NGV

‘I want to paint people, homely interiors, skies and trees and water and all that is living and vibrating around me ... I feel freer and surer of myself, and I know what I want.’

Nora Heysen, Australian artist

Life & Times

Stories of women in art and design in the NGV Collection

MAGAZINE
AUGUST 2020

Zanele Muholi *Ntozkhe II* 2016 from the *Somnyama Ngonyama* series 2015–16. Bowness Family Fund for Photography, 2017

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DEPUTY EDITOR'S NOTE

NGV Magazine Collected Editions is an online publication series that brings together the best essays, interviews and texts from *NGV Magazine* into an edited anthology. The editions borrow from regular features from the bi-monthly *NGV Magazine* including *Transcript*, *Deep Read*, *Secret Life of Art* and now also, *Life & Times*.

Life & Times considers the valuable and lasting contribution that artists, designers and makers throughout history have given to the community. The series looks predominantly to female practitioners, examining how their distinct skills, bold visions and the unique challenges presented by the era and social context in which they studied and worked shaped their professional and personal lives.

While this edition features the stories of a number of remarkable, convention-defying artists and makers whose work is represented in the NGV Collection, sharing these stories is an ongoing journey and we will continue to celebrate and publish many more. For similar stories we also encourage you to visit *She Persists: Perspectives on Women in Art and Design*, an NGV publication and online platform featuring thirty-four insights.

Happy reading, from the *NGV Magazine* team.

Elisha Buttler
Deputy Editor, *NGV Magazine*
Audience Engagement Manager

Helen Maudsley in her studio in Surrey Hills
Photo © Selina Ou

HELEN MAUDSLEY

Helen Maudsley describes her art as ‘visual essays’ and, despite her rigorous painting routine, is adamant that she is not a twenty-first-century artist.

BY GABRIELLA COSLOVICH

Helen Maudsley has left a little note on her front door. ‘COME IN’, it reads – just like that. Forthright, like its author. I gingerly enter the house, calling out. I walk along the corridor, calling a few times more until she appears, beckoning me into her studio at the back of the house. The small room, which doubles as storage space, is littered with paper: rolls piled high on a bench; loose leaves scattered across the floor; large sheets fixed with bulldog clips on wooden easels. Upon these sheets and fragments of paper are masses of sketches, studies, designs, colour charts and scrawled titles; these are Maudsley’s workings and re-workings, blueprints for her vexingly complex paintings, with their symbols, shapes and patterns that pull the eye this way and that.

‘I’m not sure how we’re going to do this’, she tells me, as I sit next to her in this flourishing paper field. Dressed in jeans and a black jumper, spectacles hanging around her neck, Maudsley props herself on a stool. I’ve interviewed her several times before. I know that she knows exactly how to do it. She will be precise, opinionated and original. Candid commentary is assured. Maudsley is ninety and has been exhibiting her work for more than sixty years. She has nothing to lose from speaking her mind. She once told me that art was ‘intrinsically useless’. I remind her of the remark and she stands by it – ‘absolutely!’ And yet, every day she comes into her studio at 9 am, works until midday, lunches, returns at 1 pm, and works until 5. Art may be pointless, but for Maudsley it’s a compulsion. After all these years, she is still trying to make sense of

the world, of the very nature of being, through her paintings and drawings which she describes as ‘visual essays’.

‘They’re always essays about these things that are puzzling me and that I can’t really find an answer to’, she says.

The things that puzzle Maudsley range from philosophical conundrums about the ‘meaning of meaning’, to chance encounters with strangers: an overtly sexual woman on a tram, whose impression she later tried to distil in a drawing; or a ‘terrible-looking’ young man she was convinced was about to mug her, but who unexpectedly came to her aid, helping with her luggage and escorting her down a steep set of stairs. He sparked a visual essay contemplating ‘the presence of God’.

‘I don’t believe in God, but that is the presence of God’, Maudsley says of his small act of kindness. She revels in ambiguity.

The title of her 2017 exhibition – *Our Knowing and Not Knowing* – at the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia alluded to her perennial probing and searching. Thirty paintings and three drawings featured in the exhibition as part of a focus on contemporary female artists that also included Del Kathryn Barton, Mel O’Callaghan and Louise Paramor. Not that Maudsley identifies with the ‘contemporary’ label. She rejects it, just as she once refused to be called ‘modern’. She shuns the contemporary fashion for mixed-media, videos, installations and the like. She sees herself foremost as a twentieth-century artist, interested in the ‘visual grammar’ inherited from art history. Jan Van Eyck, she has said, was her ‘first real teacher’. Johannes Vermeer, her second. From them she learnt how to compose paintings and drawings in which objects have both a literal and symbolic meaning. In Vermeer’s *The girl with the wine glass*, 1659–60, for example, the girl’s voluminous red skirt is echoed by a white jug on a draped cloth, with clear sexual implication. Maudsley calls this ‘visual analogy’, and this is what interests her.

‘But this does not seem to be a twenty-first-century interest’, she says. ‘Indeed, most curators don’t seem to know what it is, that it exists. “Meaning” for twenty-first-century artists seems to mean “political meaning”, and, to me, this is really art made into propaganda’.

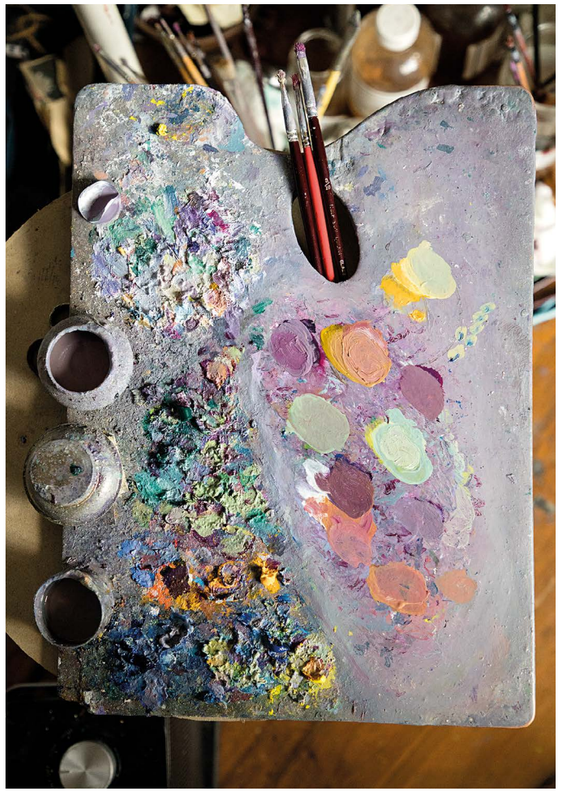
Four of her most recent works, painted this year, are in her studio, propped up against other canvases. We turn to look at three companion works of equal size – 52.5 cm by 40 cm – whose dense composition, mauve-toned palette and cryptic iconography are distinctively Maudsley. Each of these paintings was produced using only three colours, mixed to create a curiously subtle range of hues.

‘And that’s the exercise, to find how many different colours you can get, just using three’, Maudsley says.

One of these paintings, titled *The self: part of it but not merging*, was inspired by a trip to a forest near Warburton, some 70 kilometres east of Melbourne, where the peculiar colour of the trees – bluey green with a red-pink overtone – fascinated her.

(above)
Sketches and studio details,
Photo © Selina Ou

(opposite)
Helen Maudsley *SELVES; IN TOUCH BUT NOT MERGING* 2017. Collection of the artist © Helen Maudsley



'I've never seen that before except in this area … and that's why I did it, with the self in the middle of it', she says.

Working from a restricted palette of cobalt blue, lemon yellow and magenta, Maudsley has transformed her walk in the forest into a fabulously coloured labyrinth of cubes, rectangles, triangles and diagonals that hint at leaves and paths, and perhaps even sunlight through trees. In the centre of this abstract forest is an oval shape, and within that oval is a symbol that looks like the figure 8, the symbol of infinity, that often reappears in her work.

'An 8's such a marvellous symbol … because it goes on and on forever', she says.

The oval shape, she tells me, is drawn from a small oval mirror she has hanging in her living room. Everyday objects – such as a paper towel roll, a jug and sea shells on her studio floor – find their way into her works, mutating from the ordinary into objects of spatial play.

Realism doesn't interest Maudsley; it is too easy, she says, to do 'representative things'. She aims to stylise and simplify, to create images that 'move away from the literal', and 'morph into other things'. With their confounding shifts of perspective and symbolism, her works are not easy viewing. In some ways, they repel the gaze; there is so much going on that one doesn't know where to start or what to make of them. But this is precisely Maudsley's point.

'You can't see anything at a glance, but that's what people think looking at art is, that it's the glance, whereas it isn't, it's the stare', she says emphatically.

She knows that people find her work difficult. She explores this very resistance in her 'visual essays' too, as some of her titles cheekily suggest: *If he doesn't get it, there's nothing to get*.

Maudsley's process is labour intensive. She produces many drafts before coming to a final composition, which she then traces onto a canvas. Before completing the final painting, she also creates a colour draft of the work. Three coats of oil paint are applied to her final work to create the smooth, saturated surfaces she loves. One painting takes about four months to complete.

'It's terribly time-consuming', she says. 'I sometimes wish I had some little elves who would come and do it all for me, but then I know if the little elves came I would be very cross with them because they wouldn't do it properly.'

Maudsley's paintings do not sell for millions of dollars like those of her late husband, the acclaimed artist John Brack. 'I don't sell; I mean, nobody's interested', she says, matter-of-factly. She's exaggerating just a little. Her work is held in collections private and public.

Art critic Robert Nelson once wonderfully described her works as 'temples of chromatic geometry'. Then again, Maudsley is not motivated by the desire to sell. Like any artist, she wants an audience; but she will not pander to conventional desires.

'A lot of people want to do lovely things; well, I'm not interested in lovely things. I'm not interested in giving people what they want or any of this stuff. I just want to write essays and I hope that somebody will be interested to read them.'

Each of these paintings was produced using only three colours, mixed to create a curiously subtle range of hues.

GABRIELLA COSLOVICH

GABRIELLA COSLOVICH IS AN AUTHOR AND JOURNALIST. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE NOV–DEC 2017 ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.

Sketches and studio details, Photo © Selina Ou

Zanele Muholi

The stunningly composed photographs of South African artist Zanele Muholi employ the visual tools of contrast and darkness to create works that are deeply compelling, while drawing attention to persistent inequalities across gender, race and sexuality that still play out in the daily lives of people across South Africa and elsewhere in the world.

BY SANTILLA CHINGAIPE

I first met Zanele Muholi, who uses gender-neutral pronouns, at their exhibition in Melbourne when they were completing an artist's residency at Monash University in 2010.

The exhibition – like most of Muholi's work – explored body politics and the intersections of race, gender and sexuality.

Muholi collection comprised a series of portraits of black South African women who had made Australia their home – a celebration of black womanhood, but equally commenting on the mark these women will undoubtedly make on contemporary Australian identity.

Another series explored the vagina, and sought to challenge taboos around pleasure – the taboos around what women can't talk about because of what Muholi saw as the patriarchal policing of women's reproductive organs, and the shame that can be associated with that. It also questioned the experience sexual assault has on how women see their bodies.

I recall feeling uncomfortable seeing the images. I was twenty-four years old, and up until that point I hadn't thought about the idea of patriarchal conditioning and its effect on how I saw myself and my 'private parts'. I'd never questioned the narratives around this, growing up as a black African woman in Australia. I'd never interrogated how I saw myself or how I was seen.

I left furious at the world and at the stories I'd allowed myself to accept about who I was or who I was supposed to be.

A few days later, I had the privilege of spending time with Zanele Muholi. That encounter would prove to be a life-changing experience. Muholi questioned why I hid my natural curls beneath long hair extensions that they argued were more of a reflection of European beauty standards. I recall confessing that I was ashamed of my kinky, unruly hair. We spent the conversation unpacking why and how other people's portrayals can shape how we see ourselves and others. I soon began to reclaim my identity – not just as a woman, but as a black woman.

A self-proclaimed visual activist, Zanele Muholi's work focuses on the experiences of and narratives around black LGBTQI South Africans that mirror Muholi's own life.

Following the end of apartheid in 1994, the country moved to create a new constitution that was inclusive and representative of the diversity of its peoples. It became one of the first constitutions in the world to protect people from discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

South Africa was also the first African country to legalise same-sex marriage. But despite this, homophobia is still widespread.

Writing in *The Guardian*, Muholi says they have been a victim of hate crimes and that misconceptions remain about gay people in South Africa.

'I'm so happy that we're alive, living in a country that is so infested by hate crime. About three months ago, we had droughts in my hometown of Durban and a church leader said they had been caused by homosexuality and same-sex

Zanele Muholi *Zinathi I* 2015 from the *Somnyama Ngonyama* series 2015–16. Bowness Family Fund for Photography, 2017

marriage', Muholi said. 'It was reported in the media, too. It's painful to me because the church should be preaching love. At the end of July, on the weekend of Durban Pride, there were storms, floods and snow – it was very strange. I said to a friend, 'I wonder what the church leaders are saying now?'

In 2010, a South African government minister walked out of an exhibition featuring Muholi's photographs depicting nude lesbian couples because she found them to be 'immoral' and 'against nation-building'.

Years later, says Muholi, and despite the growing international success of her work, it is a challenge getting it seen in South Africa.

'I don't have access to spaces to exhibit my work here – where it would be most important – even as I gain recognition abroad. The attitude of politicians towards LGBTQI people fluctuates a lot. When one of us has been killed – or there are elections – you find a lot of support, and then when it's over they come up with a different agenda.'

Muholi also sees their work as a way of recording history by photographing gay South Africans and allowing them the visibility that they may otherwise be denied.

'That's why it's so important to have our own people in politics, in medicine and in the media', Muholi told *The Guardian*.

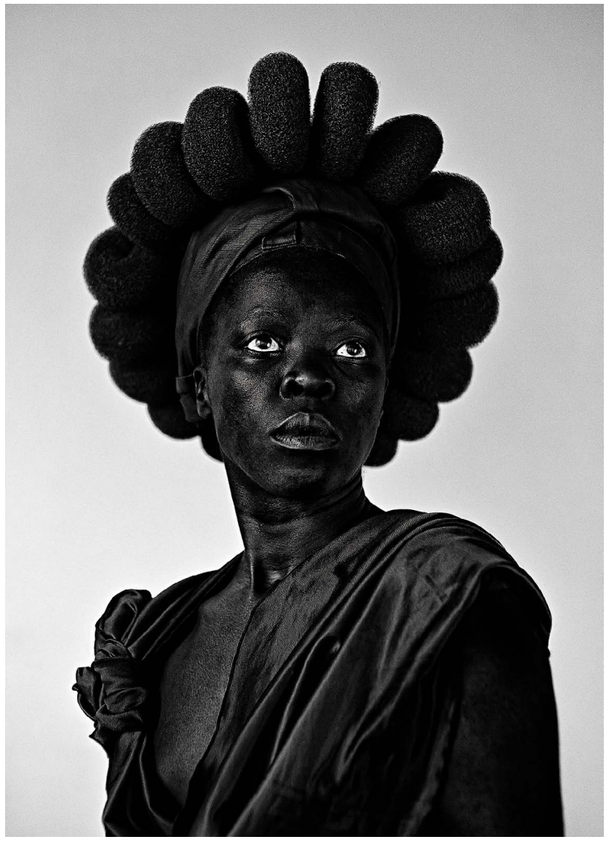
In recent years, Muholi's work has shifted from photography of queer South Africans to self-portraiture; turning the gaze inward to confront the politics of race and its representation – specifically the depiction of black women.

In the ongoing series, *Somnyama Ngonyama* (which translates from Zulu as 'Hail the dark lioness'), Muholi's body is a canvas through which they adopt different personas that aim to challenge the portrayals of black womanhood.

The work included in the 2017–18 NGV Triennial from this series was kindly supported by the Bowness Family Fund for Contemporary Photography. Through the generosity of Bill Bowness and the Bowness family this dedicated fund has significantly enhanced the NGV's contemporary photography collection. Muholi is adorned with domestic objects: scouring pads, safety pins and cables. Muholi's poses refer to a history of photography in Africa in which portraiture presented the exotic 'other' to European audiences, or was the tool of ethnographers. In Muholi's photographs, the direct engagement with the camera, and in turn the viewer, is confronting and captivating, leaving no option but to face the fearsome gaze of the lioness.

Muholi also darkens their skin to achieve striking visual effect. 'I'm reclaiming my blackness, which I feel is continuously performed by the privileged Other', they say.

Muholi is sure of their politics and refuses to be silenced. Speaking at an event in New York Muholi declared to the audience, 'My work is strictly black, and my work is queer ... If someone is allergic to this, please step out of the room.'



Muholi unapologetically continues to ensure the visibility of those who have been ignored and – as in my case all those years ago – those who are yet to fully see themselves.

Zanele Muholi's work reminds us that as uncomfortable and confronting as conversations on race and representation may be in Australia, it is vital we engage with them to fully reflect our own history.

SANTILLA CHINGAIPE IS AN AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST AND DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER.
ZANELE MUHOLI RECEIVED THE KNIGHT OF THE ORDER OF ARTS AND LETTERS BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT IN 2017. ZANELE MUHOLI'S WORKS WERE SUPPORTED BY THE BOWNESS FAMILY FUND FOR CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE MAR–APR 2018 ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.

(left) **Zanele Muholi** *Buzani (Parktown)* 2016 from the *Somnyama Ngonyama* series 2015–16. Bowness Family Fund for Photography, 2017
(above) **Zanele Muholi** *Ntozkhe II* 2016 from the *Somnyama Ngonyama* series 2015–16. Bowness Family Fund for Photography, 2017

Clara Driscoll

A leading designer at New York's Tiffany Studio

A cache of letters written by Clara Driscoll, head designer at New York's Tiffany Studio at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, captures a story that still resonates for those navigating the often conflicting demands of work, life and creativity.

BY DR ISOBEL CROMBIE

The story of historical women artists and designers is filled with examples of talented practitioners who have been overlooked, undervalued or just plain forgotten. But, occasionally, fate can deal them a kinder hand as information comes to light that rewrites those who were neglected back into art history.

One such fascinating story revolves around the career of Clara Driscoll (1861–1944), a leading designer at the famed Tiffany Studio in New York. It has long been presumed that Louis Comfort Tiffany himself was the main designer for a studio whose high-end decorative arts came to epitomise Art Nouveau taste in the United States. However, in the early 2000s, scholars Dr Martin Eidelberg, Nina Gray and Margaret K. Hofer, discovered a cache of letters by Clara Driscoll to her family that revealed a different narrative.

In her correspondence Driscoll provides a unique insight into the day-to-day work of the Tiffany Studio, disclosing in the process that she was one of its key designers and responsible for around 30 lamps, including the evocatively named *Wisteria, Dragonfly* and *Peony* lamps now considered to be Tiffany's masterworks. Along with her creative skills, Driscoll also managed the studio's Women's Glass Cutting department which, after its foundation in 1892, employed a team of up to fifty women who designed, selected and meticulously cut the glass for Tiffany's various products.

The records of Tiffany's Studio were destroyed after it closed in the early 1930s, so Driscoll's letters are significant as the only first-person account of its operations. But more than this, their value lies in bringing back to light a great designer whose place in history was nearly lost.

In common with other decorative arts studios, Tiffany preferred that his creative team were generally not publicly acknowledged. It was only when a contemporary researcher spotted Driscoll's name in a 1904 article on highly paid women in the *New York Daily News*, that her connection to the studio was made. Although the title of the article was 'Women who make $10,000 a year or more', Driscoll was actually paid $1820. This was a good, if by no means extravagant, wage that was equivalent to many of Tiffany's top male designers.

Driscoll was born in a small mid-western town in Ohio in the United States in 1861 and her career was almost over before it began. Her father died when she was 12, leaving her mother with four daughters to raise. Unusually for the time, her mother, Elizur V. Wolcott, believed passionately in women's education and sent all her children to college. Driscoll moved to New York in 1888 and enrolled in the Metropolitan Museum Art School, which specialised in industrial design for 'artist artisans'. Although women were well represented in the student rollcall, Driscoll was the only woman to study architectural decoration. By June of 1888 both Clara and her sister had begun work at Tiffany Studios.

Driscoll's tenure with the company was proscribed by her marital status: at the end of the 1800s it was uncommon for women to work outside the home and, in keeping with social mores, the company required that women leave the company when they became engaged or married. As a result, after an initial stint at the studio, Driscoll left Tiffany's to marry a fellow boarder at her rooming house. A few years later, her husband died and Driscoll returned to work, only to leave a second time when she was briefly engaged in 1896 to Edwin Waldo. Waldo mysteriously disappeared when the couple were on travels – reappearing six years later claiming he had suffered amnesia – but in the meantime Driscoll returned to her job at Tiffany's. Her third tenure with the studio (which ended with her second marriage around 1908) was her most creative.

Driscoll was a sensitive and appreciative lover of nature who drew on the natural world in designs that met and extended Tiffany's own inspired visions. Her choice of motifs was, in part, dictated along gender lines: for the production of the leaded lamps only women were allowed to work on floral designs while the male employees were assigned geometric designs.

Lamp design and production dominated Tiffany Studio's Women's Glass Cutting department after 1897. Although the team worked to a series of established designs, essentially each lamp was

unique and, in the early years especially, featured the famed coloured *favrile*, or iridescent art glass, that Tiffany invented, cut and arranged into superbly decorative patterns. It should be noted that while Driscoll was one of the main women designers at the Tiffany Studios, her female colleagues also contributed to the process, with the selector and cutter of glass key players in the eventual work. It appears that Tiffany himself rarely participated in the initial design process, however he maintained a close interest in what was produced and, as Driscoll notes in her letters, he would work with her on testing ideas around prototypes and visited her department several times a week to offer feedback as the works were in production.

The lamps came in two parts: a complex bronze armature of various forms and a glass shade. Driscoll's correspondence details how she would draw up ideas for the glass shades then make a model in clay and finally in plaster, over which she would draw the design in pencil and then watercolour to approximate how the glass would eventually look. Once approved by Mr Tiffany, a prototype was modelled in wood, onto which the glass of various colours were cut and placed. The glass was fastened together at the factory with metal and was then, 'drawn off a complete shade. It is then put in an electric bath and plated with copper (the metal) and then … it comes back here to be sold'.

The NGV's recently acquired *Wisteria, table lamp* generously supported by the NGV Women's Association a perfect example of the skill involved in its production. Made up of 2000 individually cut favrile glass pieces that form panicles in shades of lilac, ultramarine and pinkish white, the lamp shade is in the form of a canopy of blossoms in full bloom borne from a weeping plant-like armature that holds the pieces in place at the top of the lamp, and which concludes in a twisting wisteria vine, patinated bronze, that roots from the base. One feature of the lamp is the asymmetrical border of its 'blooms' which accentuates the fluid, organic form of the design. The naturalistic colours of the lamp varied across its production – sometimes bright colours of cobalt blue, ultramarine and amethyst were used (made even more luminous when the light was switched on) and sometimes the palette was more restrained and natural, as in the NGV's version.

The process of construction was a delicate one, and upsets did occur. Driscoll reports, for instance, that on one notable occasion when the women had pieces of glass for the *Wisteria, table lamp* wrapped in copper foil and placed on large easels against the guidelines of the cartoon that guided their work, a disaster occurred:

> The scrub woman was cleaning the floor under the easel when she suddenly decided to get up. Of course she took the whole … easel with her and immediately the work of …. girls for six days was in about nine thousand pieces over the floor in an indistinguishable heap'.

The *Wisteria, table lamp* was a high end decorative arts object that would have cost its owners USD$400 in 1906, making it one of the Tiffany Studio's most expensive productions. However, despite its cost, it was a popular work for the studio and, by 1905, 123 *Wisteria* lamps had been made, wearing out the templates and necessitating that they be remade. The attraction of the lamp then, as now, is clear: it's wonderfully flowing lines and articulation of colour make it both an outstanding example of Art Nouveau and also show the impact that Japanese art was making on the Western decorative arts market.

Driscoll was sensitive to Mr Tiffany's aesthetic and her own creative style evolved in response. In a letter in 1898 she revealingly notes that Tiffany's home was filled with Japanese art like a dream of poetry and harmony that might have come out of the East. It is somewhat oriental in effect but not in detail. As if Mr Tiffany had gone to the same great sources of inspiration but had evolved his own conception of their great principles. I told him that I felt that his work was in some ways suggestive of Eastern thought, which seemed to please him – and he said, 'Yes I have always been influenced by the oriental idea of form and color'. He said he thought that I was gaining in my work and that I was thinking in the right direction'.

Wisteria, table lamp is a prime example of how sophisticated Driscoll was in her absorption of the Japonisme style, showing her profound appreciation of Japanese aesthetics and design philosophy rather than being a slavish copying of forms.

In many ways, Clara Driscoll was the epitome of the so-called 'modern woman' at the turn of the century, an artist-designer who established a strong independent career for herself in the commercial art world through her design and managerial talents. She fought hard for her team of women workers and successfully battled efforts by the union (which did not admit female members) to have them disbanded. *Wisteria, table lamp*, is not only her great masterwork but is now considered the most outstanding work of the Tiffany Studio and an icon of American modern design. And yet, Driscoll's contribution could so easily have been lost to history. That it ultimately was reinstated, is a tribute to the detective work of researchers who pieced together this important design story.

DR ISOBEL CROMBIE WAS NGV ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CURATORIAL AND COLLECTION MANAGEMENT. ALL QUOTES ARE TAKEN FROM MARTIN EIDELBERG, NINA GREY AND MARGARET K. HOFER, *A NEW LIGHT ON TIFFANY: CLARA DRISCOLL AND THE TIFFANY GIRLS*, NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEW YORK, 2007.
THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE JUL–AUG 2018 ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.

(p. 18) Clara Driscoll in her workroom at Tiffany Studios, with longtime manager Joseph Briggs 1901 Archival Photography. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY
(right) **Tiffany & Co., New York Tiffany Furnaces, Corona, New York** (manufacturer) **Clara Driscoll** (designer) *Wisteria, table lamp* 1903–1905. Purchased, NGV Women's Association, 2018

‘Who was this talented Maria Margaretha la Fargue?’

Maria Margaretha la Fargue was a skilled young artist from a family of painters, who struggled to assert her identity in the male-dominated world of eighteenth-century Dutch art. We are delighted that the NGV represents the work of Maria Margaretha la Fargue through the generosity of Andrew and Geraldine Buxton.

BY CHARLES DUMAS

In 2017 the National Gallery of Victoria purchased an enchanting eighteenth-century genre scene, *The shrimp seller*, 1776, by the female Dutch artist Maria Margaretha la Fargue, with funds kindly donated by Andrew and Geraldine Buxton. In a corridor the lady of the house is buying a bowl of shrimps from a kneeling seller at her doorstep. By her costume and hat the seller can be identified as a fisherwoman from Scheveningen, a coastal village close to The Hague. Through the open door is a view of houses along a canal. Although the depicted buildings are most probably an invention by the artist, they were surely meant to represent her home town of The Hague. In the foreground on the right we see a maid servant from the back, who is carrying a young boy as well as a bucket. On the corridor floor, with its white and middle blue marble tiles, a cat is playing with an insect. To the right stands a white painted wooden bench, above which hangs a seventeenth-century Dutch landscape painting in a black ebony frame. The two ladies and the child (with a silver baby’s comforter on a blue ribbon) are dressed in fine clothing that was fashionable around 1775.

This charming picture, which shows all the characteristics of the life of the upper middle class in the Netherlands during the second half of the eighteenth century, also refers to the previous century, the Golden Age of Dutch painting. Popular motifs from that period were to a certain extent repeated 100 years later, and put into a ‘contemporary jacket’. *The shrimp seller,* for example, must have been based on a scene by the Rotterdam painter Jacob Ochtervelt (1634–1682), now in the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague, but in La Fargue’s time in the collection of the Haarlem doctor Simon Stinstra (1735–1782).

The works by the amateur artist Maria Margaretha la Fargue, dating from 1761 to 1792, are limited in number, and this is likely why she is largely unknown to the greater public. Today only thirty-one paintings and thirty-two drawings by her are known, to which some seventy described in unillustrated sale catalogues before 1900 must be added. Apart from pieces in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and in the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida, her paintings are mostly in Dutch museums and private collections. Her drawings are more dispersed, and examples of them are kept in all major Dutch print rooms and in that of the Städel Museum

(previous and below) **Maria Margaretha La Fargue** *The shrimp seller* 1776. Purchased with funds donated by The Andrew & Geraldine Buxton Foundation, 2017
(right) **Jacob Ochtervelt** *A Fishseller at a door* c. 1663. Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague

in Frankfurt.

Who was this talented Maria Margaretha la Fargue? She was the youngest child of an unusually artistic family. Of the ten children of the notary and pamphleteer Jan Thomas la Fargue and his wife Charlotte Constantia van Nieuwland, only five reached adulthood. All of them chose to have a career as an artist. The eldest, Isaac Lodewijk la Fargue van Nieuwland (1726–1781), who added his mother's maiden name to his surname, specialised in portraits. The second child, Paulus Constantijn la Fargue (1729–1782), was the most versatile and the most productive. He made paintings, drawings and prints, mainly of landscapes and city views.

The third, Jacob Elias (1735 – c. 1778) followed in Paulus Constantijn's footsteps and produced paintings and drawings with topographical subjects. His younger brother Karel (1738–1793) did the same but was also a prolific forger of seventeenth-century drawings. He copied Old Master paintings in black chalk and sold them as preparatory sketches by those original artists. Maria Margaretha (1743–1813), finally, was a specialist in genre scenes. Only Isaac Lodewijk married.

Paulus Constantijn was really the driving force and the principal breadwinner of the family and after his death, the surviving members fell on hard times. From advertisements in local newspapers we know that from 1785 on, Maria Margaretha earned her living by giving drawing lessons to children of better situated families. Later she fell into poverty, and in 1808 she was taken into the charitable care of the Dutch Reformed Poor-Relief Board. At her death she was residing in its hospital and care facility.

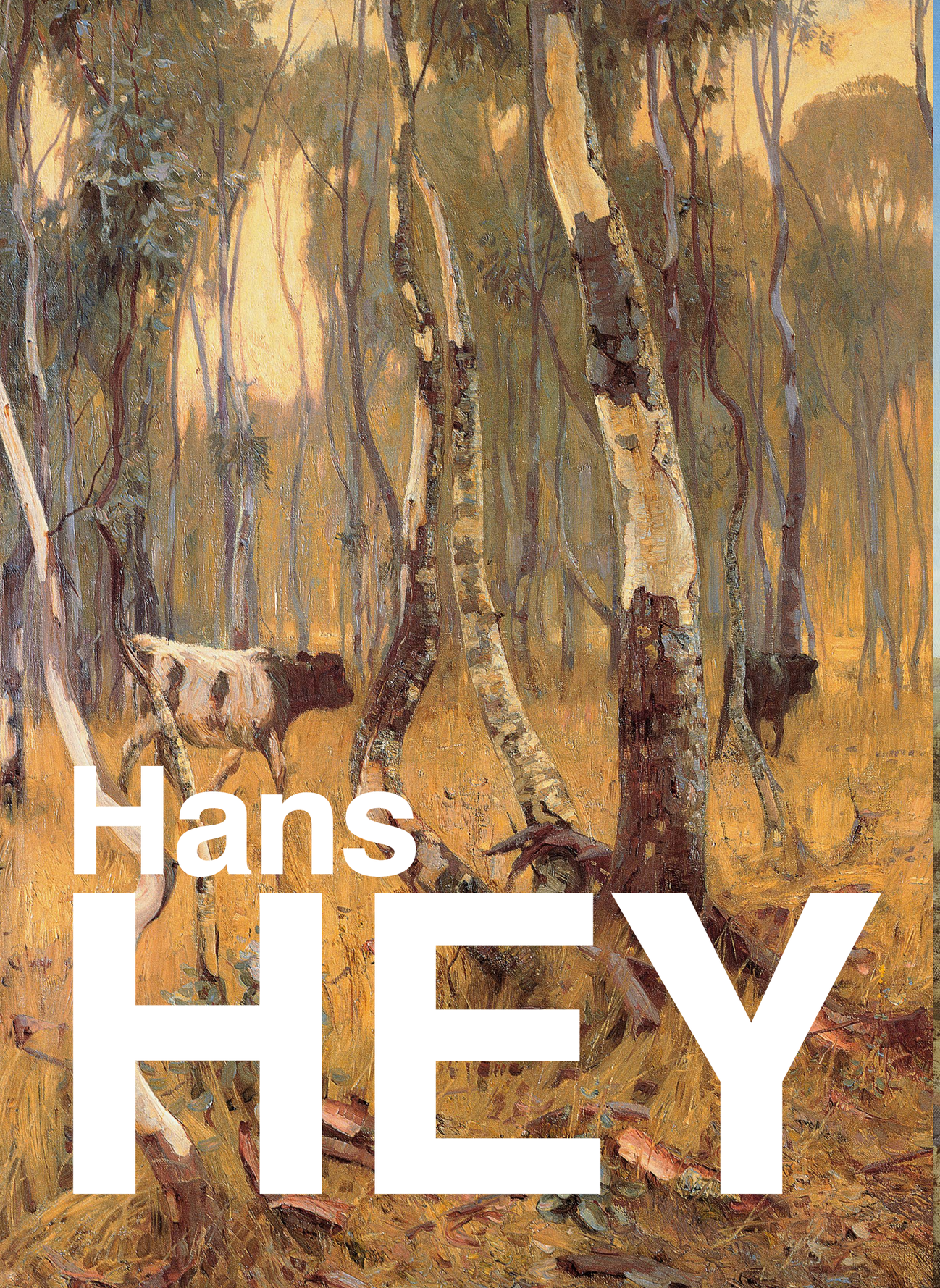
Maria Margaretha, who must have learned to paint and draw from her elder brothers, was a very religious person and – like the rest of her family – a fervent supporter of the House of Orange. This can be concluded from her writings, which were never published and only consist of manuscripts. The typical female subjects she depicted in a relatively small format can be divided into four types. Firstly, there are interiors of the affluent middle class, usually peopled with a mother, her children and a serving maid. Sometimes a visit to a cradle is depicted. The NGV's painting belongs to this group. Then there are outdoor scenes, with a woman selling fish, eggs or vegetables at the door. Those pictures were often intended as pendants, one showing an urban environment, and the other a more rural one. Variations on these are the scenes in which the saleswoman is replaced by a knife-grinder or a youth playing on a lyre, sometimes accompanied by a little dressed-up dancing dog, subjects that reflect the influence of seventeenth-century masters such as Nicolaes Maes (1634–1693). A third type employs an arched niche, through which we see the interior of a kitchen, where a woman is busy peeling

potatoes or polishing copper pans. Finally, there are the scenes in which only one person, usually a fish-seller, a Savoyard (of or pertaining to Savoy) or a lyre player, is depicted in a landscape. When a certain painting was successful, the artist sometimes re-created it, with only a few changes. In this second version mistakes could be corrected and extra details added. Therefore, such variants are in general of a higher quality. This is also the case with the Melbourne picture, which is a reworking of a painting from one year earlier (pictured opposite).

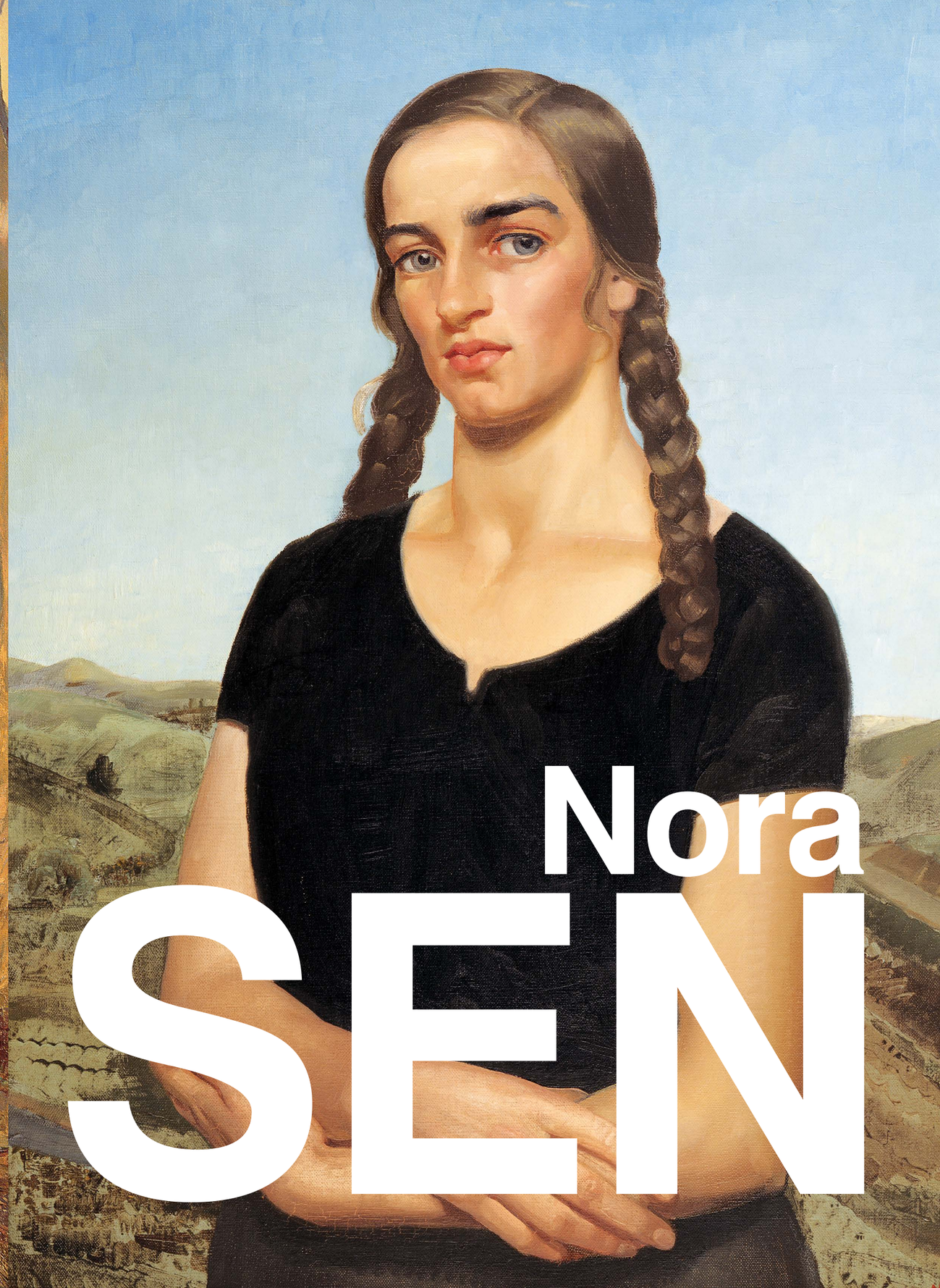
At the end of the 1780s La Fargue also executed a few portraits, including a drawing of Frederick William II of Prussia, Elector of Brandenburg. In the years 1787 to 1789 seven drawings by her of contemporary events were engraved by Mattheus de Sallieth and Theodorus Koning to be illustrated in *De Haagsche Princelyke en Koninglyke Almanach (The Hague Princely and Royal Almanac)*. Her last known work from 1792 is an etching – her only one – of the distribution of prizes to students of the Latin School. This print, which she dedicated to Princess Wilhelmina of Prussia, the wife of the Dutch stadtholder William V, was never taken into production and only a proof of it exists.

As a woman, La Fargue was not allowed to enter the Confrerie Pictura (the local society of painters in The Hague), of which her brothers were all members. In that time, women were not supposed to paint and draw as a profession (although there are a few exceptions). So, the unmarried Maria Margaretha struggled her whole life to keep her head above water. Although her choice of subjects was quite limited, she produced very elegant works of art whose anecdotal settings, with all their detailing, capture our imagination.

CHARLES DUMAS IS A DUTCH WRITER AND CURATOR.
THE NGV WARMLY THANKS ANDREW AND GERALDINE BUXTON FOR MAKING THE ACQUISITION OF MARIA MARGARETHA LA FARGUE'S *THE SHRIMP SELLER* POSSIBLE. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE SEP–OCT 2018 ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.



Hans HEYSEN



Nora HEYSEN

Hans Heysen's luminous depictions of the Australian landscape are testament to the life of an artist who had a rare and subtle relationship with nature. An early conservationist who viewed trees as individuals, Hans found solace in the natural world during times of uncertainty and trauma. His daughter, Nora, was similarly sensitive to the rhythms of life and had an impressive aptitude for capturing human emotion and domestic detail. She was also a highly-acclaimed painter of still life, was the first woman to win the Archibald Prize, and the first female Australian war artist.

BY DR ANGELA HESSON

(p. 26) **Hans Heysen** *Mystic morn* 1904 (detail) Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide Elder Bequest Fund 1904 © C Heysen
(p. 27) **Nora Heysen** *Ruth* 1933 (detail) Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide South Australian Government Grant 1934 © Lou Klepac
(p. 28) **Hans Heysen** *Sewing (The artist's wife)* 1913 The Cedars, Hahndorf The Hans Heysen Estate © C Heysen
(p. 29) **Hans Heysen** *Droving into the light* 1914–21 Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth Gift of Mr W H Vincent, 1922 © C Heysen

Born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1877, to Maria Heysen and Louis Heysen, Hans and his family moved to Australia in 1884. Though the family settled in Adelaide, from a young age Hans visited Hahndorf, a small town in the Adelaide Hills that was an important centre of German immigration. In 1892, aged fourteen, Hans left school and was apprenticed to Cowell Brothers, a sawmilling and hardware business. He began to draw seriously in his spare time, buying art materials with his wages. In 1893 he enrolled at James Ashton's Norwood Art School, where he swiftly established a reputation as an unusually talented pupil. In 1899 Hans was awarded an informal scholarship by four Adelaide businessowners to further his education in Europe. The experience was, in all ways, formative: Hans received formal instruction of a standard unavailable in Australia at that time, while also being exposed to the rich and varied history of European art. After three years of study in Paris, he travelled to the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands.

His frames of artistic reference expanded exponentially, and when Hans returned to Adelaide in 1903 it was with a new confidence and ambition. Within a year, he set up his own studio, won the Wynne Prize for *Mystic morn*, 1904, and married Selma (Sallie) Bartels. Sallie composed the title for Hans's prize-winning, Symbolist-inspired painting, and would do the same for many others. Her love for Hans was, from the outset, connected to his work as an artist. The story goes that she had declared, upon viewing his *Meadowsweet, Scotland*, 1904, in a South Australian exhibition, that she was going to marry the man who had painted it. And she did, having first engineered their acquaintance by enrolling as his student. While Hans was notably lacking in family connections, Sallie was not. Her father was the mayor of Adelaide, and she socialised widely with the city's most fashionable and prosperous families, many of whom would go on to become key patrons for Hans.

In November 1908 Hans and Sallie Heysen moved to a rented cottage in Hahndorf, and in the same year, an enormously successful exhibition of Hans's work was held in Melbourne, aided by E. Phillips Fox and opened by Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin. Nora was born in 1911, the fourth of Sallie and Hans's eight children, and the only one among them who would go on to pursue an artistic career. In 1912, the year after Nora's birth, the Heysens purchased an expansive country property in Hahndorf called The Cedars, which they furnished in the Arts and Crafts style. When Hans was ultimately able to build his own studio, it was rustically vernacular without, and luminous within, with long, geometrically paned windows evoking the work of Scottish Arts and Crafts designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The garden was planted with fragrant bourbon roses, lilacs and irises.

Although their property was surrounded by farmland and was ostensibly suitable for farming, the Heysens chose not to. Instead, they allowed it to gently return to nature.

Hans referred to 'meeting' trees. He also mourned their loss. In 1937 he wrote to Nora, 'that lovely old white Gum I have painted so often at Woodside has gone. It felt like losing an old friend'. This sensibility lends a curious ambivalence to heroic images of rural labour such as *Hauling timber*, 1911. Accounts of Hans paying local councils the price of the timber so they would not cut down his favourite eucalypts were widely reported during his lifetime, and what was once perceived as an endearing mark of eccentricity is today identifiable as a progressive conservationist impulse.

RUTH

In 1933, Nora Heysen produced a series of portraits biblically titled *Ruth*, after the Book of Ruth. The subject (pictured on page 27) was not, in fact, named Ruth at all – her name was Ronda Paech. She was a local farm worker who also delivered the family's groceries. Nora was struck by Ronda's strong features, and Sallie Heysen commissioned her to sit for her daughter.

There was something personally therapeutic, too, in Hans's approach to landscape. In 1926, following the trauma of the First World War and the sudden and tragically premature death of his daughter Lilian from meningitis, he ventured for the first time to the Flinders Ranges. He would return ten times, mainly to the Aroona and Arkaba areas, where he made sketches and watercolours, some of which were later developed into oils. In this ancient place of monumental rocks and trees scarred by time and drought, Hans found, it seems, a kind of comfort in the rough continuity of nature. It was also during this time that he discovered a new palette – the gentle modulations of his Hahndorf landscapes are replaced by something more contrasting. The influence of Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Cézanne is manifested in the Flinders landscapes – particularly striking are the effects of geometric simplification, as Hans himself described, 'the beautiful balance of the pyramid and the circle'.

Just as Hans's work emblematised the notion of 'knowing' nature through the study of landscape, so Nora knew nature through flowers and through people. Although she was not directly taught to paint by her father, Nora observed his work and accompanied him on painting trips from an early age. As a young artist, she drew many of her father's favourite subjects, and her pencil studies of eucalypts are almost indistinguishable from his. In 1926, at the age of fourteen, she enrolled at the North Adelaide School of Fine Arts, where she studied full-time for five years. Following the sale of her first painting in 1930, Nora began to paint in a converted shed at The Cedars, and over the next three years her works were acquired by major art collections around Australia. While Hans's work remained influential, Nora began to move subtly in other directions. Speaking towards the end of her life, Nora declared, 'My nature didn't lend itself to this quick watercolour painting. I wanted to model things and get things in the round'. The tendency to treat each element in a composition individually is particularly marked in early works such as *Petunias*, 1930, provoking some gentle critique from Hans, who questioned the approach of 'each flower being seen somewhat separately'. Yet this willingness to privilege the detail over the cohesive whole is arguably a mark of Nora's engagement with modernism, and a point of differentiation between father and daughter.

The year before she departed for a period of study in England, Nora mounted her first solo exhibition in Adelaide at the Royal South Australia Society of Arts. The exhibition sold out, and Nora won the Society's Melrose Prize for Portraiture for a self-portrait at her easel. In the same year, she produced three portraits biblically titled *Ruth*. In the pure, clearly delineated features of her sitter and the luminous hues of the sky behind, these paintings evoke the work of the nineteenth-century Nazarene painters – polished and technically proficient, but with a slightly paradoxical air of gentle naivety. In 1934, following a nine-month family tour of Germany and the United Kingdom, Nora arrived in London and enrolled in classes at the Central School of Art. She was joined in London by her close friend, West Australian sculptor Everton Stokes, who would become an important figure in Nora's life, in Europe and after, as a fellow artist, travel companion, and artistic subject. The following four years was a period of tremendous excitement and evolution for Nora, who wrote home to her parents in 1936, 'I want to paint people, homely interiors, skies and trees and water and all that is living and vibrating around me ... I feel freer and surer of myself, and I know what I want'.

In 1938, soon after returning to Australia from Europe, Nora departed Hahndorf for Sydney – then the centre of arts publishing in Australia. There

'Just as Hans's work emblematised the notion of "knowing" nature through the study of landscape, so Nora knew nature through flowers and through people.'

ANGELA HESSON

she was introduced to the Netherlands' consul and his wife, Madame Elink Schuurman, whose portrait she painted and entered in the Archibald Prize, the highest honour in Australian portraiture. Nora's surprise upon winning was clear – she was swimming in Rushcutters Bay when the announcement was made and arrived home to discover photographers on her doorstep. Ever the advocate of humility, Hans wryly advised his daughter against 'getting a swollen head'.

When war was declared in 1939, Nora wrote home of her frustration at her powerlessness in the face of such destruction. In 1943, the possibility of becoming a war artist emerged, and she expressed immediate enthusiasm. She was the first woman to receive the appointment and, predictably, her treatment differed substantially from that of her male counterparts. She was assigned to document medical and research units around Australia, and subsequently at Finschhafen in New Guinea. Nora's portraiture during this time bears all the marks of her great sensitivity as an artist and humanist and arguably little in the way of explicit patriotism. She was under no illusions about the glories of battle – three years earlier she had declared her 'bitter resentment against the futility and the horror of war'. Her drawings of invalids and wounded soldiers are among her most delicate and sensitive from this period, demonstrating her emotional connection to her subjects, as well as her technical facility as a draftsperson.

It was also in New Guinea that Nora met and fell in love with Dr Robert Black, a highly regarded specialist in tropical diseases. He was amusing, handsome and married, although the marriage was by that time in a state of instability. After the war, Nora followed Robert to Liverpool and, following Black's protracted divorce proceedings, the couple married in 1953 and purchased The Chalet in Hunters Hill, Sydney, where Nora would live until her death half a century later. Although the marriage was ultimately to disintegrate, it was a pivotal experience in Nora's life, the more so for the great independence and strength required to foster an unconventional romance in a period of considerable conservatism.

The Heysens were a family characterised by a combination of progressive impulses and traditional instincts. 'I'm not a feminist!', Nora is said to have called after an interviewer, and the quotation, for better or worse, has gone down as one of her most famous. Yet, to look back at Nora's life is to witness an extraordinary case-study in women's independence. Most of her adult life was spent living alone. Although she received financial assistance from her family in times of difficulty, she succeeded, for the most part, in supporting herself with her art. She travelled widely, and often alone, at a time when it was generally perceived as unsafe for a woman to do so. All things considered, Nora's relationship to feminism was perhaps more a question of semantics than politics or philosophy.

After the mid-century success of her Archibald win and wartime commission, Nora fell into relative obscurity. She continued to paint and entered the Archibald several more times, but was uninterested in self-promotion and made no attempt to maintain a public identity. In part as a consequence of her failing eyesight, her painting style changed later in life. She began to work in pastels, and in a high-key palette. She painted friends' children, animals, fruit and flowers from her garden – subjects full of symbolic and literal light. In remaining productive long into old age, Nora continued a family tradition. Hans painted and drew almost until his death in 1968 at the age of ninety, although increasing infirmity made excursions into nature, so crucial to his practice, increasingly difficult.

The Heysen family corresponded throughout their lives and their letters offer rare insight into Hans and Nora's working methods, inspirations and thoughts on the key artistic debates of their time. It was an artistic inheritance that brought its share of frustrations. Nora was a skilled and imaginative artist, yet she remained troubled throughout her life by the possibility that her reputation might be dependent upon her father's. In a 1962 interview she declared, 'I don't know if I exist in my own right'. Yet the relationship was characterised, overwhelmingly, by a sense of gratitude, inspiration and love. The frequency of Hans and Nora's correspondence attests to a bond as pleasurable as it was productive. Their shared love of nature, manifest in Hans's powerfully evocative, softly modulated landscapes and Nora's meticulous, reverent studies of flowers, formed an additional bond between them. In 1945, encamped with a medical unit in New Guinea and suffering dermatitis and exhaustion, Nora mused in a letter to her parents, 'You will be welcoming the first signs of Spring. How remote all that sweet freshness seems', before signing off with her customary farewell, 'My love to all at home'.

DR ANGELA HESSON IS NGV CURATOR, AUSTRALIAN PAINTING, SCULPTURE AND DECORATIVE ARTS TO 1980. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE MAR–APR 2019 ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.

(p. 31) **Nora Heysen** *Petunias* 1930. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney Purchased, 1930
(p. 32) **Nora Heysen** *Pathologist titrating* sera (Captain Robert Black) 1944

Françoise Gilot

Françoise Gilot's command of colour and form is strikingly clear in her work *Blue eyes* 1956. This portrait was generously supported by the Bowness Family Foundation and George and Patricia Kline and family. The first work by Gilot to enter the NGV Collection, it represents a significant addition of a School of Paris painting by a female artist.

BY TED GOTT

Françoise Gilot was born in 1921 in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France. Inspired by her mother, who was a watercolourist, Gilot was only five when she realised she wanted to become an artist and, with perhaps surprising resolve, did not digress from this early decision. She was tutored first by her mother, and then by her mother's art teacher, and although after finishing school enrolled to study law at university, compelled by her father, she dropped out at nineteen, committed to making a life and career out of art. By 1939 Gilot had attained both a Bachelor of Arts (Philosophy) at the University of Paris and a degree in English literature at Cambridge University.

Although Gilot had dreamt of being an artist from a young age, both her desire to make art and her abandonment of law school were caused by a life-changing incident when she was eighteen. Along with many other Parisian students at the time, Gilot participated in a student demonstration in Nazi-occupied Paris. Her involvement was discovered and her name placed on a Gestapo hostage list – she would be executed as a reprisal if any German soldier was killed. Having her name on a blacklist made attending law school problematic. Gilot instead spent her time sketching in Paris subways and cafes. Her decision not to pursue law studies may have been spurred by a survival instinct as much as it was by a passion for art but, regardless, that decision set the course for her future.

In 1941 at the Salon des Tuileries, Gilot met a young Hungarian painter Endre Rozsda, who invited the young artist to work in his studio. Gilot soon returned to study, at the Académie Julian and the École des Beaux-Arts. In 1943, at age twenty-one, Gilot held her first exhibition in Paris, showing work alongside another artist friend, Geneviève Aliquot. That same year she met and began a relationship with Pablo Picasso, and in their ten years together they had two children, Claude and Paloma.

Gilot continued to work as an independent artist during and after her relationship with Picasso; in 1949 she entered into a contractual arrangement with the Galerie Louie Leiris, and in 1952 was the first woman artist to exhibit with this prestigious gallery.

In 1953 Gilot left Picasso. Earlier, she had inherited some family money and, enabled by this financial independence, she left their Vallauris home and returned to Paris with their children. In 1955 Gilot married the artist Luc Simon, with whom she had a second daughter, Aurélia, and in 1969, now in Los Angeles, Gilot married Dr Jonas Salk. They were together until Salk's death in 1995. During these years Gilot travelled between France and the United States, and exhibited regularly in the United States.

In May 2016 Gilot spoke about the period of work in which *Blue eyes*, 1956, was created: 'In 1954, I decided to resume drawing from nature, taking inspiration from professional models or from friends. I worked with a young English classical dancer called Germaine Brocks. Having fair hair, pale complexion and a fine silhouette, Germaine was a well-known model in the Paris art world and she became for me quite an inspiring and poetic presence ... throughout 1955, she came to sit for me almost every day, and I believe she helped me attain very good results as I got to know her so well'. In *Blue eyes,* Germaine Brocks is shown seated on a chair, her hands on her left knee. Although painted in the 1950s, Brocks looks thoroughly contemporary in a minimalist red sleeveless top, snug black skirt and black low-heeled shoes.

Françoise Gilot is now in her mid nineties. She still paints, remaining true to that decision made at the tender age of five.

TED GOTT IS NGV SENIOR CURATOR, INTERNATIONAL ART. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE MAY–JUNE 2017 ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.

Françoise Gilot *Blue eyes (Les yeux bleus)* 1956. Purchased with funds donated by the Bowness Family Foundation and George and Patricia Kline and family, 2017

Modern Australian Women

Many Australian artists from the early to mid-twentieth century were pivotal in introducing radical new ideas and movements to Australian art, and applied a strategic yet pragmatic approach to their work, which set the scene for a century of transformation.

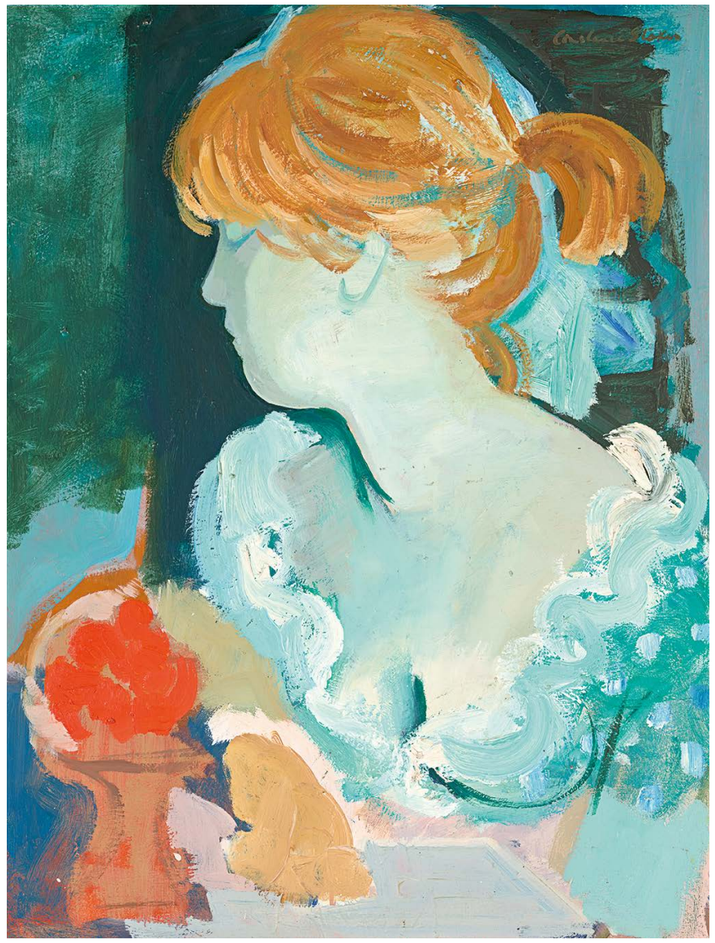
BY DR MARIA QUIRK

Modern Australian Women: Works from a Private Collection explores the lives and art of over fifty artists who worked in Australia and abroad between 1880 and the 1960s. Almost all of these women were professional working artists, often supporting themselves and their families via the sale of art through public exhibitions, commercial galleries and private commissions. The works on display provide insight into women's professional and economic strategies, as well as their role in introducing Post-impressionist and modernist artistic theories into the Australian art landscape.

It was difficult for artists of either gender to make a living in Australia during the first half of the twentieth century, a time when two world wars and an economic depression deflated art prices and art by Australians was still undervalued. Faced with the additional challenges of gendered pricing practices and institutional biases, most women took a pragmatic approach to producing and selling art for the domestic market, working in genres and mediums that were popular with buyers, such as floral still life and travel landscapes.

Women were regarded as 'naturally' suited to flower painting, which was considered a minor genre. While this characterisation was reductionist, women like Violet McInnes and Alice Bale used women's association with floral painting to their advantage. Small scale still lives were among the safest and most saleable works for women to produce. Small canvases and floral subjects suited the homes and tastes of middle-class buyers, and producing a large number of small canvases, priced modestly, was an effective means of generating a stable income. Unfortunately, their subject matter and focus on saleability meant flower painters were often not taken seriously by critics. Even though women were encouraged to pursue and excel at

(pp. 36–7) **Dora Meeson** *On a Chelsea balcony* 1912. Gift of Andrée Fay Harkness Testamentary Trust through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2020
(p. 39) **Constance Stokes** *Head of a young girl early* 1960s. Private Collection, Melbourne
(p. 40) **Margaret Preston** *The window* c. 1916. Private Collection, Melbourne
(p. 41 left) **Bessie Davidson** *Jeune fille au miroir* 1914 Paris. Private Collection, Melbourne
(p. 41 right) **Grace Cossington Smith** *Bottlebrushes* 1935. Gift of Andrée Fay Harkness Testamentary Trust through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2020



flower painting, artists who worked consistently in the genre faced derision for producing work seen as unoriginal and artistically undemanding.

Despite this charge, women artists were at the forefront of forays into Post-impressionism and modernism in Australia, and in the 1920s and 1930s some women used floral studies as a vehicle for radical artistic experimentation. Margaret Preston and Grace Cossington Smith used everyday, 'feminine' objects like flowers and tableware to develop their modernist aesthetics, incorporating graphic, geometric and decorative elements into these traditionally domestic, 'minor' subjects.

Portraiture was the other staple of women artists' commercial practice. Janet Cumbrae Stewart, Dora Wilson and Florence Rodway were prolific and popular portrait painters in the first decades of the twentieth century, working predominantly in pastel. Around 1910, Rodway accepted up to twenty portrait commissions a year, producing both large-scale and miniature likenesses for clients including Dame Nellie Melba and Henry Lawson. While portrait commissions from private clients provided a steady income, it left little time for personal artistic diversions. In 1916, Rodway noted that she had no time to work on an elaborate pastel composition because of her commitments to portrait clients. As is the case for many women, the necessity of making a living outweighed ambitious and risky experimentation.

The fact that women predominantly painted portraits of children and members of the middle class has also affected their inclusion and visibility in public art collections throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Despite advocating for the opportunity, women were unlikely to receive prestigious, public-facing portrait commissions for figures such as prime ministers. Much of their work remains in private collections, or has not traditionally been regarded as significant or relevant to public museums and collections. This exhibition offers audiences the opportunity to view works rarely seen on public display.

Women artists' careers were often punctuated by periods of travel to the artistic capitals of Europe to pursue further study and professional opportunities. Women won nine of the triennially offered National Gallery School Travelling Scholarships between 1908 and 1932, and the Post-impressionistic style common to many women of this period owes much to their intrepid travels and embrace of the new, the cosmopolitan and the foreign at a time when there was limited access to art news and art reproductions in Australia.

In London, for example, Sydney artist Thea Proctor had the opportunity to view the highly influential Post-impressionist exhibition, organised in 1910 by Roger Fry. Although she recorded that the paintings were 'rather a shock', viewing the exhibition and its colours in person was a 'thrilling experience' which, along with her introduction to the unique aesthetic of the Ballets Russes, had a profound influence on her own style.

As well as facilitating access to new cultural influences, the very experience of inhabiting complex and cosmopolitan cities was liberating artistically and personally. International mobility, and the feelings of 'otherness' that accompanied living as an outsider in an urban, Continental environment, were key aspects of international modernism that women like Proctor, Ethel Spowers and Margaret Preston experienced and imbibed at this time. Australian women's studios in Europe were spaces of burgeoning female modernity, where women's interior lives, artistic development and personal independence blossomed.

Travel in Europe was also transformative for women who didn't embrace modernism, like Bessie Davidson, Dora Meeson and Agnes Goodsir. In London and Paris, they had the opportunity to engage with new methods, subjects and contacts. Australian women achieved remarkable success in Europe; Davidson was awarded the Chevalier of the Legion of Honour by the French government for her services to art, Goodsir was invited to join the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts and many others were hung 'on the line' at the Paris Salon and London's Royal Academy. Unfortunately, recognition abroad did not always translate into respect and success at home, and many women artists of this period did not receive serious critical attention in Australia during their lifetimes. This exhibition showcases the outcomes of this crucial period in Australian art and the enduring influence of Australia's 'modern women'.

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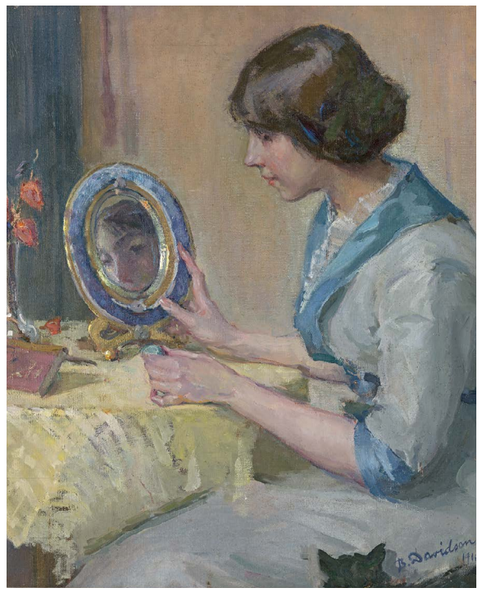


Clarice Beckett
From Dusk until Dawn

Clarice Beckett *Evening light, Beaumaris* c. 1925. Presented by the National Gallery Society of Victoria to mark the retirement of Paton Forster, General Secretary of the Society (1968–1989), 1989

Clarice Beckett emerged onto the Melbourne art scene of the 1900s with a distinct, though not necessarily fashionable, style of painting that rendered commonplace street scenes and landscapes with a dreamlike haze. She was progressive, dedicated and skilled, yet never achieved critical acclaim – until a hoard of her works was discovered decades after her death in an unlikely location.

BY BECKETT ROZENTALS

Now acknowledged as one of Australia's leading female artists of the early twentieth century, Clarice Beckett received very little recognition or support during her lifetime. Beckett was born in 1887 in the Victorian country town of Casterton where her father, Joseph Beckett, was a banker. Beckett's mother, Elizabeth Beckett nee Brown, was the granddaughter of John Brown, who designed and built Como House in South Yarra. Beckett attended Queen's College in Ballarat and then Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School, where her artistic talent came to the fore. In 1914, when Beckett was twenty-seven years old, she and her younger sister Hilda enrolled at the National Gallery School, where Clarice studied under Frederick McCubbin. In 1918, the same year that Beckett's family moved to the Melbourne seaside suburb of Beaumaris, Beckett became a pupil of artist Max Meldrum.

Meldrum was known for his radical views: he was a civil libertarian, pacifist and anti-fascist activist of some influence. In 1915, he had given his first lecture on his own art theory, in which he defined colour tone principles by showing chromatic diagrams and examples of the work of Diego Velázquez, Rembrandt van Rijn and Camille Corot, and the following year set up an art school where he taught according to these principles. Beckett exhibited regularly with Meldrum and other tonal realists including Percy Leason, Colin Colahan and Alexander Colquhoun. Following Meldrum's principles, Beckett painted atmospheric images of city streets, the bayside suburbs of Sandringham and Beaumaris, and Naringal in the Western District.

Beckett's first solo exhibition was held at the Athenaeum Club in Melbourne in June 1923, and she continued to exhibit there annually until 1932. Known for her pictorialist approach, Beckett used flat brushwork to produce misty depictions of seemingly ordinary scenes – telegraph poles, trams and car lights at dusk – creating soft, serene paintings. While at first glance her work could appear to depict commonplace scenes, Beckett's paintings in fact captured the modern world. Sadly, her work was often poorly received by critics, and she sold very few paintings in her lifetime.

Although Beckett taught for a short time at a girls' school in Mount Macedon around 1927, she spent the rest of her life in Beaumaris where, as the unmarried daughter of the family, she was obliged to care for her aged parents. While at the time a number of Australian female artists had family support and opportunities to travel abroad, Beckett never ventured beyond Victoria.

While tending to her parents, Beckett painted in the early morning and evenings. Not permitted to have a studio at home, she worked either at the kitchen table or on location, taking with her a homemade cart with paints and easel. It was on her walks that Beckett produced some of her most atmospheric scenes of the shore of Beaumaris and its surrounds.

After being caught in a storm while painting in Sandringham in 1935, Beckett contracted pneumonia and subsequently died at the age of forty-eight in May of that year. Beckett's family organised a memorial exhibition at the Athenaeum Art Gallery in 1936. However, following this, her work fell into obscurity, and her paintings were left in storage on a family property in country Victoria in an open-sided barn.

In 1971, former gallerist and art curator Rosalind Hollinrake made the discovery of some mysterious paintings signed 'C. Beckett'. This find resulted in Hollinrake embarking on a major search for the identity of the painter. Hollinrake's journey unearthed over 2000 of Beckett's paintings; some 1200 had been destroyed due to exposure to the elements and animals. Following the discovery, Hollinrake dedicated decades of her life to Beckett's work. Hollinrake curated exhibitions of the surviving paintings at Rosalind Humphries Galleries, Melbourne in 1971 and 1972. Following the first exhibition, the National Gallery of Australia purchased several works for its collection – the first acquisition of Beckett's work by a major institution. It is due to Hollinrake's discovery and dedication to Beckett's practice that every major Australian gallery, and many regional and university galleries, now hold works by Beckett in their collections, and that she has now been recognised for her significant contribution to Australian art.

BECKETT ROZENTALS IS NGV CURATOR, AUSTRALIAN PAINTING, SCULPTURE AND DECORATIVE ARTS TO 1980. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE NOV–DEC 2018 ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.

Claude Cahun

We introduce the ambiguous Claude Cahun and her extraordinary partnership with Marcel Moore.

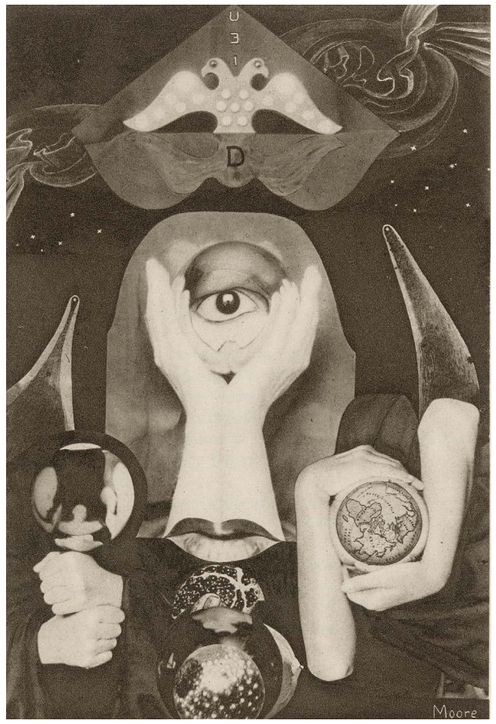
BY MAGGIE FINCH

Aveux non Avenus, by the celebrated poet, writer, sculptor and photographer Claude Cahun, was published in 1930 by *Éditions du Carrefour*, Paris, in an edition of five hundred. The book comprises a series of texts in French: poems, literary aphorisms, recollections of dream sequences and philosophical thoughts, ideas and meanderings. Pierre Mac Orlan, a French novelist who wrote the preface to the book, described Mademoiselle Claude Cahun's text as 'de poèmes-essais et d'essais-poèmes', or 'poem-essays and essay-poems', and said that overall 'the book is virtually entirely dedicated to the word adventure'.

The alliterative title presents a conundrum for English translation – 'aveux' meaning 'avowals' or 'confessions', and 'non avenus' meaning 'voided' – and is variously translated as *Disavowals, Denials, and Unavowed confessions*, among other things. Curator Jennifer Mundy has written that the title suggests 'an affirmative expression immediately followed by some form of negation or retraction'. (Mundy, 'Introduction', *Disavowals or Cancelled Confessions: Claude Cahun*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007, XI.)

Ambiguities around the title aside, there is a strong visual aspect to the book too. The texts are each demarcated with a complex and fantastical photogravure created by Cahun's partner, Marcel Moore. These photogravure (where an image from the negative of a photograph is etched into a metal plate, similar to printmaking) are collages made up of photographic images of, and by, Cahun. Throughout the book, graphic devices of stars, eyes and lips are also used to separate sections of text. *Aveux non Avenus*, which has been described as an anti-realist or surrealist-autobiography of the multi-disciplinary Cahun, exists as a potential critique of the autobiography format altogether, is wonderfully irreducible.

Claude Cahun was born as Lucy Renée Mathilde Schwob into a prominent intellectual Jewish family in Nantes, France, in 1894. Her father, Maurice Schwob, owned the regional newspaper *Le Phare de la Loire*; her uncle was the avant-garde Symbolist writer Marcel Schwob; and her great-uncle the orientalist and writer, David Léon Cahun. Following the institutionalisation of her mother, Mary-Antoinette Courbebaisse, Cahun was raised from a young age by her grandmother, Mathilde Cahun. In her teens, her father remarried and she gained a stepsister, Suzanne Malherbe; they were to become life-long partners and collaborators.



Fond of alliterations, and having temporarily used several different male pseudonyms (Claude Courlis and Daniel Douglas), around 1916 she adopted the name of Claude Cahun – the surname taken from her maternal grandmother's side of the family, and Claude for its intentional gender ambiguity and neutrality. Suzanne Malherbe, similarly, took on the name of Marcel Moore. Cahun also explored ideas around gender indeterminacy through her physical appearance and dress – early self-portraits show her with shortly cropped and shaved hair, and intentionally 'masculine' forms of dress, as well as adopting various guises – from doll, to aviator, to dandy. It was the beginning of a long exploration, in art and life, into a radical and persistent questioning of traditional ideas around gender roles, identity and authority.

The city of Paris re-established itself as the hub of the arts during the early years of the postwar period, drawing together artists, writers and musicians from around the world as the population of the city reached a historic high in 1921. As the economy gradually recovered from the desperation of the First World War, the city hosted major international events in the 1920s, such as the Olympic Games in 1924 and the international Exposition of Decorative Arts in 1925. Before the eventual Great Depression of the 1930s, the 1920s was characterised as *les années folles*, or 'the crazy years' – a period of intense artistic experimentation that saw the rise of Josephine Baker and her extraordinary, erotic performances at the Folies Bergère; the unique compositions of musicians such as Erik Satie and Maurice Ravel; the flourishing of new voices in literature and poetry through writers such as Ernest Hemingway and Ezra Pound; and the development of visual art movements such as Surrealism, Cubism and Dadaism.

Against this cultural and social backdrop, Claude Cahun commenced studies in philology and philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris while Marcel Moore worked as a graphic designer and fashion illustrator. Their first known collaboration, 'Vues et visions' ('Views and Visions'), with text by Cahun and illustration by Moore, was published in the literary journal *Mercure de France*. In 1920 they made a home together in Montparnasse – the centre of artistic activity at this time – and became a prominent couple immersed in a circle of avant-garde literary, artistic and theatrical practitioners. Particular friends during this period were two significant bookstore owners – Sylvia Beach, the British expatriate who established the bookstore Shakespeare and Company, and Adrienne Monnier, owner of La Maison des Amis des Livres. Independently wealthy, Cahun and Moore also hosted artists' salons from their apartment and guests included the likes of the co-founder of the Surrealist movement, André Breton, and Belgian writer and painter Henri Michaux.

It was during these years in Paris that Cahun wrote the majority of text for *Aveux non Avenus* – specifically between about 1919 and 1925, with a later section added in 1928. Cahun begins the book with a statement that reveals the complex self-analysis she was exploring and sets the tone for the abstract and non-coherent picture that the book paints of the artist. As she wrote, imagining herself in front of a camera:

> 'The lens tracks the eyes, the wrinkles skin deep … the expression on the face is fierce, sometimes tragic. And then calm – a knowing calm, worked on, flashy. A professional smile – and voilá! The hand held mirror reappears, and the rouge and eye shadow. A beat. Full stop. New paragraph.'

At this time Cahun was also experimenting extensively with photography and self-portraiture. It is believed that her first self-portraits were taken around 1913, in her late teens, and the examination of gender using her own face and body continued throughout her life. In the 1920s, the images were often highly theatrical and staged, and made use of costumes, makeup and masks to blur and alter her identity. Cahun often gazes directly at the camera in her portraits from this time – her distinct, angular face and androgynous hairstyle is immediately recognisable and yet intentionally inscrutable. Indeed, Marcel Moore clearly had an abundance of photographic materials to work with when producing the collages for the book – with Cahun's face mirrored, cropped and repeated extensively throughout the illustrations, and yet, like the texts, telling you very little about the person in the traditional sense of an autobiography. The frontispiece is one of the most obscure images in the book, introducing symbols of the eye and mouth, and mirroring techniques, all of which appear throughout. Curator Anne O'Hehir has said that 'the eye represented Moore, the artist, and the mouth, Cahun, the writer and actor'. (O'Hehir and Wise, 'Sole survivor: Re-evaluating and conserving Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore's only known remaining photomontage used for Cahun's 1930 publication *Aveux non Avenus (Disavowed Confessions)*', *Topics in Photographic Preservation*, 2013, vol. 15, p. 380.)

A later collage by Moore, in the section entitled 'I.O.U.', or 'self-pride', shows a detail of a photograph by Cahun from 1927 reworked in the lower right corner. Cahun is seen posing as a carnival weightlifter, legs crossed and her top adorned with the phrase 'I am in training don't kiss me', and a love heart drawn onto her leggings and painted onto her cheeks. Combining photographs, drawing and text, the composite image also shows a series of stacking dolls, each receding in size and revealing an X-ray-like image of a baby or foetus within; a drawing of a man, woman and child whose stomachs extend out from their bodies to join them physically together; a stack of Cahun's 'faces' are repeated and overlaid to form an abstracted tower of eyes and foreheads and mouths. Hand-written text outlines this 'tower' – translated into English, it reads, 'Under this mask, another mask; I will never finish removing all these faces'.

Following the rise of fascism throughout Europe, Cahun and Moore left Paris for the isolated Channel Island of Jersey. It was not the haven they had anticipated; soon after German military forces invaded Paris, Jersey was also overrun. Cahun and Moore became highly active anti-Nazi campaigners – eventually being arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo in 1944. Sentenced to death, they were saved only when the island was liberated in 1945. Cahun's health suffered terribly during this time, however, and she died in 1954. Marcel Moore died in 1972; they are buried together in St. Brelade's Church, on the island.

Many of Cahun and Moore's remaining possessions and artworks were bundled into chests and crates and sold, for little, at auction – fortunately much of the archive ended up at the Jersey Heritage Trust. Having been largely forgotten in the mid-twentieth century, their work was gradually rediscovered and widely circulated through publication and exhibition in the 1990s. Their radical ideas around gender-indeterminacy and selfhood became of great influence, as did Cahun's pioneering use of self-portraiture as a means of questioning and constructing identity – ideas and techniques which were, and continue to be, of vital interest to contemporary artists of the late twentieth century. *Aveux non Avenus* remains one of Cahun's best-known, if perpetually intriguing, works.

This edition of the book was purchased for the NGV through the Friends of the Gallery Library Endowment in 2017.

MAGGIE FINCH IS NGV CURATOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY.
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(pp. 44–5) **Unknown photographer** *Window display of the bookshop José Corti, 6 rue de Clichy*, Paris June 1930 (detail). Launch of *Aveux non Avenus*. Jersey Heritage Collection, Jersey
(p. 46) **Claude Cahun** *Untitled* 1930 in *Aveux non avenus* 1930. Shaw Research Library, acquired through the Friends of the Gallery Library endowment, 2017

The intricate designs of

LISA WAUP

From intricately woven baskets and figures to her bold patterns and designs used to create wearable art in collaboration with fashion designer Ingrid Verner, each unique work shares a different story from a stage in Lisa Waup's life.

BY HANNAH PRESLEY

(opposite and following) Lisa Waup in her studio, Melbourne, 2019.
Photo: Selina Ou

Lisa Waup is a thoughtful and spirited artist who creates elaborate and sophisticated work that eloquently illustrates her life's journey of discovery and connection. Her work highlights the importance of ancestral relationships, weaving stories of her past into contemporary sculptural forms.

I first met Waup in 2012. In my role at the time as curator at the Koorie Heritage Trust, we worked together to present her first major solo exhibition *Journey's Edge*. This was a significant exhibition in Lisa's career and marked the beginning of a nuanced and loving articulation of her diverse cultural and familial influences. *Journey's Edge* comprised a series of works on paper. Drawing on her background as a printmaker, each piece was tenderly adorned with handstitched details. Key works from the series incorporated documentation outlining her complex history of removal and her later adoption into her Calabrian family, as well as her maternal connections to the Gunditjmara people of south-west Victoria, and the Torres Strait Islands.

Soon after *Journey's Edge*, Waup began working with Baluk Arts, an Aboriginal arts centre based in Mornington, Victoria. Baluk supports artists to reconnect and express their cultural histories through strong artistic practice. Waup also turned her hands to weaving at this time. For many Aboriginal people, dispossession and loss are heavy burdens that echo throughout families, and creative practice continues to be one of the most important tools we have for

‘Her love of jewellery is unmistakeable – all who know her are greeted by her warm smile and a spectacular necklace.’

——— HANNAH PRESLEY

reconnecting with our culture. For Waup, her involvement with Baluk Arts offered her a safe space to artistically explore and grow, and to connect with her Aboriginal culture, which continues to strengthen and inform her artistic practice.

Weaving quickly became an important part of Waup’s artistic repertoire. In 2013 she was invited to exhibit in *Melbourne Now* at the National Gallery of Victoria, an ambitious survey of contemporary art, architecture, design, performance and cultural practice. This led to the NGV’s first acquisition of Waup’s work, *Cultural nesting*, 2013, a group of five intricately woven baskets made primarily of emu feathers peppered with additional colourful feathers from parrots and other native birds. This marked the start of an ongoing affinity with weaving, which draws on both Indigenous and Papua New Guinean textile practices.

Waup’s work incorporates processes and aesthetics picked up from her time living and working in Port Moresby and Lae in Papua New Guinea, the homeland of her children’s father Naup Waup. She taught photography and printmaking at the University of Papua New Guinea and it is here that she started working with tapa cloth. Tapa is a soft bark cloth made in many communities across the Pacific by a process of soaking and beating bark from the paper mulberry tree. Tapa is of strong cultural importance and is used to make ceremonial objects and garments, and to document important designs. For the artist, tapa represents a connection between Waup and her children, and plays a key role in her woven work.

Feathers and found objects feature heavily in Waup’s weaving. Her studio space is filled with beads, seeds, paints, pens and an array of feathers that have recognisably been incorporated into her work. By incorporating found objects sourced from fortuitous discoveries and unfortunate roadkill, as well as kelp and shells collected from beaches, Waup breathes new life into these organic materials, guided by their unique shapes and textures as she makes her own work.

In 2016 Waup created her first woven figure, for the exhibition *Hero Worship*, co-curated by myself and Adelaide-based artist, curator and writer Debbie Pryor for Craft Victoria. *Chosen before birth*, 2016, was an emotionally rich piece that represented Waup’s biological and adopted mothers, seen in the form of two unique faces, both cradling her as a baby. Using a specialised weaving technique, she would build up the form with found materials, stitching in feathers and tapa. The work conveyed strength and protection and was a generous and beautiful depiction of her love and respect for both her mothers.

Waup has always been inspired by the concept of wearable art and, in 2013 her weaving practice swiftly moved into the realm of body adornment. Her love of jewellery is unmistakeable – all who know her are greeted by her warm smile and a spectacular necklace. She has been known to wear bilums – a strong bag made by hand in Papua New Guinea – and other string bags as necklaces, but her favourite piece to wear is a soft sculpture made by Yarrenyty Arltere artists from Alice Springs, who share her love of recycled and handmade materials.

It was a natural progression into fashion for Waup who, as a child, created the fashion label LSD (Lisa Scarcella Design). By using her maiden name, the fourteen-year-old played on the cheeky innuendo her initials denote. The pieces she created then were primarily for her own use. In 2017 she was introduced to Melbourne-based fashion designer Ingrid Verner as part of a program supported by Creative Victoria – initiated by Elizabeth Liddle, manager of the Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy Implementation – to engage Aboriginal artists with local fashion designers. The project started off with the assistance of Sarah Weston from Craft Victoria, an early supporter and retailer of the Verner collaboration.

Upon meeting Verner, Waup shared a sketchbook she had been working on for many years. It was filled with intricate and bold designs that Waup refers to loosely as shield designs. Each page was covered in graphic line work representing protection: protection of family, history and culture. Together, Waup and Verner chose four main designs, titled *Homeward Boundaries*, *Land Mapping*, *Family Circles* and *Protection*, from which they created their first collaborative fashion line, Lisa Waup x Verner.

Their first collection was launched to glowing reviews at the 2017 Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival as part of the Global Indigenous Runway. Most recently Lisa Waup x Verner was showcased at the Hong Kong Business of Design Week, along with a selection of First Nations fashion from around the world. They also showed at Melbourne Fashion Week and at the Darwin Aboriginal Arts Fair as part of the *From Country to Couture* event this year.

Verner is well known for her ‘slow fashion’ approach and for creating special pieces that are ethically made with a focus on wearability. Working with Waup’s 2D designs, Verner was conscious of the need to respect the patterns in their translation to 3D, avoiding the need to splice or repeat the designs. Their ongoing collaboration has resulted in a stunning interpretation of Waup’s own work that honours and amplifies their meaning, creating powerful pieces that channel her original concepts of protection and strength.

The Lisa Waup x Verner collaboration was hand screen-printed with Stewart Russell at Spacecraft in Melbourne. Each ensemble comes with its own range of handmade jewellery, which further unites her weaving practice with her fashion line and illustrates the significant role fashion has played in her artistic career, as well as the role the collaboration is playing in the wider Indigenous fashion scene.

HANNAH PRESLEY IS NGV CURATOR, INDIGENOUS ART. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE NOV–DEC 2019 ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.

EVA ZEISEL

Playful Search for Beauty

Eva Zeisel, born in Hungary in 1906, was designing visually and conceptually progressive ceramics for leading manufacturers in Germany and Russia by the time she was twenty-six years old. Arrest, solitary confinement and the threat of persecution did not hold back this designer, whose ‘useful’ objects are as contemporary now as when they were first made.

BY AMANDA DUNSMORE

Eva Zeisel led a prodigious life as one of the most successful industrial designers of the twentieth century. She was a tremendous force, living until the age of 105, and continuing to design until the last few months of her life. Over a career that spanned eighty-five years she produced hundreds of designs across the fields of ceramics, glass, metalwork, plastics, furniture, lighting and textiles and worked for manufacturers across Europe, Russia, the United States, Mexico, Japan and India.

Zeisel is best-known for her ceramics and pioneered design in the field of accessibly priced, mass-produced tableware aimed at the burgeoning middle class of the postwar period. She received numerous international awards and accolades throughout her career and was awarded honorary doctorates from the Royal College of Art, London (1988), the Parsons School of Design, New York City (1991), the University of Craft and Design, Budapest (2004) and the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island (2005). Zeisel was the first female designer to feature in a solo exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York – *New Shapes in Modern China: Designed by Eva Zeisel* (1946). This was a remarkable achievement given that she had only migrated to the United States eight years earlier, having fled the German annexation of Vienna.

She was also forging her career at a time when women were expected to marry and become full-time mothers. Zeisel was married with two young children, yet she managed to juggle her family commitments with her emerging career (often working in tough, largely male-dominated commercial environments) through the great support of her mother and her sheer tenacity and, at times, obstinacy. This was particularly evident when she was trying to defend her vision of how a piece should be made, advertised and exhibited.

Nevertheless, despite her long list of achievements and awards, what ultimately defines Eva Zeisel's career and sets her work apart from that of all other designers is its sensuous beauty, humour and gentle humanity. Zeisel was a humanitarian and constantly spoke of her desire for objects to nurture the person that held them. She talked of 'soul contact' through her tableware and believed that her responsibility as a designer was to go beyond the application of rational thought in the design process and enhance the more subliminal and emotional dimensions of a design. Her approach to evoking these intangible qualities was through playfulness and beauty. The search for beauty in the everyday was a constant thread throughout Zeisel's life.

Eva Amalia Stricker was born in Budapest in 1906 to a wealthy Jewish family. 'Mad about art', in her words, and keen to become a painter, she studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest but went on to become an apprentice potter, at the encouragement of her mother, in order to have a trade that would give her a living. 'Ladies didn't pot when I started', she said, 'but my mother let me do it anyway'. She became the first woman to be trained through the Guild of Chimney Sweeps, Oven Makers, Roof Tilers, Well Diggers and Potters. She learnt all aspects of potting, from the refining of the raw clay, to the hand building and throwing of pots, to the glazing, drying and firing of them. This training with the wet raw clay stayed with Zeisel throughout her career and even when working on mass production projects many years later, she made a point of feeling and handling the clay that would be used to form her designs. The design historian Tanya Harrod has commented that her greatness as a designer was based, in part, 'on her profound tacit knowledge of clay'.

After graduating as a journeyman (a trades or craftsperson who has completed an apprenticeship) potter, Zeisel began working as a designer in the Kispester-Granit manufactory in Budapest. Two years later she took up the role as designer for the Schramberger Majolikafabrik in Germany, a firm which specialised in mass-produced domestic wares and employed around 350 workers. Undaunted by the fact that she had none of the necessary drafting skills, she begged a friend for a day's intense tuition and worked at the factory for the next two years, successfully creating many playful geometric designs for dinnerware, tea sets and vases. An example of these designs held within the NGV Collection, *Gobelin 8, tea service*, c. 1929, is pictured (left) and was generously supported by Merv Keehn and Sue Harlow. In 1930, Zeisel moved to Berlin to design for the Carstens factories, but two years later she went to Russia to experience the new artistic and social movements, along with many other idealistic young artists and intellectuals. As an experienced industrial designer, Zeisel was offered a position assisting in the modernisation of the ceramic industry. She travelled to many parts of Russia in order to understand and coordinate efforts to create a central manufactory that would make products for the homes of ordinary Russians. Her efforts were recognised, and she was soon transferred to the Lomonosov factory in Leningrad (the former Imperial Porcelain Factory). This in turn led to her appointment as artistic director for the state-run Porcelain and Glass Industries, with specific responsibility for designing objects for mass production. In 1936, however, Zeisel was caught up in one of the Stalinist purges, falsely accused of plotting against the leader. She was imprisoned in the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) prison for sixteen months, spending most of that time in solitary confinement, before being unexpectedly released and put on a train to Vienna. By this time she was extremely fragile, emotionally and physically, and the deep scars of this experience remained with her for the rest her life. She talked of seeing colour differently after emerging from solitary confinement and the inhumane treatment that she received only served to heighten her humanist sensibilities. As a result of the rise of anti-Semitism, Zeisel fled to England on one of the last trains out at the time of the Anschluss (German annexation). Months later, in 1938, she migrated to the United States with her husband; they settled permanently in New York.

Only a year after arriving in New York, Zeisel began teaching industrial design at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, undaunted by the fact that she had never taught before. Her curriculum focused on the fundamental principles of good design, foremost of which was functionality. Teapots had to pour well, no drips were tolerated, neither could they be too heavy once full; handles also had to be firmly luted on and be substantial and open enough in design to be comfortable. Yet she did not subscribe to the modernist mantra of form following function, arguing that 'for every use and for every production process, there are innumerable equally attractive solutions'. Zeisel liked to describe herself as a 'modernist with a small m'. She found Modernism too patronising and didactic in its narrow definitions of 'good design', which she believed limited variety and choice. For Zeisel, Modernism and its products offered neither 'amusement nor beauty' and failed to establish emotional connections between the object and user. Thus, unlike other teachers at the time, Zeisel stood apart in her emphasis on the importance of designing forms that expressed emotion. For her it was critically important that functional wares offered the user pleasure and delight. Ultimately, all of Eva Zeisel successes were guided by the very simple yet fundamental truth that, as she put it, 'beautiful things make people happy'.

'Ladies didn't pot when I started', she said, 'but my mother let me do it anyway.' She became the first woman to be trained through the Guild of Chimney Sweeps, Oven Makers, Roof Tilers, Well Diggers and Potters. She learnt all the aspects of potting, from the refining of the raw clay, to the hand building and throwing of pots, to the glazing, drying and firing of them.'

——— AMANDA DUNSMORE

(pp. 52–3) Eva Zeisel. Photo: TalismanPHOTO
(p. 54) **Eva Zeisel** (designer), **Schramberger Majolikafabrik, Schramberg** (manufacturer) *Gobelin 8, tea service* c. 1929. Purchased with funds donated by Merv Keehn and Sue Harlow, 2017

GROWING UP WITH A DESIGNER

Actress and daughter of Eva Zeisel, Jean Richards, recalls a creative life.

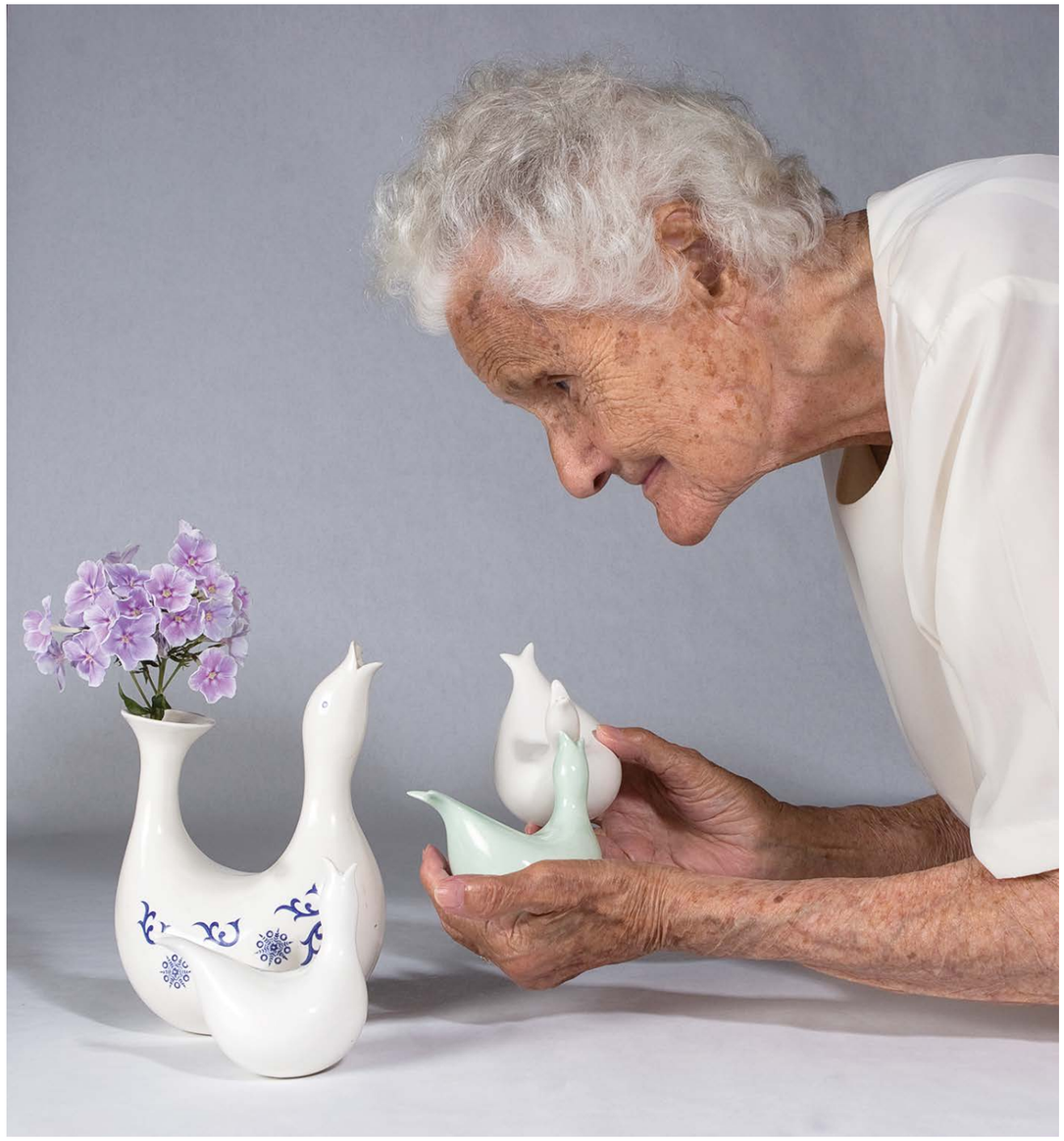
My younger brother and I always felt we were a part of Eva's creativity. Her beautiful studio was in the basement of our apartment building in New York. We lived on the fifth floor and there was an intercom between the studio and our apartment. Eva often told the story of how my little brother used the intercom while she was having a business meeting, saying, 'Billy kicked me! What should I do?'

We were always welcome in the studio, where we made friends with her assistants. Eva also hosted wonderful children's parties for us there. Every Easter and Christmas the whole class was invited to arts and crafts parties. At Easter her assistants would prepare eggs for us to decorate (blowing out the raw insides). We added faces with hats using paper, glitter, scissors and paste. Our decorated eggs were displayed in the ageing cabinets (lit cabinets where Eva would put her newest samples to see how they aged, before deciding whether to adjust them). The best eggs were chosen by her assistants, who were usually her former Pratt students. We could take the eggs home, of course.

Our cousins lived a block away. They were the children of Eva's very proper and organised patent-attorney brother. I always loved having dinner at their house, which would start promptly at six. The food was nicely laid out on the plate with each item – peas, rice, chicken – arranged neatly on the plate. When we grew up, one of my cousins confided in me that he had always loved to eat dinner at our house. He said it was always a surprise; you never knew when dinner would be served or what it would be. Eva hated housework but loved to cook. It was always spontaneous, never a recipe.

Nature, the human body and birds inspired many of Eva's designs. Eva was once quoted as saying, 'when you put your hands in clay it's hard not to make a bird'. At her ninety-fifth birthday party at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the design curator gave a speech: 'Phillip Johnson was inspired by machines; Eva was inspired by baby's bottoms'. Eva herself said that her motto was 'the playful search for beauty.' She thought of her designs as a gift to the user.

AMANDA DUNSMORE IS NGV SENIOR CURATOR, INTERNATIONAL DECORATIVE ARTS. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE SEP–OCT 2019 ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.



Eva Zeisel. Photo: TalismanPHOTO

HARRIET FRISHMUTH

We reveal the story of sculptor Harriet Frishmuth, her encounters with celebrated artist Auguste Rodin and her studious approach to depicting the human body. Her sculpture *Speed* 1922 was considered a symbol of modernity in the roaring twenties, and has entered the NGV collection through the generous support of the Nicole Chow Family Foundation.

BY TED GOTT

Harriet Frishmuth (1880–1980) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but spent her childhood and teenage years in Europe. She was descended from a distinguished family of physicians, and was also to devote herself to study the human body, but in a different manner – as a sculptor. The child of parents who separated when she was only eight years old, Frishmuth rose to become one of the most popular and successful American sculptors working prior to the Second World War. Little was published on Frishmuth in the second half of the twentieth century, but thanks to the recent monograph *Captured Motion: The Sculpture of Harriet Whitney Frishmuth* (2006) by Janis Conner, Leah Rosenblatt Lehmbeck and Thayer Tolles, we can now gain a clear picture of her development and significance as an artist.

After her parents separated in 1888, Harriet's mother took her to Europe, where she was schooled in Paris and Dresden, learning to speak French and German fluently. It was while holidaying in Switzerland in her late teens that Frishmuth was introduced to the plastic arts by the American sculptor Lucy Brownson Hinton, who encouraged her to experiment with plasteline, a German-made soft modelling clay similar to plasticine.

At the age of nineteen Frishmuth studied briefly under Auguste Rodin in Paris, where she was profoundly influenced, she recalled, by Rodin's insistence that sculptors should 'first always look at the silhouette of a subject and be guided by it; second, remember that movement is the transition from one attitude to another'. Frishmuth also remembered how Rodin 'told me a figure in action shouldn't be too correct. There should be a little of the action that was passed and a little of the action to come, and that way you get the illusion of motion'.

Study at the Académie Colarossi followed, under the tuition of Henri Désiré Gauquié and Jean Antoine Injalbert, with Frishmuth and her mother living frugally in order to pay her tuition fees. 'We had a very good time on very little money' in Paris, she recalled. In 1903 Frishmuth relocated to Berlin, studying for a year with the prominent sculptor of public monuments Cuno von Uechtritz-Steinkirch. Frishmuth's language skills enabled her to move fluidly from one European capital to another.

In 1904 Frishmuth and her mother returned to the United States. Settling in New York, Frishmuth found employment as a studio assistant to the Austrian-born sculptor Karl Bitter. Because her father, uncle and grandfather had been physicians, Frishmuth herself was

Harriet Whitney Frishmuth, Gorham Manufacturing Company, Providence, Rhode Island (manufacturer) *Speed* 1921. Purchased with funds donated by the Nicole Chow Foundation, 2017

able to study anatomy and dissection for two years at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. This was an unusual undertaking for a woman at this time, as was her choice of the physically strenuous profession of a sculptor. Frishmuth's lifelong interest in depicting the human body in movement has understandably been related to her family's strong medical background.

Frishmuth also undertook further studies at New York's Art Students League under the renowned American sculptor Gutzon Borglum, who had known Rodin in Paris and was an advocate of his Impressionist aesthetics in the United States (Borglum was later to sculpt the celebrated Mount Rushmore national monument). Frishmuth would also work as Borglum's studio assistant, absorbing his passion for catching the play of light on the naked human form.

In 1908 Frishmuth branched out on her own, following Borglum's advice: 'Establish your own studio, your own expression, you've studied enough!' Opening a studio in premises on Park Avenue provided by an uncle, she started her career by modelling utilitarian objects with naturalist themes, such as bookends and ashtrays featuring nudes, nymphs and fishermen. Frishmuth now formed a strong relationship with the Gorham Manufacturing Company in Providence, Rhode Island, the United States' largest producer of sterling and silver plate, who worked with numerous artists to create small bronze sculptures. Over the following decades Gorham would be her preferred foundry for the casting of her bronzes.

Despite being humble in scale, Frishmuth's first small bronzes sold well, enabling her to purchase her own premises in 1916 at 6 Sniffen Court, an artist's enclave located in a cul-de-sac on East 36th Street near Third Avenue. She would reside here until 1937. Not long after she moved into Sniffen Court, Frishmuth's life was changed forever by her meeting Desha Delteil, a Yugoslavian-born dancer who had recently emigrated to the United States and who was soon to become a star ballerina in Michel Fokine's dance company. A perfect and unselfconscious model, Delteil liberated Frishmuth's sculptural vision, striking poses to music that brought a new freedom and grace to Frishmuth's compositions. Nude female dancers, sea nymphs and athletes, cast as both life-sized and smaller bronze versions, now became the mainstay of Frishmuth's art, bringing her tremendous popular and financial success. Throughout the 1920s Frishmuth won award after award for her fluid and graceful bronze sculptures of dancing figures, most of which were inspired by her friendship with Delteil. Her most successful work, *The vine*, 1921, depicting a nude woman with her back arched in inebriated delirium, encapsulated the spirit of the Roaring Twenties perfectly. Five life-size versions were sold by Frishmuth, along with a staggering 396 casts of the reduced-size bronze.

Frishmuth paid great attention to the detailing of her sculptures, supervising their careful chasing by bronze foundry workers, a process whereby extraneous pieces of metal attached to a sculpture after its casting are carefully removed, and the composition's fine details (such as fingers or hair) chiselled to perfection; and their patination by other craftsmen, a process in which acids and salts are applied by heat to a bronze's surface to create a range of colourations, from black and brown through to green. Frishmuth favoured a particular greenish patina that was described in 1928 as 'light soft green with a little gold showing through'.

Frishmuth's career survived the Depression that ravaged the United States in the 1930s, and remained strong until the outbreak of the Second World War. Gorham focused almost exclusively on the production of ammunition casings for the military throughout the war, only resuming bronze casting for artists at the war's end in 1945. Frishmuth continued to cast copies of her earlier bronzes in the late 1940s and 1950s, even sporadically in the 1960s, but on witnessing the rise of abstract sculpture recognised that the taste for her figurative works was waning. Her last bronze was cast in 1972.

Frishmuth's *Speed* was modelled in plaster in 1921, and soon became an iconic symbol of a progressive and hopeful Unites States in the pre-Depression period. One of Frishmuth's clients famously told her that 'Your *Speed* represents better than anything else the culture and mode of America, its eagerness and its promise'.

Speed was cast into bronze in 1922 by the Gorham Manufacturing Company. A popular attachment to luxury cars as a hood ornament or radiator cap in the 1920s, Frishmuth's *Speed* became synonymous with modernity. Marion Couthouy Smith wrote in *The American Magazine of Art* in 1925 of how 'The famous "Speed" figure, now used as an auto emblem, combines a classic dignity with its straight flash of breathtaking swiftness'. *Speed* was to earn Frishmuth a medal of recognition from the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors in 1924.

Seventy-one *Speed* bronzes were cast in all by Gorham, of which fifteen were silver-plated and two gold-plated. Presumably these silver and gold versions were attached to the cars of rich clients. *Speed* was not produced in association with any specific car manufacturer, and probably adorned a variety of high-end automobiles. For example, Clifton H. Presbrey, president of the Presbrey-Leland stonecutting company in New York State, is known to have used his *Speed* as the radiator cap for his luxury Packard. Because *Speed* proved popular with thieves when displayed so prominently in public, Frishmuth instead started mounting the sculpture on decorative bases for viewing indoors.

Although symbolising modernity as a sleek female form, *Speed* was initially inspired by the groundbreaking work of the Russian male dancer and choreographer, Michael Fokine, Desha Delteil's employer at the American Ballet Company. Frishmuth recalled how: 'I was in a theater watching Michel Fokine dance … The big curtain was down and I saw this vision of a figure pass across the great screen and I could hardly wait to get back to the studio to model it. I made a sketch of it and then I got this very lovely English girl, Blanche Ostreham, to pose for it'. *Speed*, now an icon of American Art Deco sculpture, was created from this fleeting moment of inspiration.

TED GOTT IS NGV SENIOR CURATOR, INTERNATIONAL ART. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE SEP–OCT ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.

Harriet Whitney Frishmuth with *The Star and The Dancers*, c. 1925 Photograph, Harriet Frishmuth Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

Moga: The Audacity of Being a Modern Girl

Japan in 1920s and 1930s was a time when traditional art and aesthetics merged with European life and culture. The result was a pulsating era of Japanese modernism and the creation of Asian Art Deco architecture, paintings, prints, design and fashion. Investigating the socially liberated status of young Japanese women known as *moga* (modern girls), a 2020 exhibition at NGV, *Japanese Modernism*, included two major works by young contemporary female creators of the era. These women changed tradition by seeking financial and emotional independence and adopting Western fashion styles and behaviours.

BY MARIKO NAGAI

Taniguchi Fumie *Preparing to go out (Yosoō hitobito)* 1935. Purchased with funds from the Estate of Kevin and Eunice McDonald and NGV Foundation, 2019

They cut their long black hair, symbolic of a traditional Japanese woman's beauty. They removed their conservative kimonos, the very clothes that defined the upper class, and put on vibrant kimono designs and Western dresses that gave lightness to their steps. These girls took it all in and made it all their own: bobbed hair, knee-length dresses, stockings, painted eyebrows and dark rouge. All of the things their mothers would disapprove of and maybe, they thought, all the things that some boys would frown upon, but who cared about those boys anyway?

In the 1930s, they strutted down the streets of Tokyo, Osaka and Kobe, arm in arm, without chaperones, defiantly, boldly, as if they owned the streets – no, they owned the entire city and its future. They flirted with boys and men and sometimes other girls, they ignored hisses from the old, they danced and danced until their feet hurt in their pumps, but they could have danced even more if they hadn't had to go to work the next day. They drank. They smoked. They held on tight to boys, swaying their bodies languidly to the music. The media loved to hate them, calling them 'loose' and 'immoral' and 'independent'.

A modern girl, *moga*, laughed at people bound to tradition; she laughed at conventions and modesty; she laughed at being bound to men (like their mothers and some of their friends were), working from sunrise to sunset, all for their families. This was the time of the Taisho and early Showa democracy; a liberalism movement coinciding with the reign of Emperor Taisho between 1912 and 1926, and the young Emperor Showa up to the late 1930s. Following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and 1905, and after the First World War of 1914 to 1918, Japan became an international entity rivalling the West. Just as Japan was audacious, so were these girls.

Japan during the interwar period was a complicated space where modernity clashed with the deeply rooted *Ie seido* (the ideal Japanese family structure, as determined by law). *Moga* girls walked the sunny streets of Ginza in Tokyo, while factory girls in Gunma and Nagano worked ten-hour shifts reeling silk in humid windowless factory rooms for the good of the nation, their fingers red and

(left to right) **Itō Shinsui** *Freshly-washed hair (Arai Gami)* 1936. Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers AO, 2015
Japanese *The Asahi weekly edition 3 November* 1935. Purchased with funds donated by Maureen Morrisey, 2018
Negishi Ayako *Waiting for makeup* 1938. Purchased with funds donated by Jennifer and Brian Tymms, 2018
Itō Shinsui *Early spring (Shensun): Manners of Showa women (Showa bijin fuzoka)* 1931. Lillian Ernestine Lobb Bequest, 2008

senseless from scalding water. It was also a time when politicians lived in fear of assassination attempts, when anarchists and socialists shared the same temporal and intellectual space with nationalists and imperialists, and when Tokyo lay in waste from the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and, as quickly as the city was destroyed, began to rebuild itself with buildings seemingly reappearing overnight.

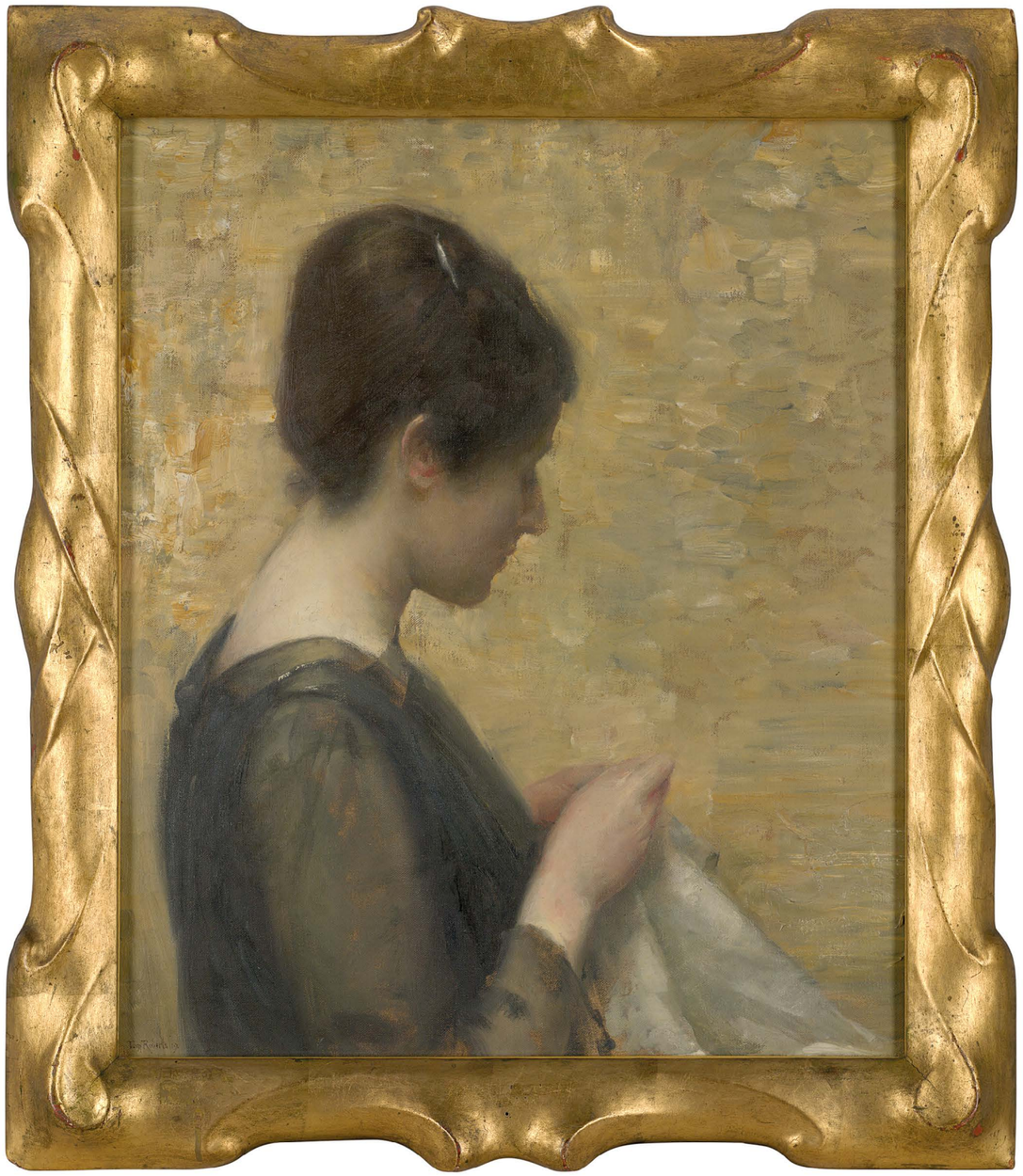
From this landscape emerged Taniguchi Fumie, a young artist, creator of the work *Preparing to go out* (*Yosoou hitobito*), 1935. Taniguchi was a graduate of the prestigious Joshibi University of Art and Design, Tokyo, an all-female art school established in 1900 that sought 'to empower the self-reliance of women through the arts' and 'to improve the social status of women'.[1] In some sense, Joshibi encouraged girls to be *bad*, to have agency over themselves. Taniguchi was a rising star, collecting major art awards in the 1930s, becoming somewhat of a darling of the art world. Her other works from this period, such as *Farming woman*, 1932; *Inside the car*, 1933; and *Obi*, 1935 (private collection), also feature empowered women (though not necessarily *moga*), who often stand, their eyes averted to something outside of the frame, as if they are looking at their possible future, readying themselves for the next movement. In the artist's own words:

> Girls I know who are so full of life and so masculine; they've all spurned the outdated common-sense and try to live their lives in a new way … [They are] unique artists born out of the fearful time period of today.[2]

In *Preparing to go out*, Taniguchi presents six *moga* girls, four of them standing and two sitting. They are full of life and are not dictated by the male gaze, but by their own stance, as if to say, 'This is who we are. We are audacious. We are artists of our own lives'. There is no artificiality in their postures. They are in repose. They are there. Simple as that. This is also reflected in Negishi Ayako's work Waiting for makeup, 1938, which was acquired through the generous support of Jennifer and Brian Tymms. The work on paper features two young women dressed in Western-style clothing and sporting popular 1930s hairstyles made famous by French hair stylist, Marcel Grateau. Taniguchi and Negishi completed these works during a time when Japan, and the rest of the world, were becoming increasingly nationalistic and militaristic. In 1938, the Japanese government would encourage women to wear *kokubo-fuku* (national uniform), meaning that luxuriant women's fashions were replaced with more functional clothing in line with an increasing nationalistic culture of austerity. Kimonos with bright colours of light yellow, pink and blue, and created from luxurious fabrics such as silk and laces would appear less frequently on the streets, as Japan became increasingly involved in a war in China. Women's lives were no longer theirs but part of the nation, intimately bound to the war effort.

In a few years' time, the *moga* parties, independence, agency, defiance, art and uniqueness would all but disappear. Taniguchi, herself, would be taken by nationalistic fever, founding the Women Artists' Volunteer Corps (Joryu Bijutsuka Houkoutai) in 1943, her works – and other artist's works such as Léonard Tsuguharu Foujita – reflecting the militarism of the time. Though she tried to regain her artistic fame after the war, it never reached the brilliance of the interwar period, and when she divorced her husband and moved to the US to remarry to a Japanese-American man in 1955[3], she disappeared from the art world altogether. *Moga*, like Fumie herself, emerged from a particular landscape of a historical moment, and then disappeared. For now, though, here they are: women as the subjects of their own lives, fully themselves.

MARIKO NAGAI IS A JAPANESE-BORN POET AND AUTHOR. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE JAN–FEB 2020 ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.



Australian Framing Royalty: Lillie Williamson

An award-winning frame maker of her generation, Lillie Williamson is now celebrated for her contribution to early twentieth-century frame making, thanks to the investigation into Melbourne's frame makers undertaken through the NGV Centre for Frame Research, generously supported through the Professor AGL Shaw AO Bequest.

BY HOLLY McGOWAN-JACKSON AND JESSICA LEHMANN

Tom Roberts *Penelope* 1919
in an original frame by Lillie Williamson

In the early years of the twentieth century, Melbourne-born Elizabeth (Lillie) Williamson created exceptional picture frames that were highly regarded in England and Australia. She designed, carved and gilded bespoke frames for collectors and artists; in particular, her husband, Australian Impressionist painter Tom Roberts, who said of Williamson 'at wood-carving and gilding she excels; she designed and made frames for me like no other obtainable in London'.[1]

Lillie Williamson was born in 1860 in Collingwood, Melbourne, to Caleb and Elizabeth Williamson (nee Cakebread). Caleb owned two successful linen, drapery and grocery stores in Melbourne and in the 1860s the family relocated to Tasmania to expand the business. In the early 1880s the family returned to Melbourne and in 1885 Caleb became the co-owner of the affluent Melbourne department store Craig & Williamson's. The family lived at 'Rangeview' in Mary Street, Kew, a heritage-listed house built between 1875 and 1878, which still stands today.

Although there are few records of her early training, Williamson's artistic practice developed beyond that of a leisurely pastime. She was accepted to the University of Melbourne in 1876, and in the early 1880s undertook study as a traditional artist at the National Art Gallery School. In 1886, Williamson embarked on a grand tour of Europe where she visited England, France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. On her return to Melbourne, she exhibited her own art at the Victorian Artists Society, showing around five oil paintings between 1888 and 1892. It is not known what led Williamson to move from oil painting to frame making, but we do know that, at the time, woodworking was a popular craft activity pursued by women,[2] through the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement. This movement, originating in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century, emphasised the simplicity of design and use of handmade products in areas such as the arts, architecture and furniture making, as a reaction to the mass production of goods brought about by the Industrial Revolution and ornateness of the Victorian style of

design. According to an interview in the daily newspaper *The Argus*, in 1923, Williamson obtained her first lessons in carving from Mr Dunne in Melbourne, while her earliest recorded carved frame was made for a Tom Roberts's painting around 1894.[3]

Williamson and Roberts had met seventeen years earlier in Tasmania. In the 1880s their friendship flourished, Roberts painted Williamson at Phillip Island and completed portraits of her niece and parents. After a lengthy courtship, the pair were married in 1896, after which time they moved to Sydney where their only child, Caleb Grafton, was born in 1898. Due to the difficult economic conditions and lack of patronage of the arts in Australia, the family relocated to London in 1903, where they were based for the next twenty years.

In England, Williamson developed her carving and gilding skills to an advanced level. She completed studies in carving at the London City Council's Central School of Art and arranged to have tuition from Mrs Batten, whom she regarded as the best gilder in England. Williamson won several awards for her work, including a medal and certificate for a carved and gilded frame shown in the *Imperial International Exhibition*, a world fair held in White City, London, in 1909. Williamson continued to create frames for paintings by Roberts, including two exhibited at the Royal Academy, as well as many private commissions. Roberts struggled to sell his works, so the income earned from Williamson's frames, as well as her inheritance, were the family's main source of income during this period.

At a time when most frames for paintings were made using techniques of mass production, with repeated sections of plaster or composition ornament pressed from moulds, Williamson's methods recalled an earlier era. She individually designed each frame and hand carved them with intricate profiles and adornments. Her artistic technique was influenced by the contemporary Arts and Crafts movement, in particular, as well as by Art Nouveau design and a range of other historical styles. Researcher Pamela Clelland Gray states that Williamson came to be 'one of Britain's most celebrated wood carvers'.[4]

Many of Williamson's designs feature floral, berry and leaf motifs, carved in a flowing, naturalistic style. Another major group references historical French and Italian frames, including the highly decorative Rococo style of eighteenth-century France, which evolved from Baroque types of frames (distinguished by the ornate use of scrolls and curves). These frames created by Williamson present swept or curved outer edges – giving a shaped silhouette – and piercing or cut-out areas that give a lightness to the carving and showcase her proficiency.

In 1906, Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria and a member of the Royal Family, purchased one of Williamson's frames. The drawing for this frame design is in the NGV Collection. While, unfortunately, the location of the frame itself remains unknown, the drawing shows that it was decorated with black bryony berries and leaves.

Loss of attribution is a common occurrence for frames, which may be easily separated from the works they originally housed; the location of many other frames made by Williamson also remain unknown. However, by studying the large collection of Williamson's drawings and photographs held by the NGV, a wider perspective on her practice can be determined.

Most of Williamson's designs, dating to the early twentieth century, are life-size, on both card and tracing paper. They indicate her working methods in developing the drawings, and suggest that she used tracing paper as well as carbon paper[5] to copy repeated patterns and to transfer designs to the wood surface, providing a guide for carving.

Soon after the First World War, Tom Roberts held an exhibition in Melbourne with several of the paintings framed by Williamson. One of these works, *Penelope*, 1919, in its original frame, is in the NGV Collection. This unusual and elegant frame is carved with abstracted flowing forms that are reminiscent of both Art Nouveau and seventeenth-century Dutch designs.

In 1923, Williamson and Roberts returned to Australia and settled in the Dandenong Ranges building their own cottage Talisman, at which the family celebrated Christmas in 1927. Sadly, however, this was to be the family's last Christmas together, as Williamson became suddenly ill and died on 3 January 1928.

A successful pairing of painting and frame can be compared to a great partnership, with the two parts working in harmony. This analogy can also reflect Williamson's and Roberts's personal and professional lives, as creative collaborators, supporting each other's work. As reported, 'Mr Roberts avers that in her own way she [Lillie] is a better artist than he is himself'.[6]

Williamson's dedication and passion for the art of frame making saw her achieve success and recognition in her lifetime. However, for many years after, her work has sat at the margins of history, with the focus on her artist husband. Now it's time for Lillie Williamson's artistic contribution to be celebrated.

HOLLY MCGOWAN-JACKSON IS NGV SENIOR CONSERVATOR OF FRAMES AND FURNITURE. JESSICA LEHMANN IS NGV CONSERVATION PROJECT OFFICER. THE CENTRE FOR FRAME RESEARCH IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED THROUGH THE PROFESSOR AGL SHAW AO BEQUEST. THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE JAN-FEB 2020 ISSUE OF *NGV MAGAZINE*.

'Mrs Tom Roberts' at an exhibition of her carved frames, c. 1906 Photo: Kate Pragnell

'A successful pairing of painting and frame can be compared to a great partnership, with the two parts working in harmony. This analogy can also reflect Williamson's and Roberts's personal and professional lives, as creative collaborators, supporting each other's work.'

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© Zanele Muholi, courtesy of the artist, Yancey Richardson, New York, and STEVENSON, Cape Town/Johannesburg

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© Courtesy the artist, Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York and Stevenson

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© Courtesy of the artist's estate

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Gift of Andrée Fay Harkness through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2020
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Shaw Research Library, acquired through the Friends of the Gallery Library endowment, 2017
© the artist's estate

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© The Estate of Harriet Whitney Frishmuth

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Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers AO, 2015
© Estate of Itō Shinsui

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Lillie Williamson

1. Robert Henderson Croll, *Tom Roberts: Father of Australian Landscape Painting*, Robertson & Mullens Limited, Melbourne, 1935, p. 127–28.
2. Pamela Clelland Gray, 'A pioneer of Australian picture framing: an introduction to the work of Lillie Williamson', *Art Bulletin of Victoria*, no. 34, 1994, pp. 48–58.
3. This information is from Helen Topliss, 1985, *Tom Roberts 1856-1931: A Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. I, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985, as cited in Gray, pp. 48–58. The painting by Tom Roberts titled *Peanahgo Billipimbah: Billie Millera*, c. 1894, is currently unlocated.
4. Gray, pp. 48–58.
5. Carbon paper, consisting of paper coated with loosely bound ink or pigment, is placed between the part to be copied and the surface to receive the design; when the lines are redrawn with a pencil, an image is transferred.
6. 'Women's views and news', The Argus, 23 Feb. 1923, p. 10.