilieff

Russia 1897 – Australia 1958, Australia from 1923, Central and South America, Europe, England 1929–34

Street scene with graffiti

1938

oil on plywood

Private collection, Melbourne

Danila Vassilieff

Russia 1897 – Australia 1958, Australia from 1923, Central and South America, Europe, England 1929–34

Truth, Woolloomooloo

1936

oil on canvas

Private collection

It is notable that the first artists to depict the poverty of inner-city slums were two recently arrived émigrés, Danila Vassilieff and Yosl Bergner. Russian-born Vassilieff, who had fought with the white Russian army, first arrived in Australia in 1923 before leaving again in 1929. On his return in 1935 he painted a series of dark streetscapes, depicting the inner suburban areas of Woolloomooloo and Surry Hills in Sydney. Moving to Melbourne, Vassilieff's expressionist style influenced many young artists, including Lina Bryans, Albert Tucker, Arthur Boyd and Sidney Nolan.

Danila Vassilieff

Russia 1897 – Australia 1958, Australia from 1923, Central and South America, Europe, England 1929–34

Street scene with children

c. 1938

oil on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne

Arriving in Melbourne in 1937 Danila Vassilieff lived for a time in Fitzroy, a poor working-class suburb. There he began to paint brightly coloured expressionist pictures of children playing in the streets. Yet these are not carefree images of childhood. A 1937 investigation reported that children represented forty-six per cent of the total occupiers of slum dwellings in Melbourne's inner-city areas and contemporary viewers of Vassilieff's paintings would have been well aware of the poverty in which these children lived.

Danila Vassilieff

Russia 1897 – Australia 1958, Australia from 1923, Central and South America, Europe, England 1929–34

Young girl (Shirley)

1937

oil on canvas on composition board

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

National Gallery Society of Victoria Century Fund, 1984

A8-1986

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia 1937–48, Israel from 1950

Group of Aborigines

1938

pen and brush and ink and gouache on lined paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Yosl Bergner, Founder Benefactor, 1984

P64-1984

In the interwar period there were growing calls by Indigenous people to be granted citizenship. On 26 January 1938 the Melbourne-based Australian Aborigines' League, led by William Cooper, joined forces with the New South Wales Aborigines Progressive Association, headed by Jack Patten, Bill Ferguson and Pearl Gibbs. They staged a Day of Mourning conference in Sydney, where they protested the callous treatment of Indigenous Australians and asked for full citizens' rights.

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia
1937–48, Israel from 1950

Aboriginal man and child

1938

pen and ink over pencil on lined paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Yosl Bergner, Founder Benefactor, 1984

P63-1984

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia
1937–48, Israel from 1950

Aboriginal man seated on the ground

1938

pen and ink over pencil on lined paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Yosl Bergner, Founder Benefactor, 1984

P62-1984

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia
1937–48, Israel from 1950

Aboriginal man seated

1938

pencil on lined paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Yosl Bergner, Founder Benefactor, 1984

P61-1984

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia 1937–48, Israel from 1950

Citizen

c. 1940

oil on canvas

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
South Australian Government Grant 1972

722P1

Yosl Bergner was one of approximately 7000–8000 Jewish people, mainly from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, who arrived in Australia between 1933 and 1939 fleeing Nazi persecution. This number included many artists, musicians, architects, writers and intellectuals who were to contribute greatly to Australia's cultural life. However, government policy remained opposed to large-scale intake of Jewish refugees, and some were met with anti-Semitic sentiments upon their arrival.

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia 1937–48, Israel from 1950

Aboriginal man standing

1938

black chalk on lined paper

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Yosl Bergner, Founder Benefactor, 1984

P60-1984

Jewish refugee Yosl Bergner recalled the first time he saw an Aboriginal man: 'I saw an Aborigine ... somehow, to me, he looked like a Jew, with a hat on ... So then I painted Aborigines, identifying them with Jews'. Notably, on 8 December 1938 members of the Australian Aborigines' League marched to the German Consulate in Melbourne, where they attempted to deliver 'on behalf of the Aborigines of Australia a strong protest at the cruel persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi Government of Germany and [ask] that this persecution be brought to an end'.

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia 1937–48, Israel from 1950

City lane

c. 1940

oil on composition board

Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat

Purchased with funds from the Colin Hicks Caldwell

Bequest, 1996

1996.74

Yosl Bergner was born in Vienna and grew up in Warsaw, Poland. Arriving in Melbourne as a refugee in 1937, seventeen-year-old Bergner lived in Parkville with his sister, the dancer Ruth Bergner. He studied briefly at the National Gallery School and quickly became part of Melbourne's radical artistic and intellectual circles. From 1938 onwards Bergner made numerous drawings and paintings of the poor and dispossessed living in the run-down inner Melbourne suburbs of Carlton, Fitzroy and Collingwood, one of the first artists in Australia to do so.

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia
1937–48, Israel from 1950

Metho drinker

1938

pencil over brown ink wash

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Yosl Bergner, Founder Benefactor, 1984

P65-1984

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia
1937–48, Israel from 1950

Pie eaters

1938

pencil over brown ink wash

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Yosl Bergner, Founder Benefactor, 1984

P69-1984

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia
1937–48, Israel from 1950

Municipal rat catchers

1939–40

pencil over brown ink wash

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Yosl Bergner, Founder Benefactor, 1984

P70-1984

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia
1937–48, Israel from 1950

Salvation Army

1938

pencil over brown ink wash

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Yosl Bergner, Founder Benefactor, 1984

P67-1984

Yosl Bergner

Austria 1920 – Israel 2017, Poland 1921–37, Australia
1937–48, Israel from 1950

Victoria Market

1938

pencil

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Yosl Bergner, Founder Benefactor, 1984

P68-1984

F. Oswald Barnett

Australia 1883–1972

Carlton. Two mothers

Carlton. Entrance to a slum pocket

Carlton. Somerset Place

**Fitzroy. View from the Brotherhood of
St Lawrence**

Fitzroy. Rear view of house

**Collingwood. Plan of house, No.
12 Hood Street**

North Melbourne. Canning Place

**Carlton. Kitchen interior with woman
and three children**

**Fitzroy. The Bungalows c. 1930 –
c. 1935**

**North Melbourne. Group of children in
Erskine Place**

West Melbourne. A Dudley Mansion

West Melbourne. A group of Dudley Mansions

Carlton. Wash-house and bath-room, 48 Palmerston Street

North Melbourne. No. 19 Byron Street

West Melbourne rubbish tip

c. 1930 – c. 1935

gelatin silver photograph and typewriting on card

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

F. Oswald Barnett Collection

Gift of Department of Human Services, Victoria 2001 H2001.291/9, H2001.291/12, H2001.291/3, H2001.291/42, H2001.291/38, H2001.291/78, H2001.291/53, H2001.291/6, H2001.291/34, H2001.291/61, H2001.291/70, H2001.291/69, H2001.291/15, H2001.291/65, H2001.291/67

One of the most visible and lasting effects of the Great Depression was the housing crisis in the poor working-class areas of Melbourne and Sydney. Many of the nineteenth-century houses had fallen into disrepair, overcrowding was endemic and a great number of families lived in squalid and unhealthy conditions. Throughout the decade 'slum' abolition movements in Melbourne and Sydney ran public campaigns to place public housing on the political agenda, leading to the creation of the first state Housing Commissions.

In Melbourne, Methodist layman F. Oswald Barnett led a campaign calling for slum demolition and the rehousing of residents in government-financed housing. He took hundreds of photographs that were used in public lectures and to illustrate the 1937 report of the Housing Investigation and Slum Abolition Board. This led to the creation of the Housing Commission of Victoria in 1938, with its first major project being the Garden City estate at Fishermans Bend. In Sydney a similar campaign led to the *Housing Improvement Act* of 1936 and the construction of the first fifty-six home units at Erskineville.

**Hoffman Brick Company, Brunswick,
Melbourne** manufacturer

Australia 1870–1969

Mel-rose Australian Ware range

1931 – c. 1940

Koala jug

c. 1939–40

earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1986

D186-1986

Hoffman Brick Company, Brunswick, Melbourne manufacturer

Australia 1870–1969

Mel-rose Australian Ware range

1931 – c. 1940

Possum jug

1931–40

earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1979

D132-1979

Mel-rose ware, produced from 1934 onwards, is an example of how Australian businesses responded to the Great Depression. The Hoffman Brick Company, based in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick, was the largest manufacturer supplying the building industry; however, it was severely impacted by the economic downturn. As a way to keep its business functioning and to retain skilled personnel, it turned to the production of decorative household wares. Their line of Mel-rose ware became very popular and most usually featured Australian motifs, such as gum leaves, gumnuts and native animals.

**Hoffman Brick Company, Brunswick,
Melbourne** manufacturer

Australia 1870–1969

Mel-rose Australian Ware range

1931 – c. 1940

Planter

c. 1939–40

earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1987

D62-1987

Premier Pottery, Preston, Melbourne
manufacturer
Australia 1929/30–1956

Jug
1930–33
earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Dr G. C. Webb, 1986

D47-1986

**Hoffman Brick Company, Brunswick,
Melbourne** manufacturer

Australia 1870–1969

Mel-rose Australian Ware range

1931 – c. 1940

Bust of John Pascoe Fawkner

c. 1934

earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Don McRae, 1991

D38-1991

**Hoffman Brick Company, Brunswick,
Melbourne** manufacturer

Australia 1870–1969

Hoffman Ware range

1915–38

Melbourne Centenary jug

1934

earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Don McRae, 1991

D36-1991

Premier Pottery, Preston, Melbourne
manufacturer
Australia 1929/30–1956

Sugar bowl
1930–33
earthenware

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Dr G. C. Webb, 1986

D48.a-b-1986

Ola Cohn

Australia 1892–1964, England 1926–30

The sundowner

1932

painted plaster

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Jack and Zena Cohn, 2016

2016.119

Ola Cohn studied sculpture with Henry Moore at the Royal College of Art in London in the 1920s. She returned to Melbourne in 1930, where the following year her solo exhibition established her as a leading proponent of modern sculpture. During the Depression the sight of 'swagmen' or 'sundowners' became commonplace as unemployed men travelled across the country in order to find work. In 1932 Cohn submitted this maquette of a sundowner to a competition for a full-scale sculpture to be erected in Fitzroy Gardens in Melbourne: unsurprisingly it was not chosen as the winning entry.

Scenes from Melbourne during the depression

c. 1935

black and white film transferred to media player, 1 min. 51 sec. silent (looped)

Courtesy of National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Canberra

While there is an abundance of newspaper and documentary photographs which document the 1930s shanty towns, slums, relief and charity works, there is very little moving image recordings available. Instead, the moving image medium at the time was primarily focused on providing entertainment that would allow the audience temporary relief from the Depression. This rare footage depicts slum areas of inner Melbourne, and provides great insight into the horrible living conditions that many Australian families experienced.

Adolphina Noll

active in Australia 1930s

The Wilmington wagga

1934

wool and cotton

National Wool Museum, Geelong
Donated by the Running Stitch Group, 1989

W1669

During the Depression it was common for women to sew quilts with scraps of whatever fabric was available: suiting samples, old garments, or even grain bags and flour sacks. In Australia such quilts, blankets and bedcoverings constructed from found materials were known as 'waggas'. This quilt was made as a wedding gift from Adolphina Noll to her grand-daughter.

Unknown, Australia

Sideboard

1920s–1940s

painted wood, wood, tin

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013

2013.22.a-e

Unknown, Australia

Chest of drawers

1920s–40s

painted wood, wood, tin

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2013

2013.21.a-k

Working-class people were the most affected by the high levels of unemployment during the Depression. By 1932 more than 60,000 men, women and children were dependent on the *susso*, a state-based sustenance payment that enabled families to buy only the bare minimum of food. Many families unable to pay their rent were evicted from their homes. For those suffering economic hardship, 'making do' became a way of life, and furniture would be constructed from found items such as kerosene tins and packing crates.

During the 1930s a small number of artists became active in the militant working-class struggle through their involvement in social and cultural organisations affiliated with the Communist Party, such as the Friends of the Soviet Union, the Workers' Art Club and the Workers' Theatre Group, which were formed in Sydney, Melbourne and other metropolitan centres. A number of these artists were also involved with a variety of mostly short-lived radical magazines, helping with their production, as well as providing covers and illustrations. Linocuts were a preferred medium for these artists, as the materials were inexpensive and the images reproduced well.

Unknown illustrator

active in Australia 1930s

Proletariat

cover illustration for *Proletariat*, vol. 2, no. 1, printed and published by Melbourne University Labour Club, February 1933

1933

colour linocut

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

RARELT 335.005 P94

Unknown illustrator

active in Australia 1930s

Proletariat

cover illustration for *Proletariat*, vol. 2, no. 3, printed and published by Melbourne University Labour Club, October 1933

1933

colour linocut

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

RARELT 335.005 P94

Unknown illustrator

active in Australia 1930s

Proletariat

cover illustration for *Proletariat*, vol. 3, no. 2, printed and published by Melbourne University Labour Club, August 1934

1934

colour linocut

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

SLTF 335.005 P94

Noel Counihan illustrator

Australia 1913–86, England and Europe 1949–52

Proletariat

cover illustration for *Proletariat*, vol. 1, no. 2, printed and published by Melbourne University Labour Club, July 1932
1932

colour linocut

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

RARELT 335.005 P94

Jack Maughan illustrator

Australia 1897–1980

Masses

cover illustration for *Masses*, vol. 1, no. 1, printed by
Bright Printing Services, published by the Workers' Art
Club, Melbourne, November 1932
1932

linocut printed in red and black ink

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

RARELTP 335.405 M38

Programme for Waiting for Lefty

1936

for the production of the play written by Clifford Odets
(published 1935), performed by the Workers Theatre
Group, Central Hall, Melbourne, August 1936

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
Gift of Dr Angela O'Brien, 2001

2001.040.497

Playscript for *Till the day I die*

for the production of the play written by Clifford Odets (published 1935), performed by the Workers Theatre Group, Central Hall, Melbourne, 1937–41

Performing Arts Collection, Arts Centre, Melbourne
Gift of Dr Angela O'Brien, 2001

2001.040.367

In July 1936 the Sydney New Theatre League presented *Till the Day I Die*, an anti-Nazi play described as 'a tribute to workers who fight for freedom under the shadow of the swastika' by the American communist writer Clifford Odets. However, following a protest from the German consul general, the play was banned, first in New South Wales and subsequently in other states (although it was performed at the Brunswick Town Hall in February 1937). This ban was not repealed until 1941, well into the Second World War.

Upsurge

1934

written by J. M. Harcourt, published by John Long,
London, March 1934

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

RARELT 819.93 H2154U

Censorship of books was vigorously pursued by federal and state governments during the 1930s. Australia was one of only two countries in the world to ban Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* when it was first published in 1932. Australian author J. M. Harcourt's novel *Upsurge* (1934) was the first book to be banned following a recommendation by the newly established Book Censorship Board in 1934. Portraying the lives of Western Australia's working class during the Depression, it was described by one customs official as 'thinly disguised propaganda on behalf of Communism and social revolution'.

Herbert McClintock illustrator

Australia 1906–85

Strife

cover illustration for *Strife*, vol. 1, no. 1, edited by Judah Waten, printed and published by A. E. Pearl, Melbourne

13 October 1930

1930

colour linocut

State Library Victoria, Melbourne

RARELT 819.905 St8

Vol. 1, no. 1 (Oct. 1930)

Edited by eighteen-year-old communist Judah Waten, with Herbert McClintock as art editor, *Strife* declared itself 'an organ of the new culture, destructive and constructive'. The first issue was due for release in October 1930; however, a blasphemous poem by Brian Fitzpatrick published in the magazine prompted a police raid on the *Strife* office and the editor's hasty destruction of (most) copies of the issue.

Noel Counihan

Australia 1913–86, England and Europe 1949–52

James Flett printer

Australia 1906–86

Tycoon

1931

linocut

Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat
Gift of Noel Counihan, 1981

1981.117

Noel Counihan was the most high-profile communist artist of his generation. In 1931 at the age of eighteen he joined the Communist Party, and was a founding member of the Workers' Art Club in Melbourne. He began printmaking, and throughout the decade produced illustrations and cartoons for a range of radical magazines and newspapers. Counihan was also active in the struggle for workers' rights and in conflicts between the unemployed and the police. In 1933 he was arrested (but not charged) for protesting in support of free speech from inside an iron cage on Sydney Road in Brunswick.

Albert Tucker

Australia 1914–99, Europe and United States 1947–60

The futile city

1940

oil on cardboard

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

1980.92

At the start of the Second World War Surrealism was an important influence upon Albert Tucker, as were the writings of T. S. Eliot. *The futile city* was inspired by Eliot's epic poem *The Waste Land* (1922): 'I came on T. S. Eliot, and instantly I recognised a twin soul because here was horror, outrage, despair, futility, and all the images that went with them. He confirmed my own feelings and also became a source ... because of the images that would involuntarily form while I was reading the poetry'.

Bernard Smith

Australia 1916–2011, England and Europe 1948–51

The advance of Lot and his Brethren

1940

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of the artist, 2008

NGA 2008.674

In the early 1930s, artists depicted the city as a modern utopia, a place of triumphant progress and aspiration later in the decades, a new radical iconography of the city as a place of moral decay and corruption appeared. Painted at the start of the Second World War, *Lot and his brethren* expresses Bernard Smith's despair at the conflagration that the world had been plunged into. Based on the biblical story of Lot, who fled from God's destruction of Sodom, Smith depicts Karl Marx as the saviour who leads his people from the burning city.

James Gleeson

Australia 1915–2008, England and France 1947–49,
Europe and United States
1958–59

Weeping head

1939

oil on canvas on composition board

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1982

NGA 82.1374

In the late 1930s many younger artists in Australia adopted Surrealism, and as with French Surrealism many of its earliest practitioners, including Herbert McClintock, Albert Tucker and Bernard Smith, were members of the Communist Party or affiliated organisations. James Gleeson's *Weeping head* recalls George Grosz's etchings of maimed and disfigured First World War veterans and Pablo Picasso's *Weeping Women* series of 1937, themselves based upon his great anti-fascist painting *Guernica*, 1937, which by 1939 was already emblematic of the horror of the Spanish Civil War.

Frank Hinder

Australia 1906–92, United States 1927–34

Little man with a big gun (Mussolini)

1939

tempera on gesso on composition board

Private collection, Sydney

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Doom of youth

1937

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1982

NGA 82.1090

In *Doom of youth* – a title taken from Wyndham Lewis's 1932 polemical book of the same name – Max Dupain creates an allegorical photograph in which a naked male body represents his vision of modern Australia. Using symbols that suggest disempowerment, Dupain implies that the flywheel of mechanisation has doomed youth (the representatives of a nation's future) to a bleak fate.

Max Dupain

Australia 1911–92

Brave New World

1938

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
William Kimpton Bequest, 2017

In 1935 Max Dupain referred to Aldous Huxley's book *Brave New World* (1932) in his photograph of a woman trapped by technology. Dupain was attracted to this biting satire on the ethical dilemmas of social engineering because it appeared to endorse his own fervently held ideas of how modernity was affecting the individual and national body. At the time his choice to directly reference this book was surprisingly provocative: *Brave New World* had been banned by the Australian customs department, with existing copies rounded up and burned. Dupain returned again to the theme in 1938, producing this variant version.

Laurence Le Guay

Australia 1917–90

No title (War montage with globe)

c. 1939

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through the NGV Foundation with
the assistance of Mrs Mem Kirby, Fellow, 2001

2001.547

Laurence Le Guay

Australia 1917–90

**No title (War montage with child and
soldier)**

c. 1939

gelatin silver photograph

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through the NGV Foundation with
the assistance of Mrs Mem Kirby, Fellow, 2001

2001.548