



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA
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A Modern Life: Tablewares 1930s – 1980s

NGV International | 30 March 2018 – January 2019 | FREE



This March, the National Gallery of Victoria will offer a glimpse into the domestic lives of eras past in *A Modern Life: Tablewares 1930s – 1980s*. Running until January 2019, this new collection exhibition in the NGV's popular Decorative Arts corridor will premiere over 140 never-seen-before tablewares including dinner services, pitchers, teapots, mugs and plates from the 1930s to the 1980s.

Exploring the transformation of lifestyles following the austerity of the Second World War, the exhibition will illustrate the shift towards a more contemporary approach to tableware design with the emergence of bold colour, versatility in design and technical innovations. The exhibition, which celebrates a generous gift from Melbourne collector John Hinds,

includes works by leading manufacturers Wedgwood, Rosenthal and Poole Pottery and designers Keith Murray, Ulla Procopé, Eva Striker Zeisel and Jens Quistgaard.

Tony Ellwood, Director, NGV said, 'The end of the Second World War marked a turning point in the design and manufacturing of tablewares and reflects the beginning of our modern fascination with interior and domestic design. We are deeply grateful to collector John Hinds for this gift which has significantly enriched the NGV's Decorative Arts collection.'

Charting a thematic and chronological course, the exhibition will investigate the rise of professional designers and features important works by American designer Russel Wright. The exhibition will include pieces from Wright's famous *American Modern* range, renowned for its use of bold colours and streamlined forms. With items including teapots, pitchers and plates, *American Modern* was one of the first dining settings to encourage consumers to mix and match colours and designs. This new approach opened up possibilities to curate and individualise home interiors and marked the beginning of the consumer lifestyle.

The tableware industry also reflected the financial and social changes to women's roles post-war. With greater education and employment opportunities, women were now able to take on senior positions as product designers and decorators. *A Modern Life: Tablewares 1930s – 1980s* will feature a section dedicated to the female designers of the time and their stories, including Marianne Westmann, Kathie Winkle and in particular Eva Striker Zeisel. Zeisel is considered one of the greatest ceramic designers of the twentieth century for her sleek and modern tableware designs which revolutionised casual dining in her adopted country of America.

The 1960s saw the introduction of affordable and practical plastics as the material of choice for domestic designs. Demonstrating this shift from traditional dining and towards a relaxed approach is the *Set of Bessemer picnic plates* by Australian manufacturer Nylex. A staple of 1960s Australian households, the plastic Nylex Bessemer wares were recognisable for their bright colours and fashionable patterns which became popular as informal gatherings including outdoor parties and picnics became more common.

A Modern Life: Tablewares 1930s – 1980s will further highlight the impact of Scandinavian design which dominated post-war design for several decades. Showcasing works by prolific designers Stig Lindberg and Kaj Franck, the exhibition celebrates the craftsmanship and simplicity of form which Scandinavian design is renowned for. These design principles can be seen in Lindberg's *Siam, tea service* and Franck's *Teema* range. In particular, the functional forms and mixed colours of the *Teema* wares emphasise the continued prevalence of Scandinavian influence in contemporary homeware design.

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A Modern Life: Tablewares 1930s – 1980s is on display at NGV International from 30 March 2018 to January 2019. Open 10am – 5pm. Free Entry.

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Image caption: (from left to right) Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire (manufacturer), Keith Murray (designer), *Tankard and Part coffee service (cup and saucer and sugar box)*, c. 1935, earthenware, gift of John Hinds, 2017 and Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire (manufacturer), Tom Wedgwood (designer), John Goodwin (designer) and Keith Murray (designer), *Annular, jug*, c. 1940, earthenware, gift of John Hinds, 2017. **Photo: Victoria Zschommler**