

**N  
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FEATURING

JR's Homily  
to country:  
powerful  
storytelling

BY DR JESSICA McLEAN

She-Oak  
and Sunlight:  
Australian  
Impression

BY ANNE GRAY,  
ANGELA HESSON  
AND SOPHIE  
GERHARD

# TRIENNIAL

MIRROR IMAGE: CONTEMPORARY  
PORTRAITURE

Kim Sihyun, Ayana V. Jackson, Aida Muluneh, Lakin  
Ogunbanwo, Phumzile Khanyile and Girma Berta

**MAGAZINE**

ISSUE 27 MAR-APR 2021 \$12



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## CONTENTS

14

### Deep Read

JR: the power of storytelling  
by Dr Jessica McLean

18

### Life & Times

Glenda Nicholls and the spirit  
of the river by Hannah Presley

22

### Artist Profile

New York photographer Bruce  
Gilden by Meg Slater

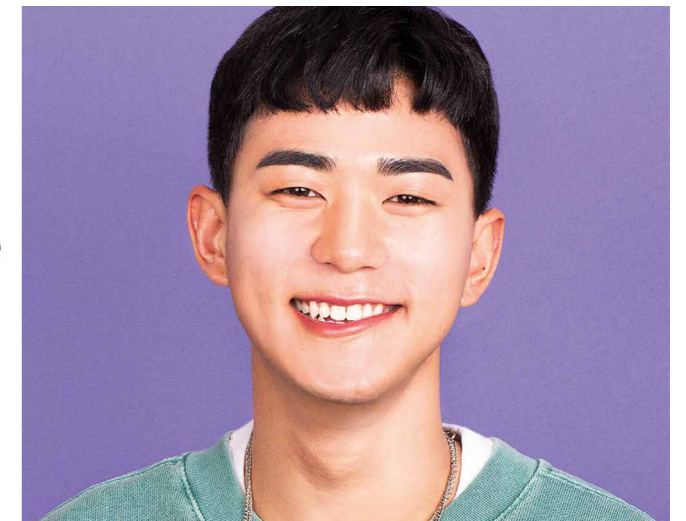
24

### Deep Read

Mirror image: contem-  
porary portraiture, image  
and identity

BY SUSAN VAN WYK

Kim Sihyun *Untitled from the Identification  
(ID) Photo Project series 2017– (detail)*,  
Collection of the artist. Presented by Korea  
Foundation © Kim Sihyun



32

### Interview

Maria Cristina Didero speaks  
with design studio Carnovsky

36

### Artist Spotlight

Dhambit Mununggurr by  
Myles Russell-Cook

38

### Making With

Makiko Ryujin and Michael  
Gittings

44

### Community

NGV team favourite works  
from the NGV Triennial

54

### Artist Profile

Artist and poet Diamond  
Stingily by Katharina Prugger

58

### Exhibition

Introducing *She-Oak  
and Sunlight: Australian  
Impressionism*



72

### Conservation

Lasting friendships of  
Australia's Impressionists

BY MICHAEL VARCOE-COCKS

Tom Roberts *The artists' camp 1886 (detail)*,  
Felton Bequest, 1943



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**CONTENTS CONT'D**

**78**  
**Decorative Arts**  
Pablo Picasso's  
ceramics: playing with  
the fourth dimension

BY AMANDA DUNSMORE



Pablo Picasso (designer) Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (manufacturer) *Laughing-eyed face, pitcher* 1969. Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2020

**90**  
**Design**  
Melbourne Design Week and  
Melbourne Art Book Fair 2021

**94**  
**Design Store & Books**  
On writing: meet four *NGV  
Triennial 2020* authors, plus  
new books and jewellery

**109**  
**In the Next Issue**  
Melbourne Winter Masterpieces  
2021: *French Impressionism from  
the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*

11 From the NGV  
13 Contributors  
102 Making News

104 People  
106 Around Victoria  
110 List of Reproduced Works  
and End Notes

112 Thank You

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
people are advised that this publication  
contains names of people who have  
passed away. The National Gallery of  
Victoria acknowledges the Wurundjeri and  
Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin nation,  
the Traditional Owners of the lands and  
waterways upon which the NGV is located.

(cover) **Kim Sihyun** *Untitled* from  
the *Identification (ID) Photo Project*  
series 2017– (detail) Collection of the  
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28

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### FROM THE NGV

Identity, community, the precariousness of life and the ties that connect us to place are all themes in this issue of *NGV Magazine*, as we continue to profile the NGV Triennial. Considering the impact of French artist JR's *Homily to country*, 2020, and its meditation on the people whose lives depend on a declining Darling River system, Dr Jessica McLean writes: 'You can devour all the data in the world to get a sense of the scope and scale of the Murray-Darling Basin ... but for others to change their mind about something, engaging with stories may be the best path towards transformation.' Similarly, Hannah Presley looks to Glenda Nicholls's largest woven net, *Miwi Milloo (Good Spirit of the Murray River)*, 2020, observing: 'Glenda's journey with net making has provided her with a platform to share the plight of the struggling Murray River system.' I thank Triennial Major Supporter Lisa Fox for her support of Glenda Nicholls's work, and Triennial Champions Loti & Victor Smorgon Fund for their support of JR's project.

I also encourage you to read about the strong photography presence in the exhibition including *NGV Magazine* cover artist Kim Sihyun, presented by Triennial Supporter Korea Foundation. The response to the NGV Triennial has been incredible and I am deeply grateful for the exceptional support of all of our community. I warmly recognise Principal

Partner of Triennial and Triennial EXTRA Mercedes-Benz and Managing Director and CEO Florian Seidler; NGV Triennial Champions Neville and Diana Bertalli; Chadstone – The Fashion Capital; EY and Managing Partner Melbourne Rodney Piltz; Telstra and CEO Andrew Penn; and Macquarie Group and Executive Director Tim Joyce. I thank Design Partner RMIT University and Vice-Chancellor and President Martin Bean CBE; Major Partner Deakin University and Vice-Chancellor Professor Iain Martin; Learning Partner La Trobe University and Vice-Chancellor Professor John Dewar AO; and Research Partner the University of Melbourne and Vice-Chancellor Professor Duncan Maskell. I also thank Major Partner Clemenger BBDO and Creative Chairman James McGrath and CEO Jim Gall for their support of Triennial EXTRA.

Moving to The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, I am thrilled to introduce a new exhibition, *She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism*, with insights including a feature essay by Dr Anne Gray, Emeritus Curator and former Head of Australian Art, National Gallery of Australia. I gratefully acknowledge the support of our partners including Principal Partner Macquarie Group for their support of this exhibition and their long-term support of our Australian art exhibitions and Collection. I also sincerely thank Major Partner Deakin

University and Vice-Chancellor Professor Iain Martin; and Supporters Yering Station and winery owner Doug Rathbone AM, and Dulux Australia and CEO Patrick Houlihan.

Also at NGV Australia, *DESTINY*, the bold exhibition of Australian artist Destiny Deacon, recently closed and it is with great sadness that I acknowledge the passing of Destiny's long-term collaborator, Virginia Fraser.

Finally, it is my pleasure to welcome back Melbourne Art Book Fair and Melbourne Design Week 2021, both of which extend across Melbourne and Victoria. With the support of the Victorian Government, Melbourne Design Week is led by the NGV's Department of Contemporary Design and Architecture and we acknowledge The Hugh D. T. Williamson Foundation for their ongoing generous support. I also thank Melbourne Design Week Major Partners Mercedes-Benz, Telstra, and Design Partner RMIT University.

I hope the essays in this issue inspire you.

**Tony Ellwood AM**  
Director

Welcome to our second issue of *NGV Magazine* dedicated to the NGV Triennial 2020 exhibition. Since the exhibition opened in December last year, to celebrate the reopening of the NGV, we have relished welcoming visitors back to the Gallery to experience firsthand the art and design on display.

We devote this issue of *NGV Magazine* to the NGV Triennial exhibition themes of 'Reflection' and 'Conservation'. Art and design studio Carnovsky's installation for the NGV Triennial, *Extinctions*, 2020, is one work that explores these themes, and in an interview for this issue author and design curator Maria Cristina Didero discovers how the work manipulates sight to remind us of the interconnection between our lives

and other species. We also welcome back Melbourne designers Makiko Ryuji and Michael Gittings to *NGV Magazine*, this time to write about their lighting installation *Samsāra*, 2020, for the NGV Triennial in 'Making With.'

We are also delighted to open *She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism* at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia in March and celebrate the works of Frederick McCubbin, Ina Gregory, Tom Roberts, Jane Price, Arthur Streeton, Charles Conder, Clara Southern and others. Dr Angela Hesson, NGV Curator of Australian Painting, Sculpture and Decorative Arts to 1980, in her essay for this issue, focusses on some of the movement's lesser known artists, to explore the complex relationships

between nature, art, spirituality and politics that influenced their treatment of landscape around the turn of the century.

I hope the insights in this issue offer great preparation for a visit to the NGV Triennial, on display until 18 April, or may even prompt a second look, and the other exciting exhibitions of art and design on display at the NGV.

**Donna McColm**  
Managing Editor, *NGV Magazine*  
Acting Assistant Director, Curatorial and Audience Engagement



Photography: Courtesy of Chris McConville

## Share 2020 by KAWS

After 14 months in the works, the New York-based artist's sculpture *Share 2020* has finally landed at the 135-hectare Pt. Leo Estate on the Mornington Peninsula, where it now takes pride of place in the Sculpture Park.

Entry is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children and \$20 for families (two adults, two children)



Pt. Leo Estate's Sculpture Park is open daily from 11 am to 5 pm  
3649 Frankston-Flinders Road, Merricks, Victoria  
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Anne Gray is an independent curator with more than forty years' experience working in art museums. She is Emeritus Curator at the National Gallery of Australia, and was Head of Australian art at the National Gallery of Australia (2001–16), Director of The Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, University of Western Australia (1995–2001), and Head of art at the Australian War Memorial (1980–95).

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Dr Angela Hesson is Curator, Australian Painting, Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the NGV. She has curated numerous exhibitions, including *Hans and Nora Heyesen: Two Generations of Australian Art* (2019) and *Love: Art of Emotion 1400–1800* (2017). Prior to her appointment at the NGV, she was employed as a lecturer in Art History and Literature at the University of Melbourne and at La Trobe University, and as a curator at The Johnston Collection. Dr Hesson has also worked extensively as a freelance arts writer.

### DR JESSICA MCLEAN

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### SUSAN VAN WYK

Curator, NGV

Susan van Wyk is Senior Curator of Photography at the NGV. Since joining the NGV, she has worked on more than sixty exhibitions of Australian and international photography. Recent exhibitions include *Olympia: Photographs by Polixeni Papapetrou* (2019), *Turning Points: Contemporary Photography from China* (2019), *Colony: Australia 1770–1861* (2018) and *Henry Talbot: 1960s Fashion Photography* (2016). Over a thirty-year career she has published widely on photography in books and exhibition catalogues and in numerous journals and magazines.

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# JR's *Homily to country*: storytelling with pictures

JR's *Homily to country*, 2020, supported by Loti & Victor Smorgon Fund, is an ambitious installation that draws global attention to the ecological decline of the Murray-Darling River system caused by intensive water extraction due to irrigation and climate change. It also introduces us to three people whose lives are intrinsically connected to the Darling River, in cathedral-like, stained-glass windows standing in a scaffold structure, in an effort to engage, to understand and, perhaps, to even transform.

BY JESSICA McLEAN

**People carry stories.** They make and remake these stories in the glimpses they offer other people of their lives and homes. Here is where JR's work *Homily to country* is wonderfully generative – making and remaking images of people in places they belong to, and that care for them. JR situates people in Countries that nourish them: framing individuals in ways that capture connections with, and reflections on, the Murray-Darling Basin, suggesting multiple ways of knowing and ways of being in those places. The people are static in the images he captures for the NGV Triennial but there is movement behind and around them, and suggestions of absence and transformation.

Stories have the power to change people's minds. You can devour all the data in the world to get a sense of the scope and scale of the Murray-Darling Basin: about how these river catchments are Country for more than forty Aboriginal Nations; that the Basin covers an area of more than one million square kilometres; how it provides water for more than three million Australians in good years; and that it is habitat for forty-six species of native fish. That in the summer of 2018–19, low and poor water quality led to the death of up to three million fish. You can read and learn all this and ponder the multiple

values at play in this massive system and you could begin to understand its complexity. As well as the trouble the Murray-Darling is in. Armed with these facts and numbers and scope, some people may be convinced that other paths are worth following. This Murray-Darling Basin data could enable some to come to terms with how important the Basin is and why we need to think differently about its management, before following through on this knowledge with action. But for others to change their mind about something, to gain insight and empathy, engaging with stories may be the best path towards transformation.

*Badger*, 2020, captures Baakandji Elder Badger Bates in the dry Darling riverbed, holding a rock in one hand and entreating the viewer with the other. His t-shirt says 'Save our Darling-Barka: Lifeblood of the people'. Barka, or Baaka, meaning river, is the home of the Baakandji or Paakantji people, the traditional owners of land around the lower Darling River, stretching from far west New South Wales to the South Australian border just above Broken Hill. Badger is a river person, the Baaka is his kin and Country. The welcoming language of Badger's t-shirt is an invocation and prompt for us all – 'the people' hold the Baaka as lifeblood. He is, unequivocally, asking for action.

Badger Bates is also an artist who creates elaborate carvings that are maps of Baakandji Country. Like JR, his work is grounded in place; the stories his carvings tell are integral to Baakandji ways of knowing, being and doing. To engage with Badger's art is to engage with Baakandji Country.

How do we respond when people's lifeblood stops flowing for a time? Or flows less frequently, with less vigour and variability? Mourning is an option but the moral imperative to do more accompanies any expression of grief. JR typically shares his photos on public streets, pasting large portraits of people whom nobody is expected to know. By keeping his subjects anonymous, JR wants to provide room for encounters between strangers – the subject and the person on the street. But in some quarters, Badger Bates is a well-known Baakandji man and even for those who don't know of Badger, his story comes with him in the self-identifying t-shirt and gesture of welcome. So these relationships of knowing and not knowing, connecting and disengaging, are contingent.

A mess of different priorities have contributed to the crises that the Murray-Darling Basin communities have weathered. Are weathering. Priorities held by different bureaucracies, at different scales, with different

foci. The problems facing the Murray-Darling Basin communities and the non-humans that rely on it are human induced. These problems cross scales from the local to the global and emerge from difficult social, cultural, economic and political realities. From decisions to farm water intensive crops and raise certain livestock, to the practice of extracting water for mining fossil fuels, along with colonial histories and presences and escalating climate change, the dynamics that co-produce the Basin are deeply challenging.

I say co-produce because non-humans talk back, they assert their agency. With climate change, rivers and creeks dry up and fish die, while more inputs such as fertiliser and pesticide are required to maintain marginal crop production. When water does return, so do non-humans that thrive in and with healthy Country.

I know a part of the Murray-Darling reasonably well, having grown up as a white person in Mudgee, a town that is part of Wiradjuri Country, before leaving as a teenager to go to university, and returning frequently since then. Designated as a homily to Country, JR's art is unlike most homilies I experienced in the churches of the Murray-Darling Basin as a child. Similarly, the stained-glass windows in the scaffolding that present JR's images vividly reference religious settings but in a new way. The better homilies included metaphor and imagery, the worst involved droning and pejorative lectures and the best offered a story that lingers still. The etymology of homily is noteworthy: it comes from the Ancient Greek *homilos*, a term referring to a crowd or assembly, and is also linked to *homilia* – a conversation. Talking with a crowd or assembly is how we might view JR's pieces, then, as they come from particular places and give glimpses into poignant connections to Country.

In Australia, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use the term Country to refer to that which gives life and creates identity. Country is often cared for by those that belong to it, and Country also cares for people. When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identify themselves, Country is central in terms of communicating family origins and belonging.

It also refers to non-human entities and forces, including animals, plants, animate and inanimate objects, water and wind.

To talk with Country, then, is to continue an ongoing dialogue and set of relations that are vital for life and life-giving. Badger's dry riverbed and his open entreaty to save the Baaka evoke a knowingness and sadness but there's a stoic presence captured here, too. There is power and capacity.

The two stained-glass windows that stand alongside *Badger* show orchardists who have lost their livelihoods due



to lack of water to nourish their crops. *Alan*, 2020, stands in front of a conflagration that appears to almost move as you watch it. *Rachel*, 2020, wears the hint of a smile in the middle of a dirt road, her vehicle to one side matching the hue of her shirt. Unlike Badger, I do not know who Alan and Rachel are, whether they have close ties to Country or otherwise. All wear their years of knowing and living on and with Country on their bodies – their faces and hands show the experiences that come with sometimes difficult conditions such as exacerbated droughts.

For as long as intensive agriculture has been pursued in settler colonial communities, cooperation and competition over water has existed, bringing people together and apart, up- and downstream rivers, and with diverging and converging viewpoints. There are ongoing water histories at play here,

including the appropriation of waterways by settler colonial Australia, and formal attempts to control natural systems, such as installation of infrastructure to support irrigation (dams and canals), leading to the Murray-Darling Basin being the most regulated system in Australia. The Federal Government has been explicitly involved in the Murray-Darling's governance since the Water Act of 2007, overseeing the management of water between four states and one territory. The effectiveness of this approach must be questioned given recent massive fish kills and the escalating impacts of climate change across the Basin.

The stories that are captured in the stained-glass portraits in JR's *Homily to country* are powerful as they work to bridge the gaps that exist between bracketed or siloed perspectives. NGV's installation of JR's full body photos help to think differently and bring together often separate viewpoints. The particular struggles and challenges that each subject and context present are written on their bodies and in the landscapes that hold them. JR brings stories from rural Australia to the city. It sits within the NGV in Naarm (central Melbourne) as an offering – collapsing the distance between the urban and rural. Like Badger's entreaty, it is an invitation to think again about Countries of the Murray-Darling Basin. Cohering lived experiences into pieces that bear witness offers a way for talking and thinking together, and at a time when we need it the most.

DR JESSICA MCLEAN IS A GEOGRAPHER AT MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY, NEW SOUTH WALES, RESEARCHING AND TEACHING IN ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND POLITICS, WITH A FOCUS ON GEOGRAPHIES OF WATER AND DIGITAL SPACES. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL CHAMPIONS LOTI & VICTOR SMORGON FUND FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF JR'S *HOMILY TO COUNTRY*, 2020. ON DISPLAY IN THE NGV GROLLO EQUISET GARDEN AT NGV INTERNATIONAL UNTIL 18 APRIL 2021.

(pp. 14–5) NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of JR *Homily to country* 2020. Proposed acquisition with funds donated by Loti & Victor Smorgon Fund © JR. Photo: Tom Ross (p. 16) JR photographing local farmer Rachel for his new work *Homily to country*, 2020 (above) *JR Badger*, 2020. Courtesy of the artist © JR



# ‘They are here with me, they are not gone, their blood runs through me and I am continuing their dream.’

GLEND A NICHOLLS

Glenda Nicholls, a Waddi Waddi, Ngarrindjeri and Yorta Yorta artist, is a master weaver who constructs elaborate sculptural works that connect the present with her ancestral past. To create *Miwi Milloo (Good Spirit of the Murray River)*, 2020, for the NGV Triennial, Nicholls wove her largest and most ambitious net to date. Supported by Lisa Fox, this impressive net is comprised of thousands of hand-woven finger knots, and decorated with hundreds of hand-made feather flowers, constructed in collaboration with her daughter, Melinda Andrew.

**BY** HANNAH PRESLEY

Just over a decade ago Waddi Waddi, Yorta Yorta and Ngarrindjeri artist Glenda Nicholls awoke from a vivid dream that she later began referring to as a vision. She immediately picked up her crochet materials and made a knot, then another and another – Glenda was weaving a fishing net. This dream would be the start of a journey that would strengthen Glenda’s connection to Milloo, the mighty Murray River, and bring her closer to her ancestors.

When Glenda was born, on the verandah of the Swan Hill District Hospital, the cultural name she was given was Jule Yarra Minj, which translates to Little River Girl. Glenda was raised close to the river, like her parents and her grandmother who, as a child, lived with

her siblings in a huge hollow tree stump at Poocher Swamp on the banks of Milloo near Border-town, South Australia.

Glenda has always had an affinity with crafts, and both her mother and grandmother were always crocheting, knitting and sewing, as well as making traditional bush crafts. Feather flower making was a popular craft that was also an important part of the Aboriginal economy during mission times. Glenda’s grandmother would make feather flowers to adorn her hand-woven baskets that she would then sell. Glenda, having practised the craft when she was younger, picked it up again when she had her children and often sold her creations in order to give them pocket money.

(left and pp. 20–1) NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of **Glenda Nicholls** *Miwi Milloo (Good Spirit of the Murray River)* 2020. Purchased with funds donated by Lisa Fox, 2020 © Glenda Nicholls. Photo: Tom Ross



Glenda knew she had received a gift from her ancestors when she awoke from her dream, a gift that would guide her to refresh a cultural practice that had been left behind.

Glenda currently lives on Waddi Waddi Country, just outside of Werrt Werrt (Wood Wood) in northern Victoria, where Milloo carves itself through the Nyah Vinifera forest. Dominated by longstanding river red gums and black box trees, the forest is full of sacred cultural heritage including scarred trees, earthen ovens, middens and burial sites. The area also has diverse plant and animal life and an abundance of birds, and is home to a number of threatened fauna species including the broad-shelled turtle (*Chelodina expansa*) and the growling grass frog (*Litoria raniformis*).

Glenda's journey with net making has provided her with a platform to share the plight of the struggling Murray River system. A 2020 snapshot shows the health of our rivers and waterways rapidly declining due to drought, over-allocation of water resources and salinity.

Management of both freshwater and saltwater water-ways is at the core of First Nations culture. Indigenous people's relationship with water has always been essential, as water-ways provide a sustainable source of food and materials for the community and for future trade. Fishing is a cultural practice that has existed for many thousands of years; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have historically practised sophisticated fishing techniques involving creating complex traps, nets, weirs and middens.

Glenda is from a strong line of fisherwomen who caught fish, eels and yabbies, and gathered mussels. Fishing was an activity embraced by everyone in her family. On camping trips along the river, the families would come together and have fishing competitions – kids against the adults – with the kids often turning old milk tins into shrimp scoops and crafting makeshift fishing poles. Camping on Country meant fishing, but it also meant spending time walking through the bush, listening to the sounds of the birds in the trees above you, looking down and following tracks, collecting feathers and hunting for bush foods. Caring for and respecting Country has always been a part of Glenda's life, and this translates into her art practice.

Nicholls's family story is intimately connected with riverlands, as Milloo flows

through the traditional Country of both sides of her family. For Glenda, Milloo is a member of the family, like an Elder to be respected and protected. With the support of Lisa Fox, Nicholls's most recent net, *Miwi Milloo (Good Spirit of the Murray River)*, 2020, is an ode to Milloo; a memorial to honour the spirit of the river, the river she remembers as a child, and the river her family is intimately connected with. The meticulously knotted net stretches out, mirroring the undulating waters of the river itself. The carefully selected palette of pale white and cream references the white ochre or pipe clay used to paint the body; the work also features feathers, which are universally associated with adornment and ceremony.

The net catches the light to create dappled shadows, giving the effect of water, channelling Milloo as it flows across the

landscape. The feather flowers hang like winged ancestral spirits from the net, symbolising the people culturally connected to the river, as well as the birds, animals and plant life that are all integral parts of the living and breathing land. Glenda has created a conduit between worlds, an instrument to convey a message from her ancestors: 'They are here with me, they are not gone, their blood runs through me and I am continuing their dream'.

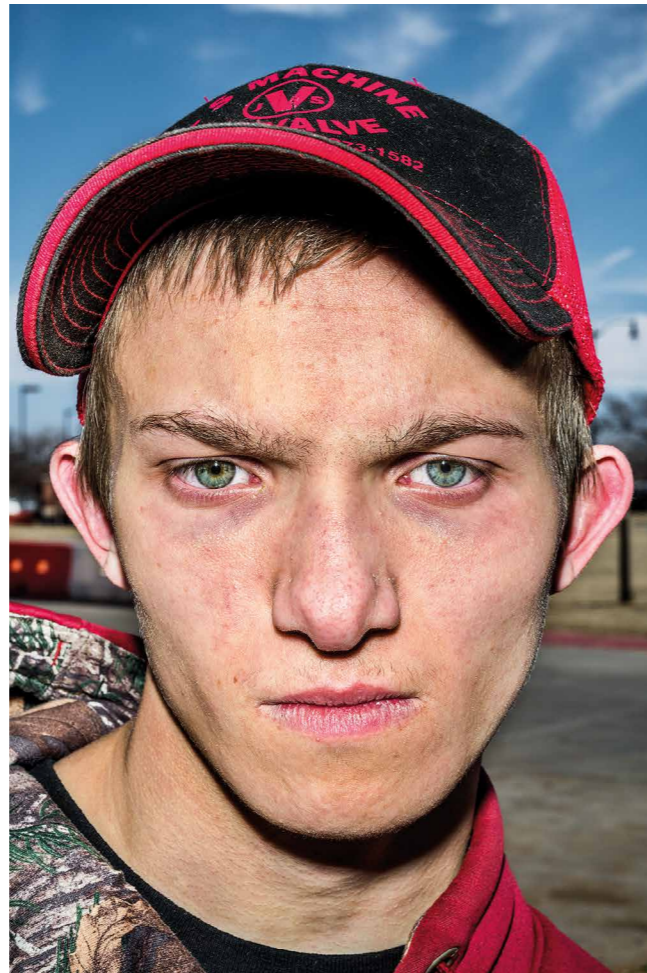
HANNAH PRESLEY IS NGV CURATOR, INDIGENOUS ART. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL MAJOR SUPPORTER LISA FOX FOR HER SUPPORT OF GLENDA NICHOLLS' WORK, ON DISPLAY ON GROUND LEVEL AT NGV INTERNATIONAL UNTIL 18 APRIL 2021. THIS IS AN EXTRACT FROM THE ESSAY 'GLENDA NICHOLLS: THE SPIRIT OF THE RIVER' PUBLISHED IN *NGV TRIENNIAL 2020*, PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA IN 2020 AND AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE AT NGV DESIGN STORE AND ONLINE AT NGV.MELBOURNE/STORE.

## ARTIST PROFILE

# Bruce Gilden

Bruce Gilden's project, *Faces*, 2012–14, on display for the NGV Triennial 2020, is an extended series of confronting and compelling photographic portraits. Gilden considers the series as an autobiographical reflection on his childhood in Brooklyn, New York City, and the result of a lifelong fascination with the 'characters'<sup>1</sup> he encounters in pursuit of his subjects.

BY MEG SLATER



Bruce Gilden was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1946. From a young age, Gilden was curious about the people he saw on busy streets from the second-storey window of his childhood home. He claims that city's 'raw energy'<sup>2</sup> momentarily exposed unique aspects of a person's character that would otherwise have remained hidden. This, and several other formative experiences, including attending night classes in photography at New York's School of Visual Arts, and absorbing the bold, confrontational photographic approach portrayed by Thomas, the protagonist in Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 film *Blow-Up*, led Gilden to take to the streets and seek out what he had only fleetingly glimpsed at a distance.

At 23 years of age, Gilden undertook his first photographic project. Begun in 1969, the series spans ten years and surveys eccentric New Yorkers along the beach, on

the boardwalk and at the amusement park at Coney Island. In the 1980s and 1990s, Gilden travelled to cities across the globe, taking photographs of everyday individuals with one or several unique qualities that resonated with him amid the noise and chaos of the street. During this period, he honed his direct, and what many consider to be controversial, approach to taking photographs. Armed with his camera and quick feet, Gilden became well known for 'ambushing'<sup>3</sup> his subjects. The result of these unexpected encounters are the chaotic, black and white photographs for which Gilden is most renowned.

In recent years, Gilden has made a definitive shift – away from capturing the unaware to getting even closer to his subjects. Over the past eight years, Gilden has travelled to regional parts of the US, UK and Colombia to capture his *Faces* series, which consists of tightly cropped, jarring portraits printed and displayed at a

monumental scale. Four of these intimate and compelling photographs – of Jean from Wisconsin, Andy from Newcastle, Robert from Oklahoma and Morgan from Iowa – are on display in the NGV Triennial.

MEG SLATER IS NGV ASSISTANT CURATOR, INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION PROJECTS. GILDEN'S WORKS ARE ON DISPLAY ON GROUND LEVEL AT NGV INTERNATIONAL UNTIL 18 APRIL 2021.

(above) **Bruce Gilden** Robert, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA 2018. Collection of the artist  
(right) **Bruce Gilden** Jean, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA 2013. Collection of the artist



## DEEP READ

Portraiture has long been a dynamic presence in the work of photographers. The majority of the photographs included in the NGV Triennial are portraits, however, more than simply pictures of people, these photographs present a sophisticated and complex image of humanity in all its iterations, from celebrating the beauty and dynamism of life to calling out and questioning generational traditions.

BY SUSAN VAN WYK

# Mirror image: contemporary portraiture, image and identity



(above) **Aïda Muluneh** *Seed of the soul* 2017 from the *A Memory of Hope* series 2017. Bowness Family Fund for Photography, 2018 © Aïda Muluneh

(p. 26) NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of **Ayana V. Jackson's** *Intimate Justice in the Stolen Moment* series 2017. Purchased with funds donated by Wendy and Paul Bonnici and Family, Trawalla Foundation, Nadia Breuer Sopher and Ed Breuer, Douglas Baxter and Brian Hastings and the NGV American Friends, 2018 © Ayana V. Jackson, courtesy Mariane Ibrahim Gallery. Photo: Tom Ross

(p. 27) **Phumzile Khanyile** *Untitled* 2016 from the *Plastic Crowns* series 2016. Bowness Family Fund for Photography, 2019 © Phumzile Khanyile

Among the works that can be explored in the NGV Triennial 2020 are photographic portraits by artists based in Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, South Korea and the United States, each of whom uses photography and portraiture in thought-provoking and expansive ways to make photographs that are not only portraits of individuals but are also pictures of community and contemporary society more broadly. These photographers have

tattoos of First Nations peoples, and the richly hued paintings that can be seen in orthodox Christian churches in Ethiopia. In her portraits Muluneh subverts the ethnographic view that this kind of imagery and decoration has long been subjected to in the European dominated world. Engagement with the contemporary world, and the rejection of the back catalogue of stereotypes promulgated in the global media, is a fundamental aspect of Muluneh's practice. As she explains: 'It's a complex

reality of her studio, to address women's stories and contemporary African experiences. Muluneh's photograph *Compromise*, 2017, for example, could be interpreted as addressing the mediated, often unwanted and sometimes unsuccessful, post-colonial experience in Africa and its ongoing ramifications. It could also be seen as representative of the carefully navigated path that women often have to tread in life. By telling women's histories and stories Aida Muluneh challenges ill-founded



created contemporary portraits and self-portraits that question ideals of beauty, sexuality and identity; performative photographs that speak to history and photography; and images that merge street photography and portraiture to construct social portraits that are about the collective rather than the individual.

The highly stylised portraits of Ethiopian photographer Aida Muluneh reference practices that have long-standing cultural histories, such as the traditional body ornamentation and

continent and Africa is not just one country. It is such a rich place, which is a continent where you see the presence of the past, present and the future ... So the conversation I am trying to lead is that our perception should not be limited to our cultural background and what we think about the places that we don't know much about'.<sup>1</sup> Her series, *A Memory of Hope*, 2017, supported by the Bowness Family Foundation, uses portraits of women, costumed, made-up and photographed in the constructed

preconceptions about women, not only in Ethiopia but across the continent and among the African diaspora, built on this colonial history. Similarly, *Seed of the soul*, 2017, delves into the challenges faced by women when their very appearance is seen as an affront. In this work there is a reference to Islam through the repeated pattern created with the word 'peace' in Arabic script painted across the woman's garment.

Women's histories and stories also inform the work of American artist

Ayana V. Jackson. Her photographs are part of the lineage of artists who use their own bodies as their subject. Jackson's photographs use performative self-portraits as a means of exploring racial stereotypes and the representation of Black American women throughout history – specifically the complex relationship between women and photography. From the nineteenth century there has been an intertwining of photography with colonial histories that saw the imposition of an ethnographic, racial and sexual gaze upon their bodies. Using both studio-based portraiture and performance, her work attempts to unravel the role of the camera in the construction of identity. For the NGV Triennial, we present three works from her series *Intimate Justice in the Stolen Moment*, 2017, generously supported by Wendy and Paul Bonnici and Family, Trawalla Foundation, Nadia Breuer Sopher and Ed Breuer, Douglas Baxter and Brian Hastings and the NGV American Friends. The portraits of the woman in this series, seemingly suspended in space, act as a physical and metaphorical freeing of the body from what the artist sees as the 'weight of gravity' of history. Jackson plays upon the idea of a laboured body, an enslaved body, being freed of that bondage and literally lifting up into space. The artist has described the inspiration for this body of work, which drew upon an earlier photograph she created and an influential book by Shatema Threadcraft.<sup>2</sup> But the time when the photographs were first conceived, in 2015, was also instrumental as Jackson explains, 'It was in the middle of the *Black Lives Matter* protests and grand jury results were coming in. I remember feeling completely paralysed; I felt stuck and I had this desire to feel unstuck. So, I decided to do these movement studies, where I was literally in the courtyard jumping around'.<sup>3</sup>

The expression and exploration of female identity has been a constant element in the work of young South African photographer Phumzile Khanyile. Her series, *Plastic Crowns*, generously purchased for the NGV through the Bowness Family Foundation, was created in 2016 and



is her most well-known body of work to date. It was created as an outcome of her being awarded the Gisèle Wulfsohn Mentorship Prize in 2015, where she was partnered with Ayana V. Jackson. The photographs in *Plastic Crowns*, are self-portraits in which the artist broadly examines ideas about beauty, sexuality and social expectations. The resulting photographs have been described as forming 'a kind of inglorious photo album, assembling all of the images that would normally be edited from a family collection'.<sup>4</sup> Khanyile presents herself in a range of confronting guises: standing by a sewing machine, an object of feminine domesticity and the tool of the largely invisible female labour force of home based, textile industry outworkers; provocatively sitting her with legs spread wide with a strategically placed balloon; draped in a plastic bag, suggesting an auto-erotic act; and wearing the plastic crown of the series title. The symbolism of the crown is significant, as the artist explains: '*Plastic Crowns* stems from the idea of taking a perceived 'prestigious' ornament such as a royal or beauty pageant crown and turning it into an object that anyone can purchase and thus enthrone themselves. It is the constant re-conception and reinvention of the self'.<sup>5</sup> In this and subsequent series Khanyile examines feminine sexuality and the female gaze. By using

herself as the model she takes ownership of the narrative presented. This is an act of defiance in a society in which, 'the female body remains socially policed territory, subject to ideas of propriety handed down from generation to generation'.<sup>6</sup>

Khanyile is speaking to the experience of many women but the autobiographical aspect of her photographs is of primary importance. She began by pushing at the boundaries of what her grandmother taught her was the behaviour of a 'good woman', but what began as a cathartic exercise became one of greater understanding and empathy. As Khanyile describes it, '*Plastic Crowns* has definitely acquired a new meaning since I finished it. Back then I was looking at my own pain, and today I am able to see and imagine the pain my grandmother and the women in my family have gone through, and how this has been passed down through generations and finally we are willing to acquire a new perspective, healing'.<sup>7</sup>

While Phumzile Khanyile is pushing against the conventional boundaries of expectations and femininity, other photographers in the Triennial celebrate ideals of beauty and style. Nigerian Lakin Ogunbanwo's photographs move seamlessly across genres and are rich with references to the history of photography. Ogunbanwo made a career and reputation as a fashion photographer, revealing the

creative activity of the vibrant Lagos fashion scene. He is also well known for his portrait photography, which draws on the tradition of studio photography across Africa perhaps best known internationally through the work of an earlier generation of photographers, including Malick Sidibé and Seydou Kéïta. The influence of studio photography can be seen across the breadth of Ogunbanwo's practice, it is an environment that enables him to control every element in his images: lighting, colour, backdrops and of course his models. The contained space of the studio providing what Ogunbanwo regards as the opportunity for creative freedom.

The expression of this creative freedom is evident in the series, *Are We Good Enough*, included in the NGV Triennial and supported by Bowness Family Foundation. The photographs have a restrained elegance and subtle sensuality, in each image the central male figure is photographed from behind against the plain white backdrop of his studio, the images are tightly cropped and the lighting draws our attention to the beauty of the

model: the line of his neck, the mass of his shoulders, the curl of an ear. This systematic approach to image-making, establishing a framework for comparison, has a well-established lineage in contemporary photography. In Ogunbanwo's photographs the uniform structure of the images draws the viewer's attention to the delicate nuances of this anonymous body, but it is the hats that he is wearing that stand out in an individualistic display of riotous colour. Discussing this series Ogunbanwo said, 'I began shooting traditional men's headwear as a way to preserve my culture and to observe how it has trickled down to my generation in the way we mix them up with contemporary fashion. There are so many different hats and each one is associated with a certain Nigerian tribe'.<sup>8</sup> These photographs are a celebration of culture and masculinity. For an older generation the wearing of hats is a traditional mark of identity, and for many younger Nigerian men they have now become part of contemporary street style and a celebration of fashion and culture that is specific to West Africa. For Lakin Ogunbanwo

this has a personal resonance as he noted when discussing these images, 'It's only when you leave West Africa that you realise that people elsewhere aren't dressing their head with the same importance we do here. For Nigerian men, a hat adds a sense of confidence, it's like a personal crown'.<sup>9</sup>

Korean photographer Kim Sihyun applies a similar standardised approach to her studio portraits as Lakin Ogunbanwo, although in her work she references the globally familiar format of identity photographs. Kim's extensive photographic practice is an exploration of beauty and contemporary culture. She uses social media to advertise her project and seek participants, and the take-up rate has been extraordinary, 'The reservation slots were all taken each month within 30 seconds (and hence I got 1000 participants quite quickly)'.<sup>10</sup> Each of the participants is invited to the photographer's studio and arrives having done their own make-up and styling. Together artist and subject establish a colour palette for the portraits, and after the studio session collaborate to finish the photograph. This is an

important aspect of Kim's process as, in her view, 'This conversation allows me and the participant to understand that there are many forms of beauties and learn about each other. Hence, often-times, I am told that this project is more than just a portrait photography'.<sup>11</sup> Kim Sihyun's photographs celebrate currently fashionable ideals of beauty and consequently her portraits have attained a cult status among younger Koreans. The works, presented with the support of Korea Foundation, also speak to trends within studio photography in Korea where editing and manipulating photographic portraits to reinforce mainstream archetypes of beauty is standard practice. The format for Kim's portraits, head and shoulders in front of a simple backdrop, is based on the most common form of portrait globally, the identity photograph. She is interested in the way that this standardised approach can create an archive of current fashions and trends. Kim asserts that she set out to, 'prove to the world that the photo studio that takes ID photos is also a space for valuable artwork and job. Through this project, I hoped to leave a mark in the history with the archive of ID photos of 1000 different people of South Korea'.<sup>12</sup>

Kim Sihyun's project has far outstripped her original goal of 1000 portraits, grown beyond her initial aim to bring individuality to homogenous ID photos, and expanded to create a collective portrait that reflects her life and times.

The city in which he lives, and the desire to show it to the world, underpins Ethiopian photographer Girma Berta's project. The resulting series, *Moving Shadows*, also generously supported by Bowness Family Foundation, presents a collective portrait of the people of Addis Ababa. His photographs of anonymous

individuals have been photographed surreptitiously on the busy streets of the city, using the camera in his phone. Berta works discretely to photograph his subjects as they go about their daily lives without them being aware of his presence. Later, working in his studio, he removes extraneous information from the background, leaving just the isolated figures and their expressive shadows against immersive, coloured backgrounds, resulting in an elegant

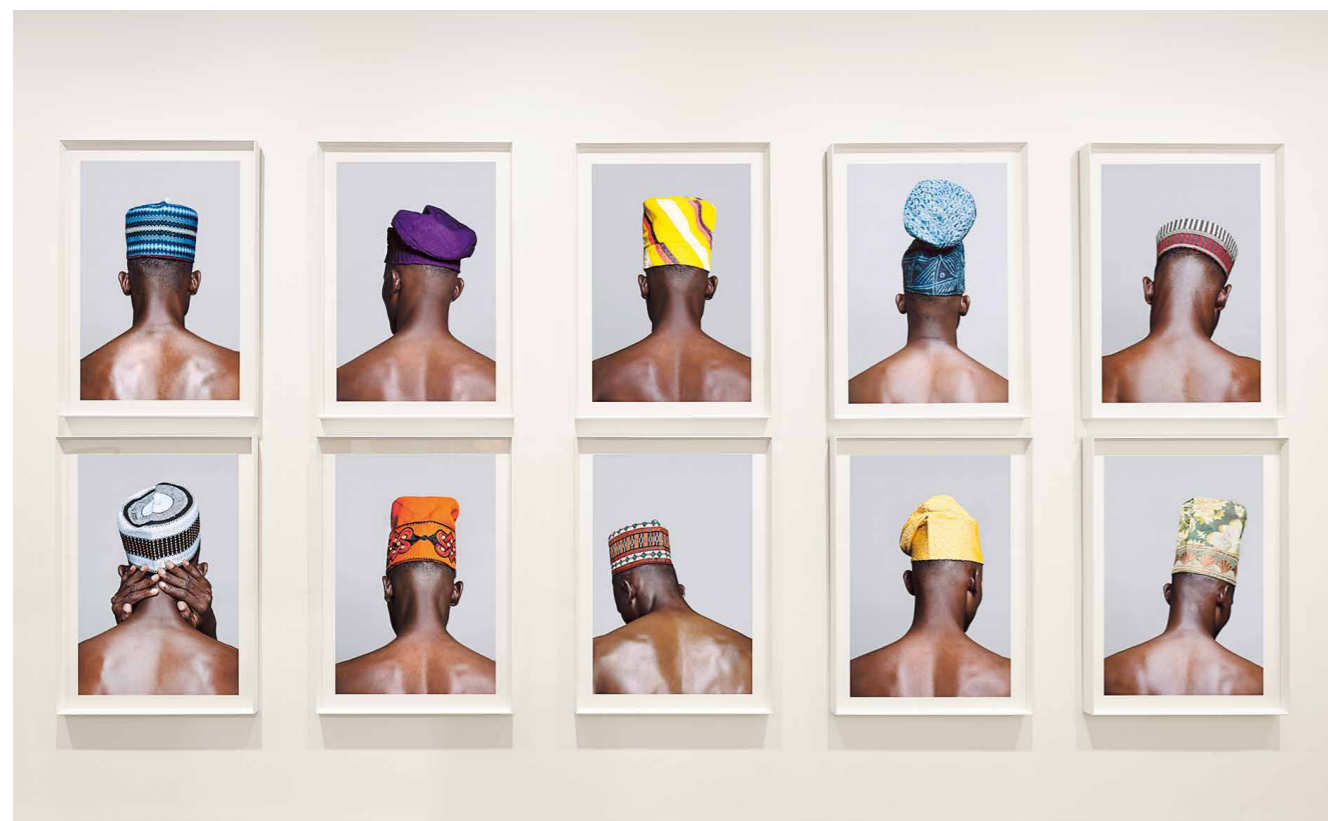
and his express desire is that, 'Through my work on Instagram, I wish the world (would) stare into the eyes of a face of Addis Ababa, the city where I was born and where I grew up. The beautiful, the ugly and all that is in between'.<sup>14</sup>

Girma Berta and the other photographers discussed here offer multiple perspectives on the human condition today. They celebrate the dynamism and beauty of life, while also questioning what it means to live in changing times, where preconceived ideas of race, gender, representation and power are increasingly challenged. They do so through the vehicle of portraiture. This most popular subject of photographers is possibly indicative of our common narcissistic fascination with our own likeness. But it is, I suggest, more complex than this and perhaps driven by more than narcissism, but instead, indicative of our curiosity about each other and the world in which we live.

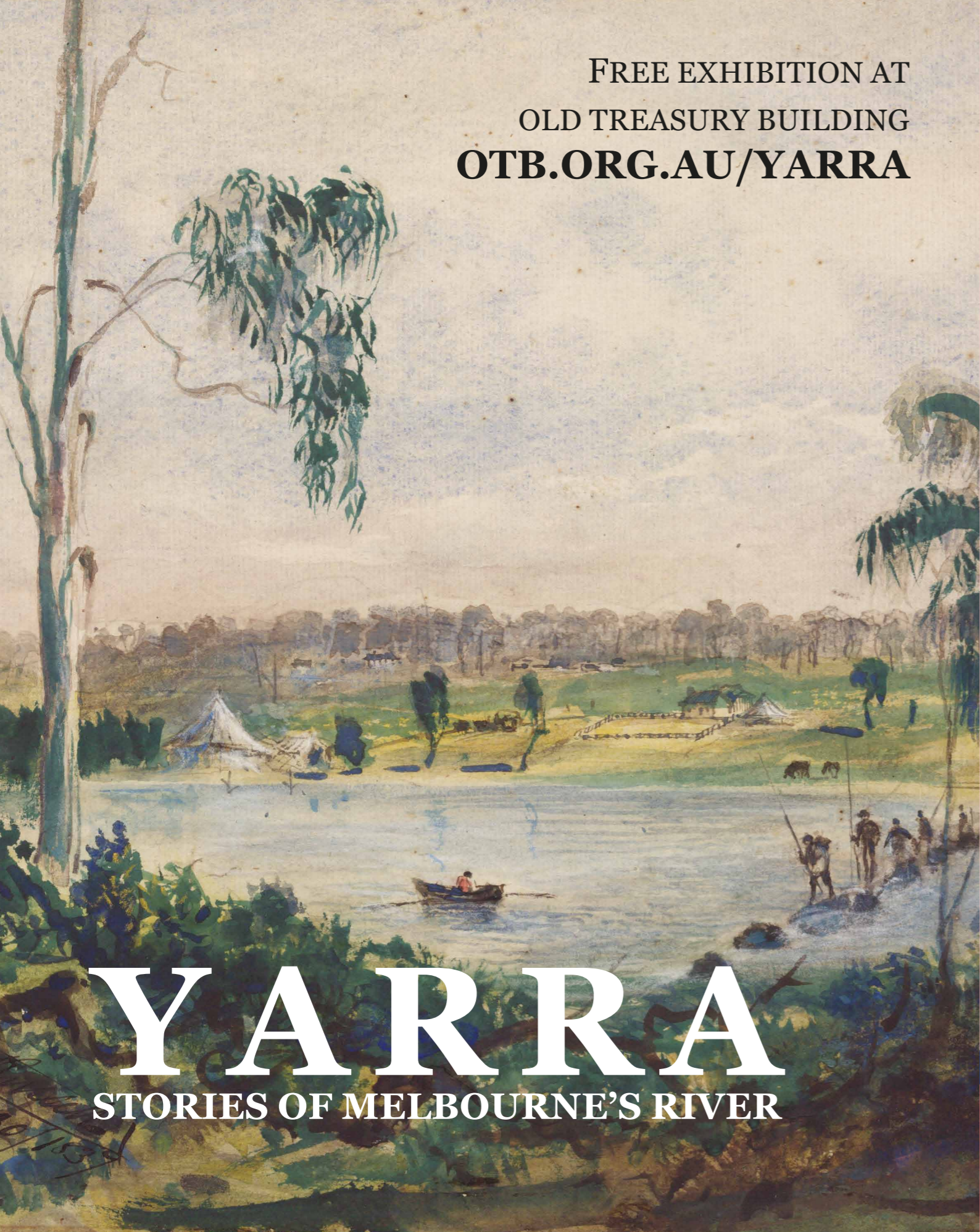
SUSAN VAN WYK IS NGV SENIOR CURATOR, PHOTOGRAPHY. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL MAJOR SUPPORTER BOWNESS FAMILY FOUNDATION FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF AIDA MULUNEH, LAKIN OGUNBANWO, PHUMZILE KHANYILE AND GIRMA BERTA'S WORKS. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL MAJOR SUPPORTERS WENDY AND PAUL BONNICI AND FAMILY AND TRAWALLA FOUNDATION, AS WELL AS TRIENNIAL CIRCLE DONORS NADIA BREUER

SOPHER AND ED BREUER, DOUGLAS BAXTER AND BRIAN HASTINGS AND THE NGV AMERICAN FRIENDS FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF AYANA V. JACKSON'S WORKS. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL SUPPORTER KOREA FOUNDATION FOR SUPPORTING THE PRESENTATION OF KIM SIHYUN'S WORK. THESE WORKS ARE ON DISPLAY ON GROUND FLOOR AT NGV INTERNATIONAL UNTIL 18 APRIL 2021.

(left) NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of Lakin Ogunbanwo's series *Are We Good Enough* 2015–17. Bowness Family Fund for Photography, 2019 © Lakin Ogunbanwo, courtesy WHATIFTHEWORLD Gallery, Cape Town. Photo: Tom Ross  
(above) Kim Sihyun *Untitled from the Identification (ID) Photo Project* series 2017–, Collection of the artist. Presented by Korea Foundation © Kim Sihyun



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Illustration by Karan Singh

# CARNOVSKY

Carnovsky is an art and design studio based in Milan founded by Silvia Quintanilla and Francesco Rugi in 2007. Carnovsky's unique approach to their work, via an obsessive scouting for visuals in archives worldwide, started from a deep passion for human beings, the world they live in and the challenges it faces. For the NGV Triennial, they have created a powerful installation, *Extinctions*, 2020, which experiments with colour and light to highlight the extinction risk of certain species.

**Maria Cristina Didero:** Carnovsky is an unusual name. How did it originate?

**Carnovsky:** We were looking for a name for the studio and we did not want to simply combine our two names. Thus, we tried to figure out a name as if we were a rock band. We were reading Philip Roth's *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981) at the time and liked the sound of the name 'Carnovsky', so we choose it for our practice.

**MCD:** How do your projects start – how would you describe the way you conceive a new design?

**C:** We don't have a standard approach. It depends on the project itself and whether it is an installation, a wallpaper, a limited-edition print, a scarf or a book. We usually start discussing the project between us: What is it going to be? What is the overall subject? Then we start researching. With the RGB images [Carnovsky's ongoing project experimenting with the interaction between coloured wallpaper and coloured light], we got used to talking in terms of three different worlds, differentiating what we are going to do on each one, or what we want to reveal with a specific light or filter. Every image has been conceived and originated from a specific story, and this story is the common thread binding together the three levels.

**MCD:** I'm really interested in how groups or collectives work together. I curated a show last year at the Design Museum Holon in Tel Aviv, called *The Conversation Show*. I asked five designers, who were already working together, to produce a piece that would show the audience their particular way of working. Could you describe your creative relationship?

**C:** We consider ourselves very lucky because we really understand each other in life and work. I think it is very difficult for a creative person to work together with other people. Even if you admire the work of another designer or artist, your approach might be completely different so working together could be a nightmare. But for us it has

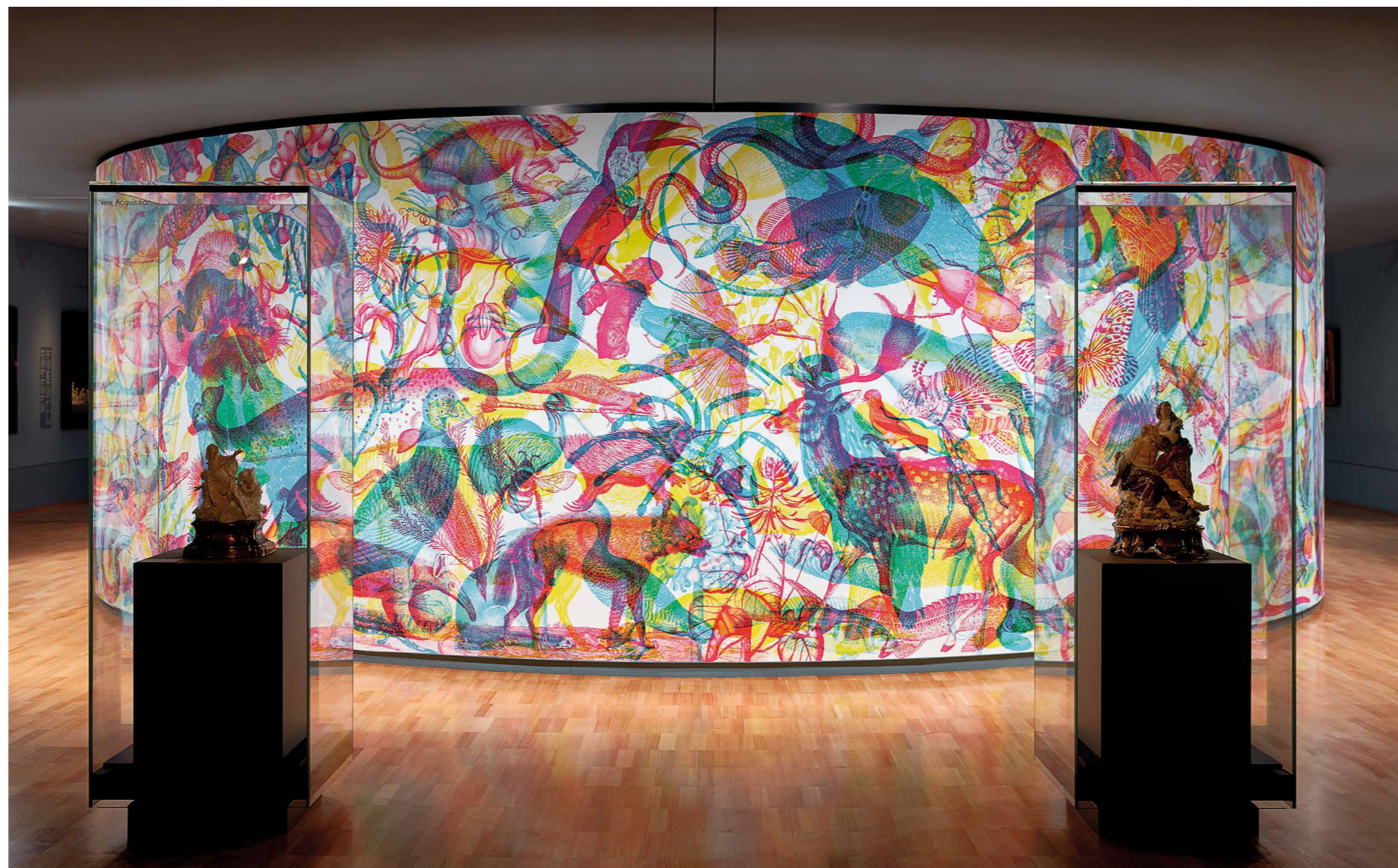
always been very easy. It is something you don't choose. Exactly in the same way as you don't choose the people you love. It is something that just happens in a mysterious way.

**MCD:** Could you clarify the role you give to different colours, specifically in your installation *Extinctions*, 2020, at the NGV Triennial?

**C:** Colour is at the core of our work from three points of view. The first is because our approach is based on science: RGB is based on the rules of colour perceptions, in particular on theories of additive and subtractive colour synthesis. [Additive colours are created by adding colored light to black. On the other hand,

subtractive colours are created by completely or partially absorbing (or subtracting) some light wavelengths and reflecting others.] The second aspect is the artistic approach, as we aim to create images that are aesthetically relevant. The third aspect is using the colours as a code, not only to symbolise different meanings but also to create a narration with the three layers, in which every image is split.

Due to the physics of the lights, the three filters [red, green and blue] are not supposed to work in the same way. The red light is always the clearest and the sharpest, the blue is always the most difficult to see and the green lays somewhere in between. We always keep in mind the different behaviours and



We decided to associate the blue with the extinct species because, as already mentioned, this colour is the most difficult to see. You don't see the images very clearly; it is like a sort of watermark, therefore it makes sense to have the extinct species here as they are already gone, or almost gone, and remain just shadows in our memory. Unfortunately, we cannot see them clearly anymore because they have become like ghosts to us.

On the contrary, red is the sharpest layer. You can see it more clearly, so here we put all the species that need our attention – the ones that are more endangered and that we could hopefully do something about so they don't disappear and become a blue shadow in our memory.

Finally, on the green layer, we have the least endangered species, for the moment. The colours also 'chase' each other – the green light becomes red, red becomes blue – showing how things are changing quickly and how a species not endangered today could be tomorrow, or how another could become totally extinct.

**MCD:** Do you have a philosophy or manifesto, or a line that summarises your way of working?

**C:** Unfortunately, we haven't yet written a proper manifesto, but there is sentence of Virgil's taken from the poem 'Moretum' that we think summarises our work perfectly: *color est e pluribus unus* [the blending of colours into one].

MARIA CRISTINA DIDERO IS AN INDEPENDENT DESIGN CURATOR AND AUTHOR BASED IN MILAN AND WORKING INTERNATIONALLY. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL MAJOR SUPPORTER ANNE ROSS FOR HER SUPPORT OF CARNOVSKY'S WORK, ON DISPLAY ON LEVEL 2 AT NGV INTERNATIONAL UNTIL 18 APRIL 2021. THIS IS AN EXTRACT FROM THE INTERVIEW 'CARNOVSKY' PUBLISHED IN NGV TRIENNIAL 2020, PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA IN 2020 AND AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE AT NGV DESIGN STORE AND ONLINE AT NGV.MELBOURNE/STORE.

features of the three lights in order to decide which images need to be shown in a particular colour and the reason behind it. Basically, in our work the images revealed by the blue light are always the deepest, the more oneiric, the ones closely related to the unconscious. For that reason, even though the colour blue is the most difficult to see, we find it is actually the most interesting one, because it shows what is completely hidden in daylight; for sure, it is the most magical, even if sometimes it can be disturbing.

Our installation at the NGV [Extinctions, 2020] is focused on the subject of extinction in the Anthropocene. More specifically, we have based our artwork on the categories and

criteria of the International Union of Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) 'Red List'. They have defined seven different categories to classify a species' level of endangerment, starting from extinct to those of least concern. We translated these criteria by using a colour code. With the blue light you will see the species that are 'Extinct' or 'Extinct in the Wild', which means they only survive in captivity or in cultivation. We will never see them again in their real habitat because in some cases the habitat does not exist anymore. With the red light you see the threatened species, ranging from 'Critically Endangered' to 'Vulnerable', and in green you see the 'Near Threatened' and 'Least Concern' species.

(p. 32–3 and above) NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of Carnovsky, Milan (design studio); Francesco Rugi (designer); Silvia Quintanilla (designer) Extinctions 2020. Purchased with funds donated by Anne Ross, 2020 © Carnovsky. Photo: Tom Ross

## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

# Can we all have a happy life?

The colour blue is dominant in the work of Yolŋu artist Dhambit Mununggurr, who first discovered the hue in 2005, when she was left wheelchair bound after a car accident. Her installation for the NGV Triennial *Can we all have a happy life?*, 2019–20, is generously supported by Orloff Family Charitable Trust.

BY MYLES RUSSELL-COOK

Perhaps more so than any other colour, blue has fascinated artists, giving it a unique place in the art world. In all human material culture the colour blue is loaded with meaning. During the Renaissance in Italy, painters coveted lapis lazuli, a semi-precious stone traded to Europe from Siberia, China, Tibet, Iran and Afghanistan. So desirable and so rare was the blue pigment that many painters reserved it for only the most sacred of subjects – the robes of the Virgin Mary.

In the natural world, the colour blue is relatively rare. There are notable exceptions; for example, across south-eastern Australia where I come from, superb adult male fairy wrens use their brilliant blue plumage to attract females, and male satin bowerbirds build elaborate structures that they then decorate with collections of blue objects as a way to attract their mate. And yet despite being relatively rare in living nature, the two largest expanses of colour visible to the human eye – the ocean and the sky – are both blue.

Great master painters have long pushed the boundaries of both customary and contemporary art and Yolŋu art is similarly driven by both tradition and

innovation. When it comes to Yolŋu art at Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre (Buku), it is customary that artists who paint Country and the stories it holds use materials collected from Country. Buku is located in Yirrkala, a small Aboriginal community in North East Arnhem Land. Here, overwhelmingly artists gather ochres and other pigments drawn from the land that are then processed, mixed with a synthetic fixative and applied with a marwat (human hair brush) to single sheets of stringybark (*Eucalyptus tetrodonta*). The landscape where Dhambit comes from is a mixture of vivid red earth, stained from bauxite, crystal clear blue waters of the coast, and deep greens found within the mangroves and along the escarpment country.

In many ways, Dhambit Mununggurr's journey towards discovering the colour blue began in 2005, when she was left wheelchair bound after a car accident. Through a combination of traditional Yolŋu healing and Western medicine, Mununggurr's condition has slowly improved, and her passion for painting has continued to grow. The car accident left Mununggurr with limited mobility, forcing her to paint with her non-preferred

hand, and Mununggurr was given special permission to paint with store-bought acrylic paint, which she finds easier to manipulate. In 2019, Mununggurr replaced the palette of black, red ochre, yellow ochre and green acrylic that she had been using on smaller-scale barks and larrakitj with the colour blue on barks of increasing scale, thereby transforming Yolŋu art. When asked in 2020 why she chose blue, Dhambit replied 'because the earth is blue, and the sky is blue, and the sea is blue'.

Dhambit Mununggurr's paintings offer a window into a world made up of her memories. These blueprints of Yolŋu knowledge represent the artist's singular vision and aesthetic, by telling contemporary stories of culture, history and the future. Each of Mununggurr's works is

imbued with the artist's deep knowledge of Yolŋu law, learnt from both her father and her mother. There is a spontaneous, gestural energy that gains texture from the irregular surface of the stringybark. Through the support of Orloff Family Charitable Trust, for her installation as part of the NGV Triennial, Mununggurr has produced fifteen large-scale bark paintings and nine larrakitj (hollow poles), which coalesce as a singular installation poetically titled *Can we all have a happy life?*, 2019–20. There is immense joy and happiness in Mununggurr's work, and the title reflects her extraordinarily positive outlook on life.

Each individual work tells a story embedded in Yolŋu narrative that has been transformed by the introduction of Mununggurr's unique visual language.

Through the installation, we gain insight into the mind and memories of one of Buku's most daring artists. *Can we all have a happy life?*, 2019–20, is a testament to the power of art to transform that which is customary, reinforcing how Indigenous art is an ever-evolving continuum of creative expression.

MYLES RUSSELL-COOK IS NGV CURATOR, INDIGENOUS ART. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL LEAD SUPPORTER ORLOFF FAMILY CHARITABLE TRUST FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF DHAMBITMUNUNGGURR'S WORKS, ON DISPLAY ON GROUND LEVEL AT NGV INTERNATIONAL UNTIL 18 APRIL 2021. THIS IS AN EXTRACT FROM THE ESSAY 'PAINTING BLUE: THE ART OF DHAMBIT MUNUNGGURR' PUBLISHED IN *NGV TRIENNIAL 2020*, PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA IN 2020 AND AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE AT NGV DESIGN STORE AND ONLINE AT [NGV.MELBOURNE/STORE](http://NGV.MELBOURNE/STORE).

NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of Dhambit Mununggurr's *Can we all have a happy life?* series 2019–20. Purchased with funds donated by Orloff Family Charitable Trust, 2020 © Dhambit Mununggurr, courtesy Salon Indigenous Art Projects, Darwin



MAKING WITH



# The flow of life with Makiko Ryujin and Michael Gittings

*Samsāra*, 2020, is a lighting installation designed by Makiko Ryujin and Michael Gittings. Generously supported by Karen McLeod Adair and Anthony Adair, the two-part work takes the form of a large blossoming tree and separate hanging canopy to embody the cyclical nature of our existence. Hear from the artists about their creative process, and how these works encourage others to reflect upon the cycles of life within and around.

**BY** MAKIKO RYUJIN AND MICHAEL GITTINGS

**Michael Gittings:** When responding to the commission to create a lighting installation for the NGV Triennial, we began by thinking about being in the space that the work was going to be displayed in. We were aware that the NGV wanted something to fill the room in the same style of our work *Impermanence*, 2019, but on a bigger scale. An evolution of it.

*Impermanence* is a branch, so it was intuitive to expand beyond that. Because the commission was to make lights for the room and *Impermanence* is a flat piece, we wanted to go from a flat wall piece to something more 3D. It was initially going to grow out from the existing lights and come out of the wall.

**Makiko Ryujin:** Michael was the art director. He sketched up three ideas. Each one differed and could be considered to offer a different utility. Michael completed the initial sketch in the space



and had no major subsequent revisions. That was what we worked from and we used the same materials as we did for *Impermanence*, but at a much larger scale. Michael has a mind's eye view of the finished piece at the beginning. But I do not operate that way. I respond to the materials and what I am working with while creating.

Once Michael completed the sketches, I started planning my contribution. Even though the sketches were well proportioned, giving me a good idea of the size, the flow of them still allowed me to work to the mood and rhythm of the piece. That feeling of flow was the key word for this piece. The sketch is very basic. It doesn't show any details, where the bowls were, where the branches were. It was just a feeling of the scale of what we were going to work with. Once we started to work with the materials, we began to get the feel for the piece.

(p. 38–9 and above) NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of **Makiko Ryujin and Michael Gittings** *Samsara* 2020 and *Samsara branch ceiling light* 2020. Purchased with funds donated by Karen McLeod Adair and Anthony Adair, 2020 © Makiko Ryujin and Michael Gittings. Photo: Tom Ross

**Michael:** We both consider our work as craft. The process of the making is what is important to us. The mastering and experimentation of our techniques is what leads us to explore the bounds of what we can do with our materials. The outcome is still important, as we wish to create something that triggers a response and encourages reflection. Yet, we are craftspeople first and foremost.

For my work, I bend the metal by hand and then heat, cut and glue it back together. There is no way to plan that, and the process of that dictates the final form. It is not a repeatable process.

**Makiko:** When I create the bowls, there is no turning back: once the shape is created and once the shape is distorted, that's what it is. All works are unique pieces, even if they are similar, they are different due to our process, which is what we aim for as well. To have the materials and the processes contribute their part to the final piece.

**Michael:** *Samsara*, 2020, continues our exploration into themes of transience, brevity and perpetual change. These pieces are built off natural elements in the environment. And that is where all the transience, brevity and perpetual change is. These things are born, grow and die. All things in the life cycle have aesthetic and philosophical beauty in different ways. If it is important to me as a designer, it is because everything is in a constant flow and a constant cycle. Nature is always an inspiration, whether it is oblique or straight on. The question is more if it's important to your life, than as a designer. Because, as a designer, you are always absorbing the world around you and the world is full of transient moments, brief experiences and perpetual change. So, while these pieces may respond to that directly, it is not because it is the most important part of our work as designers, it is always there; it is more so that in these pieces we are addressing them.

**Makiko:** Previously I have talked about the notion of where people are finding or creating beauty. Within social media, people appear to be creating what they like instead of accepting what they get. It is a distortion of reality by trying to make something perfect. We grow and change with time. It is not something that we can escape. We can modify, yet there is not a point that we can go beyond. The chasing of perfection can be dangerous to me because it is unachievable. With the transience it encourages us to embrace change. To confront the imperfections and to accept what is there. It is the study and the understanding and the accepting of the world. To continue making things is important. Not just the make, but to be conscious of what is being created... Not as a designer, but, to keep going, as a personal thing. It is important because transience is always there and perfection cannot be there at every moment. It acts as a reminder to me.

**Michael:** We want the bowls to act like little beacons and attract people to come in and look at the details of the work. It is illuminating its own details. It's a resting place. A calming piece to just be still for a moment. A lot of other works, in the way that they are so large, try to dominate; this piece is a more subtle piece. It is not attempting to force itself onto the viewer. We want to create a stillness that draws people in to consider and reflect. A bit like a room with a sunrise that comes into it. Like a silent feeling. A sacred space where one can be there with the piece, and with themselves, and reflect upon things as they are at that moment.



**Makiko:** We would like to think that audiences could stop and slow down and consider the piece. We would like people to be able to experience the piece. There is an opportunity to stop and interact with it, reflect upon the work that was put into it. It isn't really a trophy piece, one that we imagine people stopping to get a photo of, or a photo of themselves in front of. We make things with details and would like people to look at and wonder about the details of the piece. It would be interesting to hear the different answers that those, who do stop to consider these things, come up with. We don't think that we could provide the definitive answer.

MAKIKO RYUJIN IS A WOOD TURNER AND PHOTOGRAPHER, AND MICHAEL GITTINGS IS A FURNITURE DESIGNER, BOTH BASED IN FAWKNER, VICTORIA. TO READ MORE ABOUT THE ARTISTS REVISIT ISSUE 23 MAY–JUN 2020 OF *NGV MAGAZINE* AT [NGV.MELBOURNE/NGV-MAGAZINE-ONLINE](http://NGV.MELBOURNE/NGV-MAGAZINE-ONLINE). THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL MAJOR SUPPORTERS KAREN MCLEOD ADAIR AND ANTHONY ADAIR FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THESE WORKS, ON DISPLAY ON THE MEZZANINE LEVEL AT NGV INTERNATIONAL UNTIL 18 APRIL 2021.

Details of **Makiko Ryujin and Michael Gittings's** *Samsara* collection, 2020



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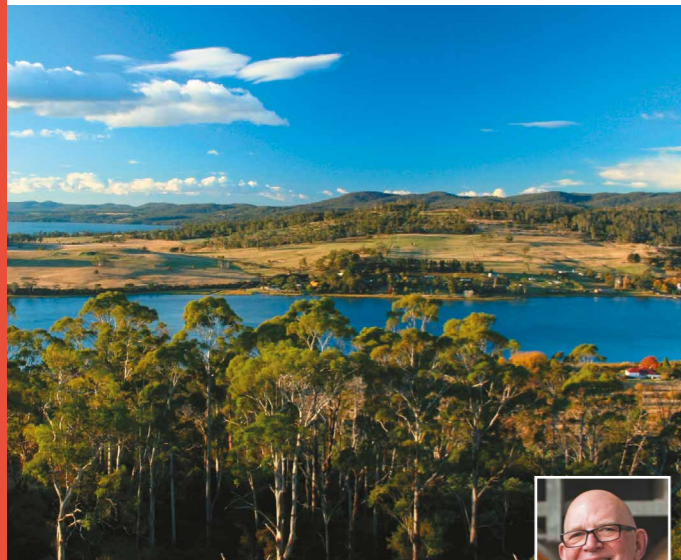


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Vincent van Gogh. Sunflowers (detail) 1888. © The National Gallery, London

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## COMMUNITY

‘Fixed against the Gallery’s bluestone wall, behind her sculptural suite of works, Danielle’s sunburst colour wheel appears to shoot away in the opposite direction.’

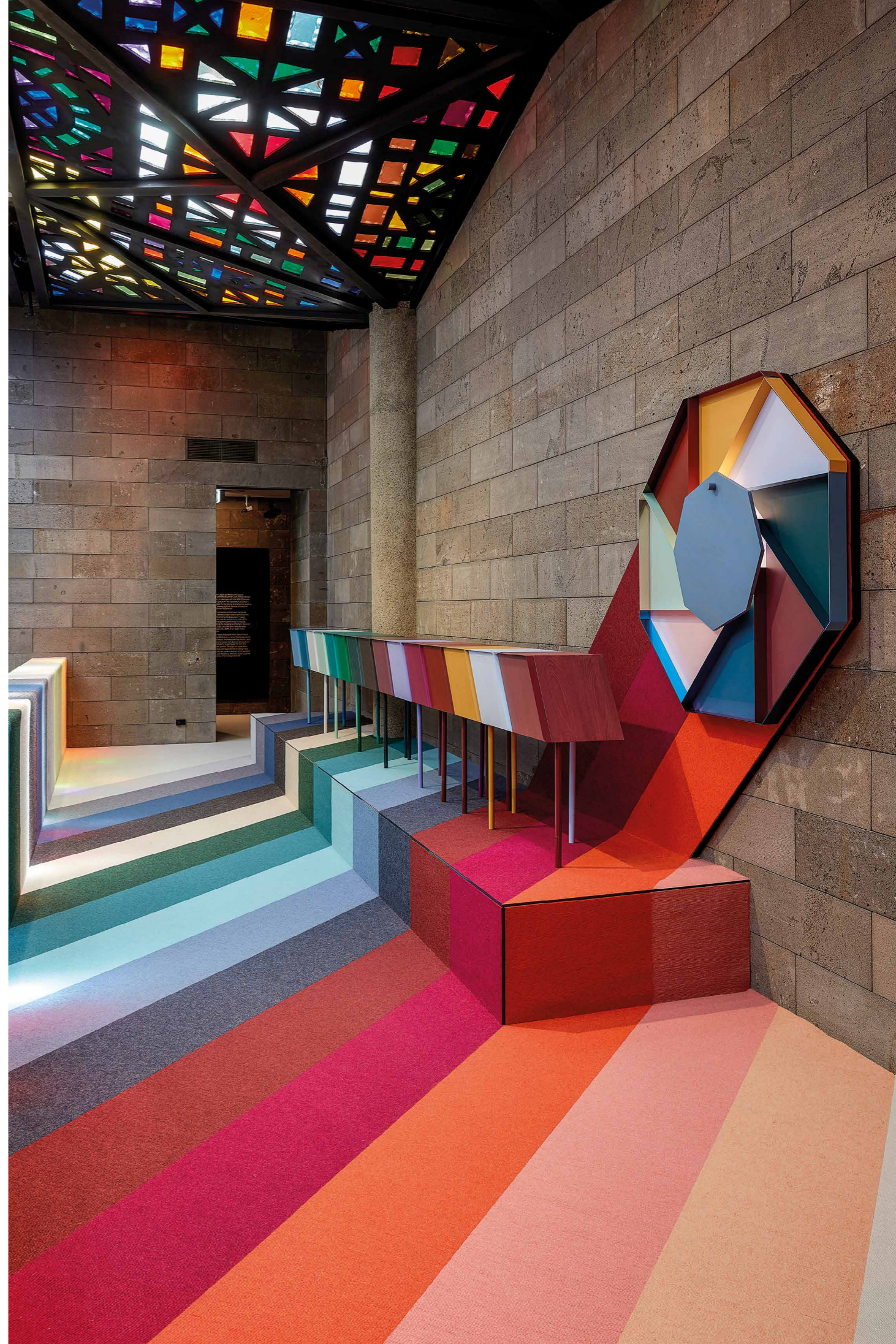
NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of **Danielle Brustman** *Coloured in 2020*, *Chromatic fantastic cabinet 2020* and *Chromatic fantastic wall light 2020* © Danielle Brustman. Photo: Sean Fennessy

The NGV is a museum for all of the community and the NGV Triennial, with more than 80 works from around the world, offers a diversity of viewpoints, stories, experiences and messages. Members of the NGV team share their personal reflections on the works that resonate most for them.

Danielle Brustman

Sarah Watts, NGV Guide

Another NGV Triennial surprise: joyful colour, elegance and quirky design greet you at both ends of the Great Hall’s upper level. At the south entrance, a stepped, multi-coloured striped carpet rolls along the floor and up the walls, topped by an inviting round bolster that makes you want to sit and rest. But the view at the north end of the building entices; the same spectrum of colours are formed into a suite of multiple elegant cabinets. These cabinets lean on a forty-five degree angle, each supported by fine tubular legs that invite a question of stability. Each piece is individually painted a different colour including lavender, plum, mustard, blue and rust, while a metal lip forms a robust handle that highlights its functionality. Fixed against the Gallery’s bluestone wall, behind her sculptural suite of works, Danielle Brustman’s sunburst colour wheel appears to shoot away in the opposite direction.





**Yann Gerstberger** *Queen Niya Yoruba Corona xxx3 2018*. Purchased with funds donated by Vivien and Graham Knowles, Katrina Knowles and Adam Karras, 2019  
© Yann Gerstberger / Courtesy the artist and OMR Gallery



## Adrian Piper

Jessica Lehmann, NGV Conservation Project Officer

I like Adrian Piper's *The humming room*, 2012, because it makes me think, not in a way that jolts you into an immediate sensory experience, but in a way that whistles and rattles in your head for days afterwards. It makes me think of the old saying 'as loud as a lion, as quiet as a mouse'. Of sacred spaces like mosques, churches and white cubes, with rules enforced through glances and polite correction. Of control over sounds and bodily functions. Of protest through sounds, the power of a loud voice and the power of a long silence. Of listening to someone's breathing, their chest heaving up and down. Of intimacy in sound and space. Of living culture banging and crashing around us. Of leaning in and listening. Of the permissions to make sound, to be heard.

Of rules or expectations and how they can be intangibly nonsensical. That maybe a hum is meditative, or a powerful act defying expected norms, or just a natural bodily response we are blessed to be able to perform.  
How very hum-an.

## Yann Gerstberger

John Parkinson, NGV Educator

I love Yann Gerstberger's 2018 *Queen Niya Yoruba Corona* tapestries. They're both painstakingly crafted, yet have the spontaneity and fluidity of Expressionist paintings, they flow as if the artist has drawn or painted them in a burst of expression.

The tapestries are great fun to look at too and, in a way, you can almost hear them. To me they're the visual equivalent of a samba: rhythmic, bright and full of beautiful harmonies.

I can sense Gerstberger has had a blast making these. With no hint of a second guess, he's improvised a world and invited us in. A fantasy island of fresh colours, cascading shapes and birds of paradise. Quite medicinal after the year we've all had!

THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL MAJOR SUPPORTERS VIVIEN AND GRAHAM KNOWLES AND KATRINA KNOWLES AND ADAM KARRAS FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

**Adrian Piper** *The Humming Room* 2012. Voluntary group performance: Full-time museum guard, empty room equipped to echo, two text signs, one above and one adjacent to door. Variable dimensions. Collection of the Adrian Piper Research Archive (APRA) Foundation Berlin. Installation view of the NGV Triennial 2020, December 19, 2020–April 18, 2021, Digital Photograph. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne © APRA Foundation Berlin. Photo: Tom Ross



## Steven Rhall

Kayla Clinch, NGV  
Children's Programs  
Administration Assistant

Steven Rhall's installation *Air dancer as black body*, 2018, is for me a sudden and startling immersion into an all too familiar experience as a Blak person. It is knowing that something frightening is about to happen but continuing anyway; it is engaging in discourse about land rights, wearing an Aboriginal flag on 26 January, knowing

you'll be the only Blak person in the space but entering regardless. You are warned of what is about to happen as you enter a darkened room, and you've been here before, you know what happens. Yet you enter anyway. The nylon inflatable air dancer violently bursts to life, an ordeal that is frightening even if expected. He looms over you, restricted yet unavoidable. He is the uncomfortable reminder of colonial consequences for Blak people. Whilst others may leave the space, avoid the discussion, omit the flag, he is tethered in place and cannot escape. Neither can I, he is me and I am him.

NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of Steven Rhall *Air dancer as black body* 2018. Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2019 © Steven Rhall. Photo: Tobias Titz Photography



## Sabine Marcelis

Trude Ellingsen, NGV  
Conservator of Objects

Sabine Marcelis's work is my favourite for many reasons. Since I was a child I have enjoyed the stillness of the early morning, and *Dawn XXXIII*, 2015, brings me back to those moments before the world wakes up. The red glow reminds me of my family's recent trip around Australia and the outback sunrises where the whole landscape seemed to be alight.

Another reason why I love this work is the clever use of materials. As a conservator I am particularly interested in new materials and techniques used to make artworks. By recessing the neon light to different degrees in the resin, the artist has created variance in translucency causing colour changes to the light from white to a diffuse orange glow. I really enjoy seeing materials that are used to their full potential in new and innovative ways.

THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL MAJOR SUPPORTERS ESTHER FRENKIEL OAM & DAVID FRENKIEL FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of Sabine Marcelis *Dawn XXXIII* designed 2015. Purchased with funds donated by Esther Frenkiel OAM and David Frenkiel, 2019 (left) and Henry Moore *Reclining figure no. 7* 1979–80. Gift of Ginny Green, Sandra Bardas OAM family, Vicki Vidor OAM and Bindy Koadlow in memory of their parents Loti Smorgon AO and Victor Smorgon AC through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2014 (right) © Sabine Marcelis © Henry Moore/DACS, London. Licensed by Copyright Agency, Australia Sydney. Photo: Tom Ross



Siji Krishnan *Father's portrait* 2016 (detail)  
Ruth Margaret Frances Houghton Bequest,  
2019 © Siji Krishnan. Courtesy Galerie  
Mirchandani + Steinruecke

## Siji Krishnan

Ingrid Wood, NGV Educator

Siji Krishnan's *Father's portrait*, 2016, appears as a dusty expanse of creased parchment until you look closely. Then, the parade of figures comes to life: the bride in white and a groom in black, holding hands and locking eyes, surrounded by family and friends in a jumble of connections and various states of dress. A woman with a baby on her back kneels to roll chapatis, a boy gets a haircut from a tall man in shorts. Mopeds, bicycles, goats and monkeys; dogs and kids peeing in the dirt. It's busy

and a bit mad, but warmly observed and affectionate – like a favourite tune or the familiar smell of home.

I haven't been to India, but this work triggers a showreel of personal memories: scenes and stories from weddings, birthdays, funerals and sundry celebrations. There's a cast of beloved regulars – mostly a bit irregular – and cameo appearances by notable extras. It's an odd assortment ... but what family isn't a mixed bag?

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY RUTH MARGARET  
FRANCES HOUGHTON BEQUEST.



## Tromarama

Leah Santilli, NGV Gallery Teacher

*Solaris*, 2020, is a shimmering curtain of kaleidoscopic colour that bathes one of the NGV's nineteenth-century galleries, and everyone within it, in a wash of shifting hues. Panning across thousands of tiny LED lights is a vivid and surreal simulation of an underwater environment, populated with rare species of jellyfish, that I have never seen but understand to be unique and special. Accompanied by an atmospheric soundtrack that is sometimes gentle and at times resounding, *Solaris* is truly immersive. I even feel as though I am submerged, floating and gliding through this digital and imaginative watery landscape that is engineered and informed by real-time climate data. As I stand before – or within – *Solaris*, I think about the fragility of some of the most precious and beautiful natural environments on our planet. I notice again that the coloured light radiating from *Solaris* envelops everything and everyone within reach, and I am reminded that the circumstances that threaten the delicate balance of life on earth touch and affect all living things.

THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL SUPPORTERS DAVID PARNCUTT AND ROBIN CAMPBELL FAMILY FOUNDATION FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of **TROMARAMA, Bandung** (art collective); **Febie Babyrose** (artist); **Herbert Hans Maruli** (artist); **Ruddy Alexander Hatumena** (artist) *Solaris* 2020. Purchased with funds donated by David Parncutt and Robin Campbell Family Foundation, 2020 © Courtesy of the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery. Photo: Tom Ross

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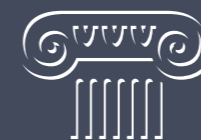


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ACADEMY TRAVEL

## ARTIST PROFILE

# Diamond Stingily

Artist and poet Diamond Stingily examines her childhood memories to speak of the systemic racism, classism and violence inscribed into American culture. Her participation in the NGV Triennial, generously supported by Neilson Foundation, marks the first time Stingily's work is exhibited in Australia.

BY KATHARINA PRUGGER



Diamond Stingily's installation *In the middle but in the corner of 176th place*, 2019, consists of more than 700 athletic trophies on rows of archival shelving and occupies an entire gallery space within the NGV Triennial. It is her most ambitiously scaled installation to date and was the central work of her two acclaimed solo exhibitions in 2019, before entering the NGV Collection with support from Neilson Foundation. Stingily often uses ready-made and found objects, such as timber doors, chains and synthetic hair in her practice, which encompasses installation, sculpture, video, writing and performance.

For *In the middle but in the corner of 176th place*, Stingily, who grew up in Chicago in a family of athletes, replaced the inscriptions on the trophies' gilded labels that usually identify the sporting

competition with a series of repeating statements. They are fragments of conversations Stingily had with her grandmother and her older brother, who is a retired NFL player, in addition to her own quotes and those of other artists and poets. The short texts range from expressions of exhaustion (THROUGH ALL THE MADNESS THIS ALL YOU GONE GET) and self-deprecation (I DID THE BEST I COULD WITH WHAT I HAD) to highlighting the artist's personal upbringing and the exclusionary nature of some sports (WE DIDN'T HAVE THIS SPORT WHERE I WAS AT).

She came up with the idea for the installation at a time in her life when she thought a lot about competition and, growing up in a competitive environment, the family's trophy shelf was a lasting

childhood memory. Stingily played a lot of sports as a child herself, and she compares the experience of being a working artist with having the mindset of an athlete.

KATHARINA PRUGGER IS NGV ASSISTANT CURATOR, CONTEMPORARY ART. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL LEAD SUPPORTER NEILSON FOUNDATION FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF DIAMOND STINGILY'S WORK, ON DISPLAY ON GROUND LEVEL AT NGV INTERNATIONAL UNTIL 18 APRIL 2020.

NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of **Diamond Stingily** *In the middle but in the corner of 176th place* 2019. Proposed acquisition with funds donated by Neilson Foundation, 2020 © Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Tom Ross

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EXHIBITION

# She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism

Working within and responding to a period of extraordinary social and cultural change, the Australian Impressionists were at once radical and romantic, as we discover in the following essays commissioned for *She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism*, a new exhibition opening April at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia.

# The enduring friendship of the Australian Impressionists



*She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism* presents more than 250 works drawn from public and private collections around Australia, including the NGV Collection. Anne Gray reveals new insights into some of the many influential friendships of the Australian Impressionist artists.

BY ANNE GRAY

**F**rederick McCubbin, Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder are the four artists principally known as the Australian Impressionists – on account of their groundbreaking *9 by 5 Impression Exhibition*, which opened on 17 August 1889 in Melbourne. They claimed that their rapid ‘impressions’ were complete, independent pictures and sought to free themselves from traditional attitudes about what was considered to be a ‘finished’ work of art. They were not always, however, or indeed often, a quartet, and they did have other friends and colleagues.

McCubbin and Roberts’s association began at art school in the 1870s and continued in one way or another for the remainder of their lives. When they worked *en plein air* at Box Hill and Mentone in Melbourne’s eastern suburbs the two artists influenced each other, painting like subjects, and using a similar approach.

Roberts’s *Slumbering sea, Mentone*, 1887 (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne) and McCubbin’s *The shore*, 1887 (State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth) were among ‘the first works in which Australian recreation at the beach was represented with considerable aesthetic authority’.<sup>1</sup> The coastal leisure-time activities depicted were increasingly part of Melbourne life in the 1880s.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE

*She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism* tells a story of the evolution of Impressionism as a key movement in Australian art history.

The importance of place as a source of artistic inspiration is central to this exhibition and also resonates strongly with our own Macquarie Group Collection theme of The Land and Its Psyche, which is one of the reasons why Macquarie Group is delighted to be Principal Partner of this exhibition. Our collection features the works of emerging Australian artists and through it we recognise that many contemporary artists remain deeply connected to the landscape around them, a quality that of course is particularly seen through the work of the Australian Impressionists.

### Tim Joyce,

Co-Head of Macquarie Capital Australia and New Zealand  
Macquarie Group

A boating party, with a breezy outdoor feeling, was also popular in contemporary European art, including French Impressionism – as was a desire to depict the effects of light and the characteristics of a place. Indeed, the composition of Roberts's *Slumbering sea, Mentone* resembles Claude Monet's *Le Point de la Havre, Sainte-Adresse*, 1864 (National Gallery, London), which also presents a view across a beach and breakwaters towards a headland, using thick white paint to convey the foam on the beach.

Depicted in a similar place about the same time, Roberts's and McCubbin's works show the closeness of the artists, and also their differences. The location was immediately below the cottage that the artists rented from farmer Moysey. Roberts looks east along the cliffs of Beaumaris and Mentone, while McCubbin looks south over Port Philip Bay. In both works an overcast humid sky is reflected in Beaumaris Bay, with air and water harmonising with the pebbly shore. In Roberts's painting, accents of white dance from a seated woman whose gaze controls the composition, across a central group greeting a boating party and terminate in the triangular sail of a becalmed boat. The distant cliff, still water, even the white-clad figures seem to be bleached of colour in the glare of the midday sun. 'It is a magical, complex composition, in which everything sings'.<sup>2</sup>

This pairing of works by Roberts and McCubbin emphasises their closeness in the 1880s, with McCubbin later writing to Roberts:

Do you remember looking at the Tea trees at Sandringham that evening long ago when you first came back from England. The Don [Abrahams], you and I, and you showed us its glorious colour. I have never forgotten.<sup>3</sup>

Roberts met Charles Conder in Sydney and in 1888 they painted together *en plein air*, with Roberts producing *Holiday sketch at Coogee*, 1888 (Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney) and Conder *Coogee Bay*, 1888 (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne). Roberts's painting is truer topographically than Conder's, and has a still, timeless quality. Conder used a

softer palette to produce a more decorative and whimsical work, capturing a transient moment, with a woman and child in seemingly instantaneous poses.

Conder and Streeton were about ten years younger than Roberts and McCubbin, and after Conder moved to Melbourne in 1888, Conder and Streeton became close friends, often working together. At Eaglemont they depicted like themes, such as Streeton's *The selector's hut (Whelan on the log)*, 1890 (National Gallery of Australia, Canberra) and Conder's *Under a southern sun (Timber splitter's camp)*, 1890 (National Gallery of Australia, Canberra). These works suggest their differences in character and approach to art. Streeton's painting is more heroic, capturing the heat and dryness of an Australian summer with a sky charged with suggestions of a hot wind. Conder was possibly influenced by Streeton, but produced a more lyrical work, with a softer light. A line of flapping washing creates a sense of humour, and a child provides an aura of domesticity.

Although they worked closely together, Conder was disappointed when, at a farewell dinner given to him in Melbourne by local artists, it was suggested that he had imitated Streeton. He wrote to Roberts (who was in Tasmania at the time):

I felt very crushed sometimes as nearly all the speakers thought it worthwhile to touch on my imitation of Streeton – I feel a good deal of truth about this but if they'd then said Roberts they might have been nearer the mark.<sup>4</sup>

In 1890, Conder went to Europe, and it was eight years before the two artists met up again in London. By then, the balance of their friendship had significantly changed. Conder had established himself in France and England, and was constantly on the move. He had made new friends, such as Henri de Toulouse Lautrec and the English artist, William Rothenstein. Streeton felt that he could not live up to Conder's pace.

After Conder's marriage in December 1901, however, Streeton saw more of his former friend. By 1905 they were living near each other in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea

(Conder at '91' and Streeton at '124' – either side of Battersea Bridge, and near James McNeill Whistler's second Chelsea house at 96–101 Cheyne Walk). Streeton at times worked from the rooftop of Conder's house, telling Roberts that 'Mrs K ... granted me a permit to sit in a lead gutter on her roof & sketch the Thames'.<sup>5</sup>

Given that the view in *Chelsea*, 1905 (Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth) is one over Battersea Bridge towards the city, Streeton most likely painted it from his own studio and not Conder's 'gutter'. He used Whistlerian shades of grey, greyish blue and brown, to capture the activity on the Thames, seeking a sense of stillness and visual poetry through tonal harmonies. It was also from Streeton's studio a few years later, in 1907, that visiting Melbourne artist May Vale painted *New Battersea Bridge & Chelsea Reach from Cheyne Walk, Chelsea* (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne).

McCubbin had written to Roberts in August 1905 informing him that Vale was going to London, and Roberts and Streeton no doubt met with Vale. In 1907,

when he visited Australia, Streeton lent Vale his studio. Perhaps he had left his oil painting *Chelsea*, leaning against a wall there. Vale certainly painted views of the Thames in muted tones, which have echoes of oils and watercolours by Streeton painted in the same vicinity.

More than that, Streeton's and Vale's works show the pervading influence of Whistler. While studying in London, Vale may have viewed Whistler's exhibition '*Notes*' – '*Harmonies*' – '*Nocturnes*' at the Goupil Gallery, London, in March 1892 before returning to Australia that year. Certainly, Streeton and Vale could have viewed Whistler's etchings such as *Hungerford bridge*, 1861 (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne) in Melbourne after the NGV's 1892 purchase of Whistler's *Thames* set of etchings. Further Streeton's memory of Whistler's work may have been refreshed after viewing Whistler's memorial exhibition in London in April 1905. As with Whistler's poetical views, Streeton and Vale were drawn to depicting grey-toned mists, fog and reflections on the Thames and using a subdued palette to capture the scenes.

These are just a few of the many examples of works by the Australian Impressionists which show their influence on each other. Roberts and McCubbin's friendship was particularly close in the 1880s at Box Hill and Mentone. Conder and Streeton inspired each other at Eaglemont. After Conder left for Europe in 1890 Roberts and Streeton moved to Sydney where they depicted similar places, although not at the same time. At this time Streeton's works also showed a continuing influence of Conder in his paintings which carried symbolic meaning. These works of the Australian Impressionists show their influence upon each other, and also their debt to international art.

ANNE GRAY IS GUEST CURATOR OF *SHE-OAK AND SUNLIGHT: AUSTRALIAN IMPRESSIONISM*, ON DISPLAY FROM 2 APRIL 2021 TO 22 AUGUST 2021 AT THE IAN POTTER CENTRE: NGV AUSTRALIA. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS PRINCIPAL PARTNER MACQUARIE GROUP, MAJOR PARTNER DEAKIN UNIVERSITY, AND SUPPORTERS YERING STATION AND DULUX AUSTRALIA FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THIS EXHIBITION.

(pp. 58–9) **Tom Roberts** *Evening, when the quiet east flushes faintly at the sun's last look* c. 1887. W. H. Short Bequest, 1944 (pp. 60–1) **Frederick McCubbin** *The shore (Moyes Bay, Beaumaris)* 1887. State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth (right) **Arthur Streeton** *Chelsea* 1905. State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth





# Arcadian Visions

Many of the artists most closely associated with Impressionism in Australia expressed an enduring fascination with the natural world. Focusing upon some of the movement's lesser known artists, we explore the complex relationships between nature, art, spirituality and politics that infused their treatment of landscape around the turn of the century.

BY DR ANGELA HESSON

In an 1890 letter to Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton proclaimed 'I went to Church... first time for years. I could not feel half as reverent as I do in the bush, among the great silent trees'.<sup>1</sup> While Impressionism's focus upon fleeting moments often gave rise to celebrations of modernity, many artists associated with the movement also expressed a more timeless sense of pantheistic<sup>2</sup> reverence and wistfulness for unspoilt nature. Streeton and his contemporary Charles Conder experimented widely with Symbolist subjects in the late 1880s and 1890s,<sup>3</sup> and many of the artists who emerged from the Melbourne School of Art at Charterisville around the same

time excelled in the depiction of mysterious, liminal moments – scenes of half-light, dusk and early morning.<sup>4</sup> This tendency would be richly elaborated by Jane Sutherland and Clara Southern in their often poetically titled visions of pastoral life. For Jane Price and Ina Gregory, the Impressionist emphasis on ephemerality also invited reflection upon the capacity of nature to arouse philosophical and mystical experience. These artists (who arguably faced more stringent criticism than that directed at their male contemporaries), drew associations between early forms of environmentalism, gender equality and

alternative spirituality, in works that referenced simultaneously a sense of nostalgia and of progress.

Southern's *Evensong*, c. 1900–14, is a bucolic scene, lyrical and timeless, with a devotional flavour lent by its title. *An old bee farm*, painted in Warrandyte around 1900, is similarly evocative, rendered in a subtle palette of twilight tones, the winter moon rising and an evening mist descending on the scene. There is, however, a historical specificity to this seeming timelessness, a residue of industrialisation with all of its associated threats to traditional rural ways of life. Southern's sensitive treatment of these subjects

suggests a Romantic longing for a kind of landscape, and a relationship with it, that modernity made vulnerable. *An Old Bee Farm* was generally positively received, with the only criticism directed at Southern's perceived ineptitude in painting the human figure: '*An old bee farm* would be excellent if she placed a real woman's form under the feminine garments in the foreground', lamented the critic for *The Arena*.<sup>5</sup> Any such weaknesses in Southern's technique might be reasonably attributed to the fact that during her time at the National Gallery School, female artists were not permitted to attend life classes, although this rule would change in the

following decade.<sup>6</sup> While Australia arguably offered greater freedom and opportunity for female artists than Europe (where systems of art education had a longer history within which inequality was more firmly entrenched), the relationship between art and gender remained fraught in many ways.

For women, to professionalise was to reject a pervasive and beloved nineteenth-century archetype – the 'Angel in the House'. They risked condemnation for their apparent abandonment of the domestic sphere and mockery for any perceived failures to fulfil their chosen public or professional roles. As late as

1925, when Ina Gregory held her first solo exhibition, the reviewer chastised the artist for her purported inability to edit her work:

Here are 176 framed works, hung in such a jumble that one's eye is bewildered and the brain befogged. This is Miss Gregory's first exhibition, and before she has another she will realise that it is only the completed and best work that ought to be exhibited. The art lover does not want to be harrowed by any tentative little sketch or color note. An art gallery is not a sporting shop window.<sup>7</sup>

The irony is that Gregory's first solo exhibition came about after almost thirty years of training, which had led to her specialisation in landscapes and garden views.<sup>8</sup> *Charterisville*, 1890s, is exemplary of her practice – a small-scale, twilight view of a garden that she knew intimately and painted often. Throughout her life, she fostered relationships with artist contemporaries, most notably Jane Price, with whom she shared a similar approach to painting and, later, to philosophy and spirituality.

Price, who was born in England, had studied at the South Kensington Art School before travelling to Sydney in 1880.<sup>9</sup> She painted principally *en plein air* (outside), making visits to the artists' camps at Heidelberg, though contemporary notions of propriety prevented female artists from staying overnight. Her aptitude for reproducing subtle atmospheric effects is reflected in *Bush scene*, c. 1900, at once an immersive ode to a landscape she loved, and a skilfully modulated exercise in tonal harmonies. From 1907, Price lived for several years in Sydney, where she became one of the foundation members of the Society of Women Painters. She demonstrated particular aptitude for organising groups, and her strong ethical principles, often at odds with the governing values of her time, shaped much of her life. From the 1920s, Gregory and Price became increasingly interested in spiritualism; alongside Gregory's sister Ada, the two artists were founding members of the Melbourne branch of the Theosophical society.<sup>10</sup> In 1938, Price moved into

Gregory's home at Rosedale where they lived and painted together until Price's death in 1948.

While Streeton had professed pantheistic tendencies, Gregory and Price went further, absorbing themselves in a holistic, spiritual approach to nature and art, and reinforcing their devotion on the page as well as the canvas. Gregory's sister Ada authored a Theosophist-inspired novella *The Clouded Dream* (1938), which included a foreword and poetry by Price. Price drew poetic inspiration from the same themes favoured in her paintings, and inscribed the prose poem, 'Star rise' (1927), on the verso of her painting *Star rise over North and Middle Heads, Grotto Point, Sydney*, 1936 (Australian Catholic University Art Collection, Melbourne):

Who has been fortunate enough during the last few weeks to watch Sirius rising above the sea, while dawn was yet two hours and more away? Once the beauty of it fell to my share, and I saw him – was wakened, indeed, by his shining through my thin curtains. Poised above the horizon, serene and brilliant, the star threw a path of light upon the water, which showed as a pale and milky purple, the line of the waves cutting darkly across it. The sky was the same milky purple as the sea, but deeper in tone, while near the line dividing sea and sky was drawn a yet more sombre veil of mist, from out of which Sirius emerged triumphant ... It was mystically lovely, a half incredible vision.<sup>11</sup>

Price's writing illuminates the depth of spiritual and mythological meaning with which her landscapes were imbued. Here she alludes to the Symbolist notion of 'vision', of the interior world of the artist colouring the outer world that she depicts. Price continued to work in this manner until the end of her career, when a reviewer of her solo exhibition cited her painting's contemplative quality as a point of departure from the plein-air tradition from which she had emerged:

The greater number of the paintings in the exhibition by Miss Jane Price

at the Athenaeum Gallery are of a reflective kind. They are the outcome of remembrance rather than direct observation before an easel and canvas ... They are more in the nature of memories from which the material ingredient of the scenes has been eliminated. This crossing allows them to keep a certain wistful, remote and purified quality that must be sympathetic to many people, though such idealism is no longer fashionable. It is particularly noticeable in crepuscular and moonlit effects, misty scenes and afterglows.<sup>12</sup>

Critic Harold Herbert, reviewing a joint exhibition of work by Price and Gregory at The Athenaeum in 1942, titled his piece simply 'Romantic paintings'.<sup>13</sup> In the context of extraordinarily rapid change, many of these works encompass a desire to document the artistic transformations associated with modernity, and a perhaps more deep-seated impulse to evoke something unchanging, even eternal. Trained in plein-air technique but drawn to spiritual and imaginative subjects, these artists' experience and practice of 'looking out' brought new subtlety and meaning to the Romantic/Symbolist business of 'looking in'.

DR ANGELA HESSON IS NGV CURATOR, AUSTRALIAN PAINTING, SCULPTURE AND DECORATIVE ARTS TO 1980. *SHE-OAK AND SUNLIGHT: AUSTRALIAN IMPRESSIONISM* IS ON DISPLAY FROM 2 APRIL 2021 TO 22 AUGUST 2021 AT THE IAN POTTER CENTRE: NGV AUSTRALIA. THIS ESSAY HAS BEEN ADAPTED FROM 'EPHEMERAL MAGIC: SYMBOLISM, POETRY AND THE TASTE FOR TRANSFORMATION' BY ANGELA HESSON PUBLISHED IN *SHE-OAK AND SUNLIGHT: AUSTRALIAN IMPRESSIONISM* PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA AND THAMES & HUDSON AUSTRALIA IN 2021 AND AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE AT NGV DESIGN STORE AND ONLINE AT NGV.MELBOURNE/STORE FROM APRIL.



Ina Gregory *Charterisville* 1890s. Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2020

# Australian Impressionism: a wider context

The acknowledgement of Australia's shared history is central to the timeline of Australian Impressionism. By positioning this important movement within a continuum of Australian history, a richer and more accurate understanding of Australian Impressionism can be realised.

BY SOPHIE GERHARD

The connection between Australian Impressionism and Australian national identity has, for a long time, gone largely unchallenged. The art movement's palette, which so accurately captured the lucidity of Australia's landscape – the vibrant blues of Beaumaris Bay and the deep ochres of the scorched dirt – and its scenes of rural life, elicit for many Australians a sense of home; a relatable image that typifies this nation. However, the persistent association between Impressionist artists and a distinctive 'Australian' art style ingrains the deep-seated, and incorrect, idea that Australian painting was the invention of this school of artists. In fact, the thriving and dynamic art traditions of Australia's First Peoples had been established for millennia, interwoven throughout their culture as documentation for stories and ceremony, and enriched by their intimate connection to Country.

The final two decades of the nineteenth century were a time of rapid change in Australia. Described as the 'golden age' of national idealism, the 1880s and 1890s saw the country's population in pursuit of self-definition and understanding.<sup>1</sup> Many artists working at the time were entrenched in this discussion, and aimed to develop a form of painting that they could call their own. For the first time in the nation's colonial history, the 1890s saw native-born non-Indigenous Australians beginning to outnumber the immigrant population; the perception of Australia was transitioning from mere geographical location to 'home'. The country's centennial celebrations in 1888 – its first national event – and the major industrial developments throughout the country's capitals that emerged during this time, including the development of tramways, an underground sewerage system and electric streetlights, heightened a sense of patriotism in Australia's white population. However, although nationalistic pride was prevailing, the industrial developments within the nation's cities and towns brought with them a collective nostalgia for the bush, heightening Australia's mythicised affinity with the pioneer and bushman.

Artists began looking inland, and providing a visual imagery to Australia's search for identity. Yet, although the depictions of the landscape in the manner of artists such as Frederick McCubbin, Tom Roberts and Arthur Streeton is distinctly Australian Impressionist in technique and palette, they are not *distinctly Australian*. The visual representation of Country formed an integral part of First Peoples' cultural and spiritual existence. William Barak, born Beruk on Wurundjeri Country near present-day Croydon, Victoria, in the 1820s, was an artist and Ngurungaeta (head man) whose art continues to communicate the significance and intricacies of Wurundjeri society. Barak lived at Coranderrk



William Barak *Untitled (Ceremony)* 1900  
The Warren Clark Bequest, 2001

**‘It is critical that the ongoing narrative that positions Impressionism as synonymous with Australian national identity is interrogated ... so the complexities and richness of our nation’s shared history can be more fully realised.’**

——— SOPHIE GERHARD

Aboriginal Station from 1863 until 1903, where he became an influential spokesperson for the rights of his people.<sup>2</sup> Barak’s corpus, of which around fifty known drawings survive, focused on the business of ceremony and was driven by an imperative to record his Country and culture, a culture that in reality was under threat. Meanwhile, Australia’s rugged terrain was becoming synonymous with a new type of national identity, and Impressionist paintings began to embody a turning point in Australia.

The record left by Barak visually documents intimate knowledge of his culture and the nargee (public ceremonies) of the Wurundjeri people. Barak’s *Untitled (Ceremony)*, 1900, shows figurative dancers, women, children, Elders and animals who fill the pictorial space, unimpeded by borders and a horizon line. The viewing process is experiential; ceremony and Country are at once in front, behind, beside and under. In contrast to the work of Impressionist artists, where the inclusion of a stark horizon line positions the landscape as something to be looked upon and admired, the absence of the horizon in Barak’s work amplifies the kinship between First Peoples and their land, highlighting that ‘there is no separation between land and sky or between the artists’ identity and their Country. The artists are the land they paint’.<sup>3</sup>

The prevalence of a horizon line within Australian Impressionism, as with much Western-centred art, represents a key point of difference from the ways in which First Peoples resonate with the land. For contemporary Indigenous artist Brook Andrew, ‘the horizon line represents patriarchy, dominance in the way of looking at other possibilities, diverse cultural readings, at women, at men, at the body, at human evolution, animal evolution ... an aspect of male conquest and dominance’.<sup>4</sup> The dominant position of artist over land renders Country as other, and restricts the viewer from reading the work from alternative perspectives – that of the bird, kangaroo, sky or sea. The horizon in Tom Roberts’s *A break away!*, 1891, and even the glimpse seen in Roberts’s *Shearing the rams*, 1890, position the land as something to conquer, and to take from it what we will.

This sentiment is echoed by Roberts in the shearing shed on Yorta Yorta Country (present-day Corowa), who described the sheep’s wool being ‘stripped from them for man’s use’.<sup>5</sup>

As an art movement, Australian Impressionism is worthy of celebration. Its artists broke ground in presenting the Australian landscape in a way that was different from what had come before, and they promoted spontaneity with their brushwork and subject matter. However, it is critical that the ongoing narrative that positions Impressionism as synonymous with Australian national identity is interrogated. In doing so, the complexities and richness of our nation’s shared history can be more fully realised.

SOPHIE GERHARD IS NGV ASSISTANT CURATOR, AUSTRALIAN PAINTING, SCULPTURE AND DECORATIVE ARTS TO 1980. THIS ESSAY HAS BEEN EXTRACTED FROM ‘AUSTRALIAN IMPRESSIONISM: A LONGER HISTORY’ BY SOPHIE GERHARD WITH HANNAH PRESLEY PUBLISHED IN *SHE-OAK AND SUNLIGHT: AUSTRALIAN IMPRESSIONISM*, PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA AND THAMES & HUDSON AUSTRALIA IN 2021 AND AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE AT NGV DESIGN STORE AND ONLINE AT NGV.MELBOURNE/STORE FROM APRIL.

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## CONSERVATION



# Lasting friendships of Australia's Impressionist pioneers

Tom Roberts *Mrs L. A. Abrahams* 1888. Purchased, 1946

Preparation for *She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism* has allowed new stories to emerge from examination and treatment of works in the NGV's conservation studio. Many can now be displayed as originally intended, with vibrant, crisp colours, enabling the artist's techniques to be viewed in clearer detail.

BY MICHAEL VARCOE-COCKS

By the middle of the 1880s Melbourne had matured into a city rich in culture and opportunity. It supported a small yet diverse artistic community, which included young, locally trained artists and internationally experienced itinerant painters who saw new opportunity in conservative Melbourne.

The NGV's temporary closure in 2020 provided a unique opportunity to undertake the technically challenging conservation of two works by Tom Roberts, which originate from this moment of change. *The artists' camp*, 1886, and *Mrs L. A. Abrahams*, 1888, are key examples of early Australian Impressionism that revealed a new method of painting in Melbourne while also capturing significant relationships at the centre of this movement.

During 1885, Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin and Louis Abrahams established a plein-air (a French term for outdoors) camp in Box Hill, then an outer eastern suburb of Melbourne. It was situated on the south side of a shallow valley carved out by what is now known as Gardeners Creek. This property was owned by a seventy-five-year-old Scottish farmer named John Houston, one of the early pioneers of the region. He referred to his property as Houston's Paddock, however, his holdings included four allotments that amounted to 100 acres, which during the competitive land pricing of 1885 held significant value in the rapidly transforming suburb.

The semi-permanent plein air camp of tarp tents and basic living provisions became a weekend retreat for the otherwise city employed artistic trio. Many significant works were painted in and around Houston's Paddock, including McCubbin's *Lost*, 1886

(National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne) and Roberts's *A summer morning tiff*, 1886 (Art Gallery of Ballarat), but none depict the campsite or capture the spirit of adventure like Tom Roberts's *The artists' camp*, 1886.

This intimate portrayal has become a defining image of the first Impressionists' exploration into this semi-rural landscape. The camp is shown at its infancy nestled on a grassy landing elevated above the creek and submerged within the protective cover of gum saplings and ti-tree. Frederick McCubbin, sporting a distinctive moustache and dressed in white shirt and vest, sits with bread and lager while Louis Abrahams prepares chops in a wire frame for supper. Sleeping apparel is slung over the tent for airing; McCubbin's coat is draped over the entrance and below in the shadows a large canvas is propped precariously against the tent pole. The scene is idyllic and bohemian and a statement of their Impressionist intent.

Through the process of conservation, *The artists' camp's* original surface has been relieved of several discoloured layers so we may again appreciate the scene closer to how Roberts intended. The tonal highlight staged by the expansive tent is surrounded by foreground grass infused with delicate flushes of gold and pink with a border of lush green bush vegetation. Roberts used small descriptive brushwork, opaque and purposeful in its application, to lay down colour mixed on his palette with a combination of small rounded and square brushes. As with many of the Box Hill works *The artists' camp* has a reserved tonalism of local colour influenced by European naturalism and particularly Jules Bastien-Lepage, the French protégé who although only a couple of years older than Roberts, had reached international fame by the time of his premature death the previous year.

Like Bastien-Lepage, the Box Hill trio sought common people for models in their compositions. During July 1885 Houston had cleared a large area of land on the opposite side of the creek, felling trees and neatly preparing 100 tonnes of firewood. Roberts made various sketches of the labourers at work resulting in several finished canvases, including *Wood splitters*, 1886 (Art Gallery of Ballarat, Victoria). This early interest in rural labour became a continual theme for both Roberts and McCubbin for decades to come and is central to many of their major works. A long view of Houston's property showing the cleared paddock and its stacked wood is also seen in Roberts's poetic nocturne *Evening, when the quiet east flushes faintly at the sun's last look*, 1887–1888. Somewhere within the bush on the opposite rise is the camp while in the distance the moon rises above the Dandenong Ranges, a picturesque setting which the trio would always remember fondly.

Along with *The artists' camp*, Roberts and McCubbin exhibited other pictures from Box Hill at the first exhibition of the newly formed Australian Artists' Association in September 1886. Small in scale they were distinct for being painted plein air yet presented as finished works of their own standing. By late 1887 growing professional responsibilities limited the trio's time spent together in the bush. During 1886 McCubbin had been appointed Drawing Master of the National Gallery School of Design and Abrahams, who was a partner in a cigar manufacturing business, had bought out his partner to become sole proprietor.

Abrahams is insufficiently credited for his involvement in the highly successful cigar manufacturing firm Snider and Abrahams. At age twenty-four he established the business

several years after his father's death, forming a partnership with Gershon Snider. By 1885 they dissolved the partnership by mutual consent and Louis took responsibility for all financial commitments. Within two years the firm had become the second largest manufacture of cigars in Melbourne and employed 50 people.

quick return to Melbourne to prepare for the opening of Grosvenor Chambers, a newly constructed three-story building, which housed purpose-built artists' studios in the highly fashionable top end of Collins Street. Both Roberts and Abrahams occupied the much-cherished upper floor with its superior natural light entering through large south-facing



As a prosperous and eligible young Jewish businessman, it was not surprising that Abrahams was the first of the trio to become engaged and naturally Tom Roberts was asked to support him at his wedding to Miss Golda Figa Brasch. Late in March 1888 Roberts travelled by steamer to Sydney and attended the wedding at the bride's parents' residence Branhholme, named after the small Victorian town where her mother's family resided. Both artists were required to make a

windows that also afforded views across Melbourne, St Kilda and Port Phillip Bay. The auspicious opening, attended by more than a hundred guests, showcased this ambitious new artistic project. On an easel in Roberts's studio was *Evening, when the quiet east flushes faintly at the sun's last look*, 1887–1888.

Within a month Golda Abrahams arrived from Sydney and possibly the first subject painted in Roberts's Grosvenor Chambers studio was *Mrs L. A. Abrahams*, 1888, a portrait

undertaken to celebrate intermit friendships and presented as a wedding gift to the couple. Seated in the aesthetically decorated interior of the main studio chamber, a pale face of the thirty-year-old bride gazes back at the artist. A lacquered tray on the foreground table holds three cups of tea including one for her husband who, like the artist, is present but not shown. Roberts

has carefully constructed his professional space equally for aesthetic effect and functionality as a studio. Blue-grey muslin drapes the walls with a fold to the right revealing the door leading to the ante-chamber. The floor has been similarly subdued in tone to minimise reflection and ensure even illumination for the careful modelling of form. Sophisticated and fashionable ornaments such as a Japanese lantern, fan and folding screen accompany decorative vases and a much-prized wicker chair. A careful study of the flower arrangement reveals the blue tint of gumleaves that Roberts was known to have collected from Box Hill to decorate his inner-city studio.

Small in stature, Golda is dressed in black lace evening wear accessorised by gloves, gold bracelet, pearl earrings and ornamental fan. The oldest child of eight, she was born and raised in Melbourne before her family moved to Sydney. As a talented pianist she performed at concerts and gave private tuition, a virtue that would be passed onto the couple's future children, particularly their son Fred (named in honour of Fred McCubbin) who became a talented violinist.

Like the depiction of her husband in *The artists' camp*, *Mrs L. A. Abrahams* has undergone conservation treatment. Similarly, the surface has been cleaned of a discoloured varnish – not the first, but a later varnish applied by a restorer sufficiently long ago that it had degraded and yellowed. However, the main purpose of the conservation treatment was to undertake technical examination of the paint structure to address a disfiguring area that has hindered the painting's appearance since it was acquired by the NGV seventy-five years ago.

Until now, a dark halo surrounded a broad region around Mrs Abrahams's head. This separate layer was a reworking

completed significantly after the original painting by an unknown hand. Although the new layer initially matched with the original paint it darkened with age and became more distinct causing confusion to Tom Roberts's work and technical facility. Through infrared, ultraviolet and microscopic examinations it was established that Mrs Abrahams was originally depicted wearing a large headpiece that formed an unusually tall peak. High-resolution microscopy revealed sections of mechanical

scratching used to physically remove this feature before the area and its surrounding region were repainted. The possible motivation for this adjustment, years after the original, is complicated and required physical and historical research to establish the best treatment path for the work.

By consulting contemporary newspaper and fashion reports from 1888, it became clear that the missing headwear worn by the new bride was the season's high fashion for a towering toque hat, typically trimmed with lace, bows or flowers. The question remained, who removed this feature and under what direction? How are the rights of the artist and sitter best understood? Sadly, fourteen years after their marriage and creation of the painting Louis Abrahams had a tragic death and was survived by Golda and four young children. It is likely that the changes made to the painting occurred after this event and it must therefore be considered that the work may have been adjusted at the sitter's request. Was this undertaken in mourning out of sorrow of the memory of such a specific event or perhaps in modesty to adjust the appearance of a widow observing Jewish customs of moderation? Without factual evidence the most appropriate action for the current treatment was not to make any permanent adjustment, but instead visually reincorporate the altered area to more sympathetically represent the artist's work. This was achieved by retouching on top of the non-original paint with a reversable media separated by a varnish layer. In time this new reworking will also darken and require replacement, but maybe then more information will enable a different course of action.

Following Louis's death, Mrs Abrahams remained close friends with Roberts and McCubbin and became an important supporter of their work. With her children she travelled widely including a year-long tour through Europe followed by trips to America and Japan eventually moving permanently to London with a daughter. Here, she was visited by Tom Roberts who would have sat in her South Kensington apartment that was decorated with his, Louis's and Frederick McCubbin's pictures – together again.

The transitional times of the arrival of Impressionism are now acknowledged as a tipping point in Australian art, yet this turbulent period was also challenging for the individuals involved. The friendships and support that these Australian Impressionist artists provided each other is an unmeasurable factor in the success of their art that, perhaps not understood by modern views, is enjoyed by the beauty it instilled.

MICHAEL VARCOE-COCKS IS NGV ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CONSERVATION. *SHE-OAK AND SUNLIGHT: AUSTRALIAN IMPRESSIONISM* IS ON DISPLAY FROM 2 APRIL TO 22 AUGUST 2021 AT THE IAN POTTER CENTRE: NGV AUSTRALIA.



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Morris Cohen  
*Twilight, Victoria* c.1900 (detail)  
 pastel on paper  
 Purchased, 2020  
 Collection of the Art Gallery of Ballarat



ART GALLERY  
 OF BALLARAT

## DECORATIVE ARTS

# The ceramics of Pablo Picasso: playing with the fourth dimension



During the later years of his life, between 1947 and 1971, Pablo Picasso produced an array of highly inventive and original ceramic works in which he delighted in the exploration of a new medium and its decorative possibilities. Picasso's wit and creativity are celebrated in the more than 4,000 works that he created during this period. Through the generous support of John and Cecily Adams, Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family, Annette Davis and Leon Davis AO, the Norma Atwell Bequest, John and Bridget Patrick, the Margaret Ditchburn Bequest, Mark Fraser and Reverend Ian Brown, the NGV Collection presents a growing representation of major ceramic works by Picasso, on display on Level 2, NGV International.

BY AMANDA DUNSMORE

*Laughing-eyed face, pitcher 1969*

One of Picasso's main preoccupations that he explored in the ceramic medium was the human face. He experimented with it in his first year of working at Madoura but did not seriously return to the subject until 1953.

From then on Picasso returned annually to this subject, depicting men and women, as well as ambiguous representations such as this pitcher from the later years of his work, which is decorated with a graphic representation of an indeterminate face.



## ‘Picasso enjoyed encouraging his viewers to question what they were looking at.’

— AMANDA DUNSMORE

At the close of the Second World War, aged sixty-three, Picasso enjoyed a reputation as one of Europe's leading artists. In 1946 while taking his summer holidays in Golfe-Juan on the Mediterranean coast, he visited an exhibition of local handcrafts in nearby Vallauris and was introduced to Georges and Suzanne Ramié, owners of the Madoura Pottery.

Vallauris had been an important ceramic-producing centre since Roman times due to the particularly fine terracotta clay deposits and its proximity to the Mediterranean. For centuries the potteries had produced rustic cooking and tablewares but, following the Second World War and the increase

in metal kitchenwares, the industry collapsed. Nevertheless, the existence of the potting facilities was attracting a new generation of young potters, including the Ramiés, who were interested in the production of art pottery. During the summer in 1946 Picasso was given the opportunity to make a few works and upon returning the next year he was delighted to find that they had been successfully fired. He was given his own working area in the pottery and for the next twenty-five years, from 1947 until 1971, Picasso returned to the Madoura Pottery annually to continue his ceramic production, which eventuated in around 4000 works, including plates, pitchers, tiles, platters, vases and plaques.

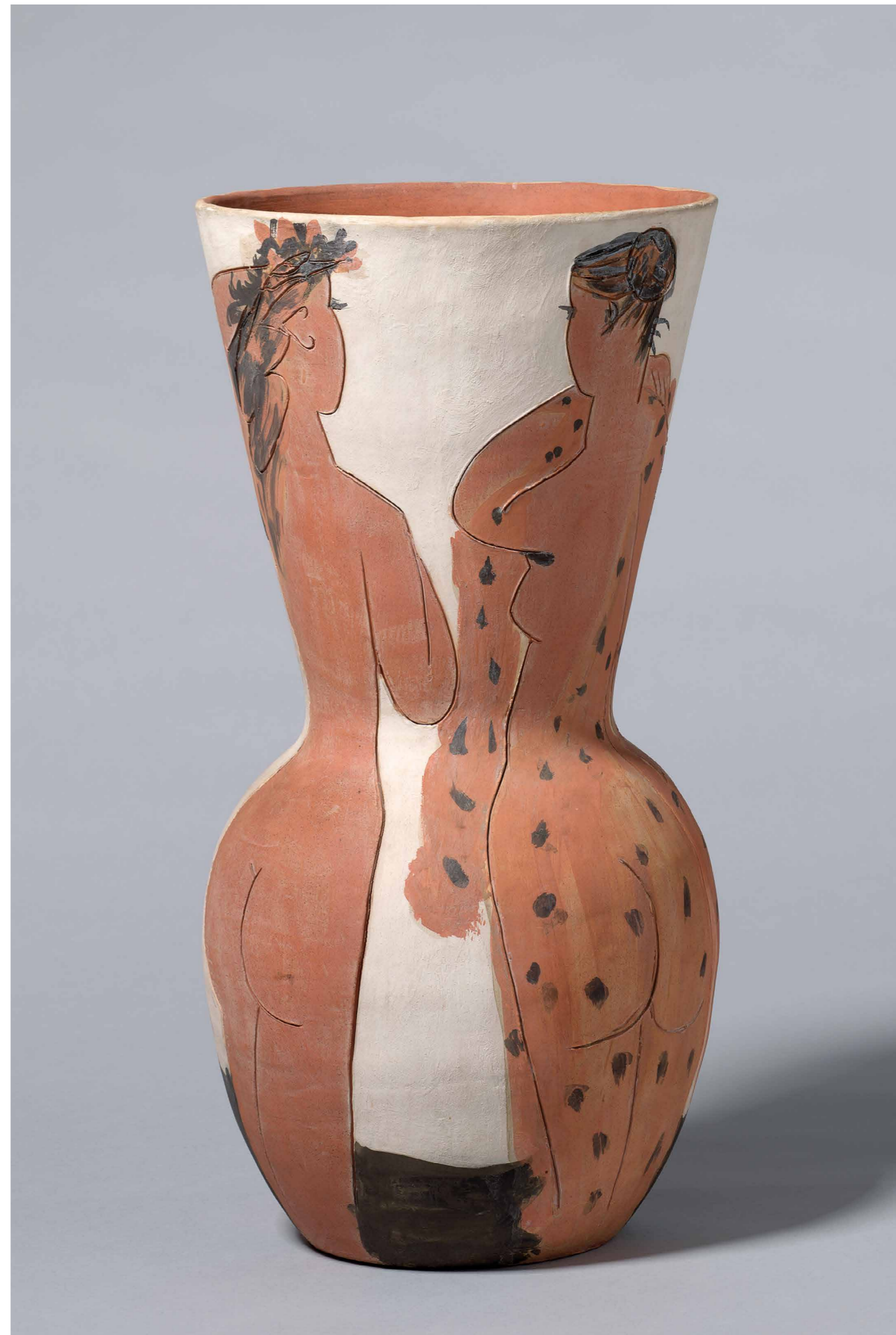
(p. 79) Pablo Picasso (designer) Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (manufacturer) *Goat's head in profile, round/square dish* 1952. Purchased with funds donated by John and Cecily Adams, 2020  
(left) Pablo Picasso (designer) Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (manufacturer) *Laughing-eyed face, pitcher* 1969. Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2020



*Jacqueline at the easel, round dish 1956*

The decoration on this dish depicts Jacqueline Roque, Picasso's second wife, seated in a bentwood rocking chair with caned back in front of an easel. To the right is one of the large windows in their Villa La Californie, located in the hills above Cannes, with the palm trees beyond. Photographs of the period show Picasso and Roque relaxing in the large living room of their villa, surrounded by furniture, objects, paintings, easels and stacks of ceramic plates on the floor around them. The bentwood rocking chair can be seen in a number of the photographs and in one image a painted sketch of the scene on this dish can be seen on one wall, suggesting that perhaps Picasso was planning to use the image in one of his paintings.

(above) **Pablo Picasso (designer)** Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (manufacturer) *Jacqueline at the easel, round dish 1956*. Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2020  
(right) **Pablo Picasso (designer)** Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (manufacturer) *Big vase with veiled women 1951*. Felton Bequest, 1955



**‘In *Matt owl, rectangular dish, 1955*, Picasso has managed to convey a three-dimensional sense of the owl’s body, which perfectly follows the inner form of the dish, despite its concavity.’**

—— AMANDA DUNSMORE



Pablo Picasso (designer) Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (manufacturer) *Matt owl, rectangular dish 1955*. Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2020



*Perched black owl, round dish 1957*

In this terracotta dish (above) with matt black decoration Picasso was paying homage to ancient Greek vases. He was also making a reference to the importance of the owl in ancient Greece, the owl being a symbol of the goddess Athena and of the city of Athens. The owl was a favourite subject of Picasso which he returned to regularly throughout the 1950s and 1960s, many of his works no doubt inspired by his pet owl, Ubu, which lived in his studio.

Pablo Picasso (designer) Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (manufacturer) *Perched black owl, round dish 1957*. Purchased with funds donated by John and Cecily Adams and the Norma Atwell Bequest, 2020



*Landscape, round plate 1953*

This large dish is decorated with a deeply evocative night time image of the southern French landscape above the Côte d'Azur. Picasso has used a matt black glaze to evoke the velvety night sky while applying touches of clear lead glaze to highlight the stars, the moon and details of the landscape, as if glinting in the moonlight. It is an arresting image that is part of a series of just four dishes on which Picasso explored the subject of landscape. All are dated to December 1953.

Pablo Picasso (designer) Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (manufacturer) *Landscape, round plate 1953*. Purchased with funds donated by John and Cecily Adams, 2020

*Profile of Jacqueline, round/square plaque 1956*

This profile of Jacqueline, which fills two-thirds of the plaque, makes reference to profile portraits on ancient Greek and Roman coinage and illustrates Picasso's abiding interest with the ancient Classical world.

Pablo Picasso (designer) Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (manufacturer) *Profile of Jacqueline, round/square plaque 1956*. Purchased with funds donated by John and Bridget Patrick and the Margaret Ditchburn Bequest, 2020



Picasso worked closely with Suzanne Ramié and the Madoura potters; in particular, their master craftsman Jules Agard, to learn the techniques of decorating and glazing. He was not interested in throwing or casting but used the standard forms that the potters produced, while also commissioning new forms, including the round/square

with the female form, and in conjunction with technical advice from Suzanne Ramié, he used unconventional tools for surface patterning such as kitchen knives and perforated cooking utensils. In short, many of Picasso's lifelong interests found new expression in the ceramic medium.

Of the 4,000 or so ceramics that Picasso produced at the Madoura Pottery, the majority were unique pieces but he chose around 630 examples to produce in editions. Picasso made the master work and this was then copied by the Madoura potters and produced in editions ranging from twenty-five to five hundred examples. It is these works that are mainly seen in museum collections around the world and in 1955 the NGV acquired its first example, *Big vase with veiled women*, 1951, through the Felton Bequest, one of Picasso's greatest achievements in the ceramic medium. The Gallery's example is number one in the small edition of twenty-five examples and was purchased directly from the Madoura Pottery by the adviser to the Felton Bequest Committee, A. J. L. McDonnell. More recently, since 2015 the NGV has focused on developing this important aspect of Picasso's artistic practice and, through the generous support of a number of committed supporters, the Collection has grown substantially with works illustrating the breadth of Picasso's interests including the human face, the female form, classical antiquity, the bullfight and animals; in particular, goats, bulls, birds and fish.

One of the most recent works to enter the Collection through the support of John and Cecily Adams is a round, shallow dish decorated with a bold image of two hands firmly clasping a fish and viewed from above. The unglazed terracotta hands are modelled in raised relief and placed in opposite directions to each other. Intriguingly, the lower hand is considerably larger than the upper one. It is a somewhat strange choice of decoration, but Picasso had always enjoyed encouraging his viewers to question what they were looking at.

One of Picasso's favourite subjects was the goat which featured on several of his ceramic works during the early

years, at the time when he owned his pet goat, Esmerelda. *Goat's head in profile, round/square dish*, 1952, purchased with the support of John and Cecily Adams is decorated with a vibrant palette of bright yellow glaze with green, brown and blue highlights, the joyous colour scheme complementing the humorous expression on the goat's face. The goat may have had ancient mythological associations for Picasso but it may also have attracted him, like the bull, for its daring boldness and independence of character. Regardless of his interest, Picasso's depictions of animals are always executed with a freshness and spontaneity and never burdened by excessive interpretation.

Picasso's genius at capturing the essence of his subject through confident linework is demonstrated in the curmudgeonly owl depicted on the large *Matt owl, rectangular dish*, 1955. A gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family, in this work Picasso has managed to convey a three-dimensional sense of the owl's body, which perfectly follows the inner form of the dish, despite its concavity. The dish is coated in a matt black glaze, referencing the inky blackness of the night and the owl is depicted sitting on a branch, surrounded by stars. Picasso's subtle blending of blue and brown glazes for the stars gives a perfect sense of their shiny brightness in the night sky.

Jacqueline Roque was Picasso's second wife to whom he was married for eleven years before his death in 1973. They met in 1952 at the Madoura Pottery where she worked in the shop. Picasso was seventy-one and Jacqueline twenty-six. She became his muse and model and Picasso produced more portraits of Jacqueline than any other woman, including paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures and ceramics, all characterised by her large almond-shaped eyes. There are several ceramic representations of Jacqueline in the Collection but one of the most recent additions, purchased with the support of Annette Davis and Leon Davis AO and the Norma Atwell Bequest is a rectangular plaque impressed with a striking frontal portrait of her titled, *Small bust of a woman, rectangular plaque*, 1964. The



design is taken directly from a linocut that Picasso produced in 1962 at the time of their marriage. A plaster mould was taken from the lino block and impressed into the terracotta plaque to create the image. The plaque was then painted with a matt black slip as if in imitation of the lino block inked up and ready to print. It makes a very direct and engaging link with Picasso's printmaking work at the time and represents another significant addition to the NGV's burgeoning collection of ceramics by Pablo Picasso.

AMANDA DUNSMORE IS NGV SENIOR CURATOR, INTERNATIONAL DECORATIVE ARTS AND ANTIQUITIES. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS JOHN AND CECILY ADAMS, KRISTYNA CAMPBELL-PRETTY AM AND FAMILY, ANNETTE DAVIS AND LEON DAVIS AO, THE NORMA ATWELL BEQUEST, JOHN AND BRIDGET PATRICK AND THE MARGARET DITCHBURN BEQUEST FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THESE WORKS. THE NGV'S COMPLETE HOLDINGS OF PICASSO'S CERAMICS ARE ON DISPLAY ON LEVEL 2 AT NGV INTERNATIONAL.

Pablo Picasso (designer) Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (manufacturer) *Hands with fish, round dish* 1953. Purchased with funds donated by John and Cecily Adams, 2021



Pablo Picasso (designer) Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (manufacturer) *Small bust of a woman, rectangular plaque* 1964. Purchased with funds donated by Annette Davis and Leon Davis AO and the Norma Atwell Bequest, 2020

plate and inventing his own sculptural forms. Picasso was interested in the dialogue between form and line and while working in the ceramic medium he would deliberately mismatch and reposition handles and spouts in order to create ingenious facial and anatomical features. He used discarded scraps of unfired clay to create seated or standing female figures, reiterating his obsession

DESIGN

# Melbourne Design Week 2021

Design the world that you want

26 March to 5 April 2021



The tumult of 2020 continues to demonstrate how the issues of our time – climate, public health and social justice – are intertwined. Melbourne Design Week 2021 asks designers to look towards the world we might make together knowing tomorrow will be very different to today. Over eleven days, designers will explore this provocation by presenting inventions, products, services, environments, materials and processes throughout Melbourne and greater Victoria.

**KERSTIN THOMPSON ARCHITECTS: ENCOMPASSING PEOPLE AND PLACE**

**Presented by** RMIT School of Architecture & Urban Design with Thames & Hudson  
Tue 30 March, 6pm  
The Capitol, 113 Swanston St, Melbourne

Kerstin Thompson, one of Melbourne's leading architects, presents her public and community-focused projects, including the award-winning Broadmeadows Town Hall, and the upcoming Jewish Holocaust Centre, as part of this book launch for the monograph *Kerstin Thompson Architects: Encompassing People and Place*. The presentation will be followed by a panel conversation moderated by ABC Radio's Virginia Trioli. This event is supported by Centre for Architecture Victoria | Open House Melbourne.

**GREENHOUSE BY JOOST**

**Presented by** Fed Square  
See [designweek.melbourne](http://designweek.melbourne) for talk and tour bookings  
Federation Square, Corner of Swanston St and Flinders St, Melbourne

Imagine solving the world's biggest problem's by simply changing the way we live. GreenHouse by Joost Bakker is attempting just that with a self-sustaining, zero-waste, productive house that demonstrates the potential of our homes to provide shelter, produce food and generate energy. For two months chefs Matt Stone and Jo Barrett will live in the house 'Futurefoodsystem' and attempt to live solely off the food and resources produced by it.

**PREMIER DESIGN AWARDS**

**Presented by** the Victorian Government  
Wed 31 March, 5–8pm  
Great Hall, NGV International

Victoria's leading designers and businesses celebrate the best of Victorian design in the state at the annual Victorian Premier's Design Awards Ceremony which, for the first time, will be held as part of Melbourne Design Week 2021. Established by the Victorian Government in 1996 as the Victorian Design Awards, the Victorian Premier's Design Awards recognise and reward Victorian designers and businesses that display excellence in the way they use design. The awards program also shines a light on design's significant contribution to the Victorian economy. In Victoria, more than 85,000 people are directly employed in design-related roles, with the sector generating revenues of \$5 billion annually including an estimated \$400 million in design-related exports.

**WATERFRONT**

**Presented by** Centre for Architecture Victoria | Open House Melbourne  
See [designweek.melbourne](http://designweek.melbourne) for locations, talks and tour bookings

Waterfront is a program of guided and self-guided tours, conversations and special events that deep dive into the role design plays in reframing Melbourne's relationship with water. In 2021, Waterfront expands to East Gippsland with the locally based School for unTourists to explore the area around Lakes Entrance and Lake Tyers through a series of walks, tours, talks, kayak and boat trips. Hear about the history, issues and opportunities related to the waterways and landscape of the Gippsland Lakes from Traditional Owners, local community members, designers, entrepreneurs and experts while participating in conversations about the future for this growing community.

**MELBOURNE DESIGN WEEK EXHIBITIONS**

See [designweek.melbourne](http://designweek.melbourne) for locations, opening hours and launch dates

Melbourne Design Week presents its biggest exhibition line-up to date with more than 130 exhibitions featuring works by Australia's emerging and leading designers, architects and brands, including: Cordon Salon, Cult Design, Danielle Brustman, Studio Flek, Andrew Carvolth, Edition Office and Kennedy Nolan. A highlight of the exhibition program is JamFactory's *Craft, Crossovers and Collaborations*, which displays the rich variety of ceramic, glass, furniture and jewellery works materialised at one of Australia's leading craft and design ateliers.

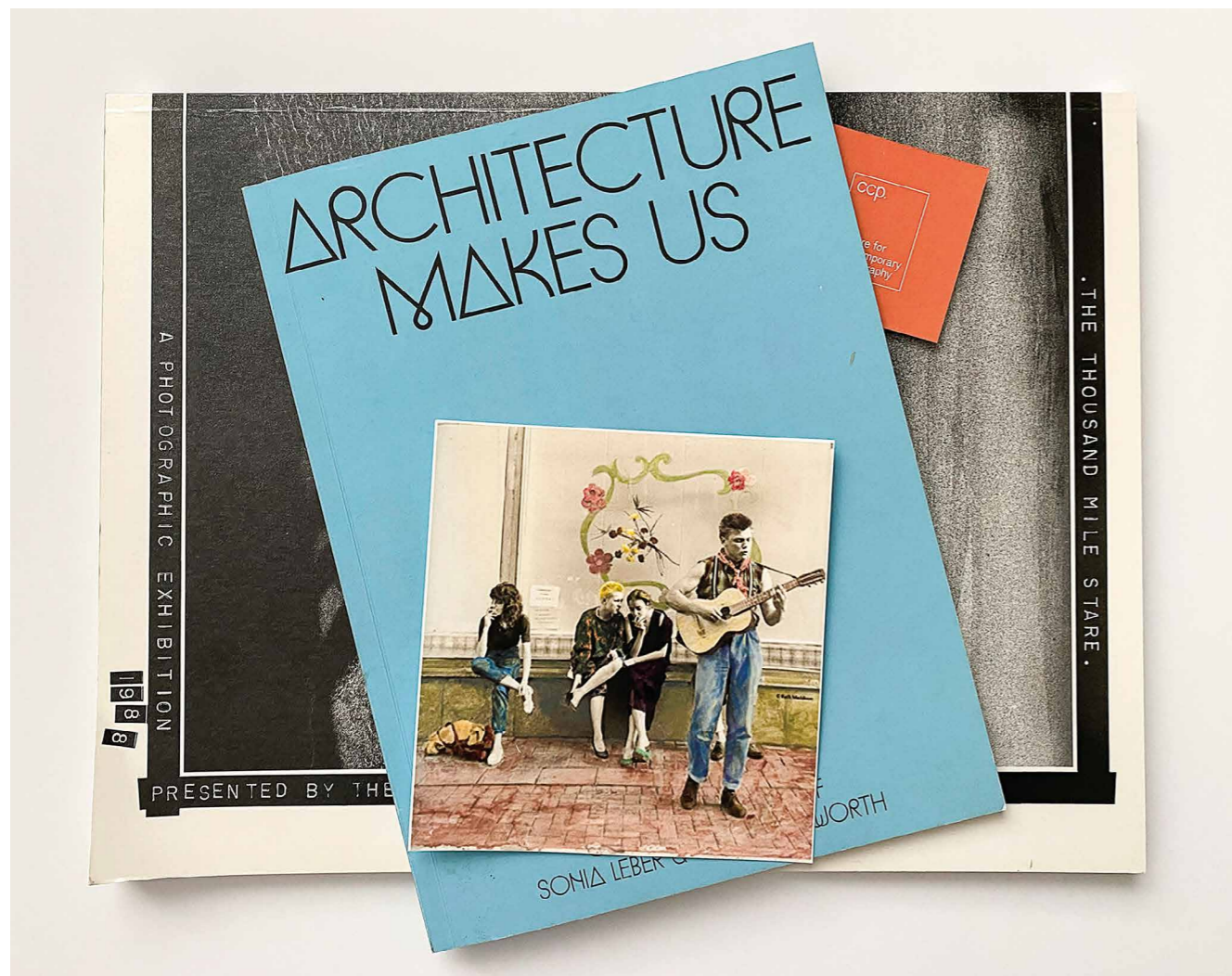
FOR THE FULL MELBOURNE DESIGN WEEK 2021 PROGRAM VISIT [DESIGNWEEK.MELBOURNE](http://DESIGNWEEK.MELBOURNE). MELBOURNE DESIGN WEEK AND THE VICTORIAN DESIGN PROGRAM ARE SUPPORTED BY THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT. THE NGV DEPARTMENT OF CONTEMPORARY DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY THE HUGH D. T. WILLIAMSON FOUNDATION. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS MAJOR PARTNERS MERCEDES-BENZ AND TELSTRA, DESIGN PARTNER RMIT UNIVERSITY; AND MEDIA PARTNER *BROADSHEET*, FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF MELBOURNE DESIGN WEEK 2021.



# Melbourne Art Book Fair 2021

26 to 28 March 2021

In 2021, the Melbourne Art Book Fair expands its horizons, reaching communities throughout Melbourne and into regional Victoria as part of Melbourne Design Week. Now in its seventh year, the annual event brings together art publishers, artists and designers from around the globe to celebrate art and design publishing. This year, Melbourne Art Book Fair hosts a broad range of events not only at the NGV, but also across Melbourne and Victoria, at bookstores, galleries, art spaces and rooftops. The Fair's online platform features more than 100 local and international publishers.



## PRINT SCREEN: NEW PUBLISHING NOW

**Presented by** Emile Zile  
Sat 27 & Sun 28 Mar, 11am–3pm  
Great Hall, NGV International, 180 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne

Melbourne artist Emile Zile hosts a podcast series and live event for Melbourne Art Book Fair / Melbourne Design Week.

Looking at the state of alternate publishing and new forms of distribution, PRINT SCREEN will host discussions on the widespread disruption of traditional media channels and the accelerating digitisation of shared cultural consumption. Via podcast and live forum, PRINT SCREEN will open up a vital discussion on the new waves of publishing and promotion that are located in simultaneously public and private realms. What are the possibilities for new forums of cultural dispersion? Is there any escape from software after Covid? Where is the new gatekeeper? Who is making new claims? Is this moment of destabilisation a significant opportunity to reimagine publishing?

## PUBLICATION AS PROVOCATION: PLANET CITY

**Presented by** Uro Publications  
Sat 27 Mar, 1pm  
Bookshop by Uro, Collingwood Yards, 5/30 Perry Street, Collingwood

*Planet City* (2021) is a book and film project by Los Angeles-based film director and architect Liam Young, exploring the productive potential of extreme densification, in a speculative future where ten billion people surrender the rest of the planet to a global wilderness.

Young joins the NGV's Ewan McEoin and *Planet City*'s editor and publisher Andrew Mackenzie in a live link-up from Los Angeles, to discuss the role of the book as a form of provocation, distinct but complementary to Young's remarkable film installation at the NGV.

## TIMELESS DOCUMENTS: COLLABORATIVE CATALOGUES PRESENTING MULTIPLE TODAYS TO HELP REINVENT TOMORROW

**Presented by** Centre for Contemporary Photography  
Sat 27 Mar, 4.30pm  
Centre for Contemporary Photography, 404 George St, Fitzroy VIC 3065

Exhibitions are restricted by time, but the exhibition catalogue lives on as a 'time capsule' representing the social, political, personal and cultural concerns formed within an art exhibition. Centre for Contemporary Photography is excited to present a community of creatives talking to a selection of catalogues from its thirty-five-year history, alongside our upcoming publication for photographer Ruth Maddison. Dr Isobel Crombie, Rhys Gorgol, Corey James, Joseph Johnson, Ruth Maddison and Amelia Wanita speak to the production process and how concepts contained within the exhibition catalogue reflect the concerns of yesterday and today, which inevitably reframe tomorrow.

## CONFIDANTS, MENTORS & COMMUNITIES

**Presented by** The Australian Book Design Association  
Sun 28 Mar, 3pm  
Rooftop Bar, Curtin House, Level 7/252, Swanston St, Melbourne

How do book designers work with other collaborators? How are creative relationships fostered and mentored? Join award-winning book designer Michelle Mackintosh as she leads the panel discussion with two long-term collaborators, Mary Small, founding publisher of Plum, Pan Macmillan, and Julia Ostro, cook and author. Hear them discuss their careers, the importance of community and how they create creatively fulfilling work together.

## STORIES OF HOME

**Presented by** Kids' Own Publishing and Latrobe Regional Gallery  
Sat 27 March, 12–4pm  
Latrobe Regional Gallery, 138 Commercial Rd, Morwell VIC 3840

Kids' Own Publishing is taking 2020's stupendous NGV MABF family activity regional, to celebrate the stories of Gippsland families, but most especially children as artists and book creators. The Latrobe Regional Gallery will host a space in which South Sudanese born storyteller Agum Maluach, armed with the vibrant fabrics of Africa for collage, will inspire children and families to make their own beautiful eight-page book and publish it on the spot. A children's picture book about Home created by young South Sudanese Australian children, in collaboration with Agum and other artists, will also be launched on the day.

FOR THE FULL MELBOURNE ART BOOK FAIR 2021 PROGRAM VISIT [NGVARTBOOKFAIR.COM](http://NGVARTBOOKFAIR.COM).

## DESIGN STORE &amp; BOOKS



## Midnight Mountain

*Midnight Mountain* is the exclusive jewellery collection from Melbourne-based designer Danielle Brustman and accessories brand Pirdy. The playful collection explores Brustman and Pirdy's mutual love of colour and form, while drawing from Brustman's work presented in the NGV Triennial, and Pirdy's catalogue of shapes and references.

BY DANIELLE BRUSTMAN

I met Juliet Carr, founder of accessories brand Pirdy, in a Zoom meeting in the middle of winter lockdown in Melbourne. We were introduced by the NGV to collaborate on a jewellery collection for the NGV design store and instantly hit it off. There is a great deal of common ground in our work. We both explore colour and bold graphic shapes in our respective mediums. The starting point for our collaboration initially drew on the shapes and motifs found in my *Chromatic fantastic* collection, 2020, of furniture and lighting, which is on display in the NGV Triennial. Although this was the initial seed for the collaboration, the jewellery collection took on its own meaning and narrative.

*Midnight Mountain* became a meeting point and conversation between Juliet's way of working and my own. The development process was very much a hands-on making exercise. We experimented with form and colour by making paper maquettes and resin prototypes. We worked very closely with Simone LeAmon, The Hugh Williamson Curator of Contemporary Design and Architecture at the NGV, and Toby Newell, Manager, Commercial Operations, to select and refine a group of pieces and colours from our experiments that would create a cohesive collection of jewellery and objects for the NGV design store.

At a certain point during development we noticed that there were elements within the palette and visual motifs from our experimentations that reminded us of Wes Anderson's 2012 coming of age film, *Moonrise Kingdom*. The collection then took a slight turn and we started to visualise these pieces as wearable parts, or costumes even, in an imaginary tale of Scouts and Girl Guides set at night in a pine forest. There is something very childlike and nostalgic in these imaginings.

The colour palette was chosen from eighteen colours that were used in my *Chromatic fantastic cabinet*, 2020. We settled on nine colours along with Pirdy's signature gold glitter thrown in for some extra razzle dazzle. The colours in this collection are slightly subdued in tone. The palette is a mix of muddy blues and pinks and maroons. We chose the palette with a mix of daytime and night-time wear in mind. Most pieces are two- or three-tone but the *Mother's Moon* tray set uses the entire colour palette. This piece is designed as a flower tray made up of six parts, or alternatively can be purchased as single crescent moon trays. The shapes throughout the collection are mostly made up of rhomboids, crescent moons and tear shapes.

Juliet made all the resin pieces in her studio. It was fascinating to watch the process of her translating initial sketches and paper maquettes into latex moulds. She pours the resin to create 3D forms, polishes the pieces by hand and then assembles the different parts and hardware. I learnt a lot about the process and the way she works to create the

**'The development process was very much a hands-on making exercise ... experimenting with form and colour.'**

— DANIELLE BRUSTMAN

shapes and finish. There are certain production limitations to this process that informed the design. Weight was a big consideration especially when it came to the earrings and how much resin can be used in a pair of earrings before they become uncomfortable to wear. Juliet is a highly experienced jewellery maker and I learnt a great deal from working with her.

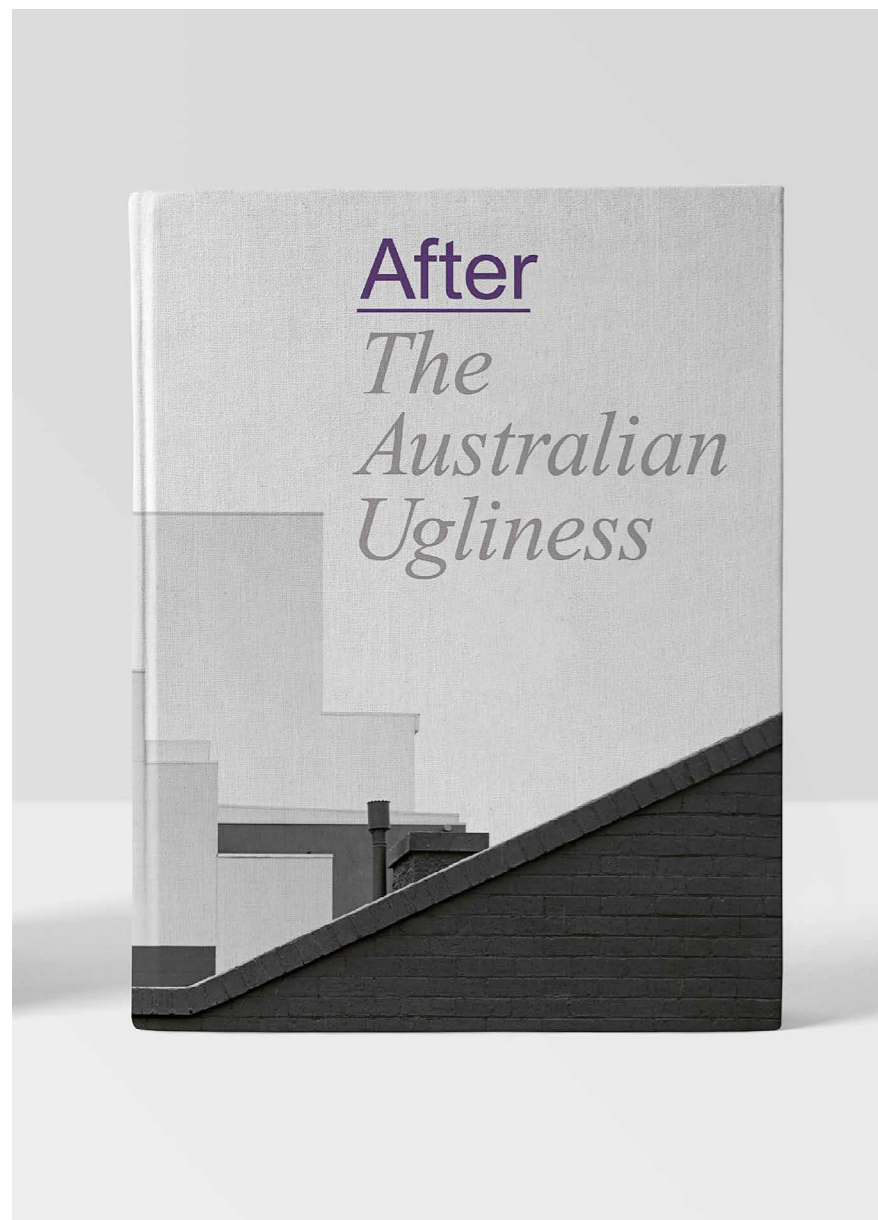
DANIELLE BRUSTMAN IS A MELBOURNE-BASED DESIGNER WHOSE WORK ENCOMPASSES A BROAD SPECTRUM OF DESIGN PRACTICE. THE *MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN* JEWELLERY COLLECTION IS AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE AT NGV DESIGN STORE AND ONLINE AT NGV.MELBOURNE/STORE.

*Midnight Mountain* jewellery collection

## Revisiting Robin Boyd's *The Australian Ugliness*

A new NGV book, published in conjunction with Monash University and the University of Technology Sydney, and with the support of the Robin Boyd Foundation, explores the legacy of Robin Boyd's iconic book *The Australian Ugliness* on the architectural and cultural landscape of Australia in the mid-twentieth century.

BY MICHAEL RYAN



There has never been an Australian architect quite like Robin Boyd. Patrician by birth but egalitarian by nature, he was a household name while he was alive. This was a rare thing for an architect in any country, in any time, but especially in Australia in the mid-twentieth century, a time when architecture and design were not widely understood or appreciated by most Australians.

As architectural historian Philip Goad highlights in *After The Australian Ugliness*, a new NGV publication exploring Boyd's most famous book sixty years after it was published, Boyd set out to correct this architectural illiteracy from early on in his career, his passion for doing so best summarised in a 1957 article in the *Journal of Architectural Education*, in which he wrote that 'satisfying popular comment' about architecture will only come about when 'normally educated people understand the essentials of architecture as they understand drama, literature, cooking, knitting and football'.<sup>1</sup>

Boyd understood that if Australia was to have better architecture, Australians needed to have a better understanding of it. He wanted to show they could live differently – in affordable, architect-designed homes that made sense in their surroundings and were not kitsch copies of the architecture of Europe and America, which was often unequipped for Australia's harsh climate and landscape. To do this, he spoke not just in a vacuum to those in the industry but also plainly to the general public, with no 'archispeak' obfuscating his message, through countless articles in *The Age*, nine books, and on radio and television.

Indeed, Boyd wore many hats during his too-short life (he died in 1971 at age fifty-two): revered modernist architect, design educator to the masses, first director of the Small Homes Service that changed the face of mid-century housing in Australia, scion of Australian artistic royalty, television presenter, writer, radio personality, lecturer. He even wrote and animated a children's television show in the early 1960s called *The Flying Dogtor* about a Great Dane who flies around Australia tending to wounded animals.

But undoubtedly one of Boyd's most enduring legacies is *The Australian Ugliness*. This hugely successful

publication has been in print almost continuously since it was first published in 1960 and is considered by many to be the definitive critique of mid-twentieth-century Australian architecture and design.

In the book, Boyd surveyed the architectural landscape of late-1950s Australia. To put it mildly, he did not like what he saw: a confused collage of nineteenth-century European and early twentieth-century American architecture, with no aesthetic identity of its own.

But *The Australian Ugliness* is much more than a work of architectural and aesthetic critique. Boyd saw similar flaws in Australia's national character as he did in its architecture. At its most basic, this was a lack of imagination and willingness to take risks, and a xenophobic wariness of any influence from non-English speaking countries and cultures. Hidden behind the book's veneer of architectural criticism is a critique of the soul of Australia during the period immediately after the Second World War but before the seismic cultural shift of the Sixties – the period we broadly define as 'postwar' or 'mid-century'. In Australia, this period is often viewed with rosy nostalgia as a 'simpler' time, when every Australian could own a quarter-acre block and a three-bedroom house, and children roamed freely on the streets without a hint of stranger danger. But things were not always the idyllic picture of nuclear-family bliss behind the neat streets and green lawns of the so-called Australian Dream: women were not encouraged to aspire to much more than marriage and a life tethered to children and a stove, while those children often grew up in monocultural cookie-cutter moulds where creativity and uniqueness were strongly discouraged. And of course, the Australian Dream was a luxury reserved only for the country's relatively recent settlers, and certainly not for the country's First Peoples.

This is the heart of the Australian ugliness: egalitarian for some but not all, and not very open to criticism about it.

Boyd took small steps in *The Australian Ugliness* towards addressing the paradoxes inherent in 'the lucky country' view of Australia. In the first paragraph he drew a metaphorical link between Australia's love of brick veneer (a decorative,

non-structural wall of brick placed in front of a structural timber frame) and the country's internalised and government-sanctioned racism:

The ugliness I mean is skin deep ... But skin is as important as its admirers like to make it, and Australians make much of it. This is a country of many colourful, patterned, plastic veneers, of brick-veneer villas, and the White Australia Policy.<sup>2</sup>

So what can we learn from *The Australian Ugliness* sixty years on? This question is the starting point of *After The Australian Ugliness*. Published by the NGV in conjunction with Monash University and the University of Technology Sydney, with the support of the Robin Boyd Foundation, this new title comprises nineteen essays examining Boyd's text through a contemporary lens. It asks, what we can learn from Boyd's book today: what is still relevant, what is now cringeworthy of its time, and what about Australia is ugly in new ways that Boyd could never have foreseen?

To ponder these and other questions, the NGV commissioned authors from a wide range of fields, each bringing a unique perspective and style to their interpretation of *The Australian Ugliness*. Vanessa Berry, Harriet Edquist, Philip Goad, Benjamin Law, Eugenia Lim, Alison Page and Georgina Reid are just some of the authors that contributed chapters, and much-loved illustrator Oslo Davis contributed a series of illustrations re-imagining Boyd's satirical, cartoon-like line drawings from the original text. There is also a new photographic series by Melbourne artist David Wadelton, capturing the ugliness of today's built environment in vivid black and white and challenging us to wonder what Boyd would make of the cheaply built and instantly decaying residential and commercial architecture in our cities today. Also included are a series of previously unpublished photographs taken by Boyd himself, mostly in the US in 1956–57 while he was a lecturer at MIT. Boyd's US visit proved crucial to him formulating his ideas for *The Australian Ugliness*.

It's not essential to have read *The Australian Ugliness* before *After The Australian Ugliness*. Of course it helps, but the remarkable thing about the nineteen essays in this new book is the diversity of perspectives gathered. All parts of Boyd's multifaceted text are put under the microscope and, like the original book, it has something for everyone. By the end, a reader will feel like they know the original inside and out, and may even be better informed on the nuance of *The Australian Ugliness* than if they had read it in isolation.

Whether readers are completely new to the original or know it cover to cover, we hope this new title, like Boyd's sixty years ago, provokes new conversations about the quality of Australia's built environment, but also more profound ones about its character. If nothing else, we hope the reader comes away with a deeper respect for Boyd's intellect, which he applied as fastidiously and uniquely to his writing as he did to his architecture.

MICHAEL RYAN IS NGV PROJECT EDITOR AND MANAGING EDITOR OF *AFTER THE AUSTRALIAN UGLINESS*, WHICH WILL BE LAUNCHED AT MELBOURNE DESIGN WEEK 2021 AND AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE AT NGV DESIGN STORE AND ONLINE AT [NGV.MELBOURNE/STORE](http://NGV.MELBOURNE/STORE).

*After The Australian Ugliness* published by National Gallery of Victoria

# On writing

NGV Triennial 2020 Research Partner, the University of Melbourne, contributed significantly to the exhibition's 688-page publication, with twelve professors and researchers writing on a wide range of critical, contemporary and creative subjects. Here, four of these authors share how they approached their texts.



**Every tree has a story to tell**  
Zena Cumpston

I approached my essay 'Every tree has a story to tell' for the publication *NGV Triennial 2020* being true to my positionality as an Aboriginal woman. I wanted to share my ideas about Aboriginal ways of doing and seeing and to explore our pedagogical practices. Because I am not a professional art critic or writer who is experienced in writing essays within this realm I strove to capitalise on my strength as a storyteller, to speak from my heart. I was also very focused on sharing with the audience the wonderful yarns I had with artist Geoff Nees and the fascinating journey of the project that he so generously shared with me.

I wanted to frame a non-Indigenous artwork within an Indigenous world view as a way of reclaiming Indigenous

perspectives as central. This approach negates the reductive lens through which our culture and stories are often presented, where cultures outside of our own explore Indigenous 'things' and situate them in Western frameworks. I sought to celebrate the incredible work of Kengo Kuma and Geoff Nees while simultaneously exploring the relationship of the work to Country, specifically to Country that the trees it is made from grew within.

I hope that the essay is accessible to a wide audience and that it achieves my ultimate aim: to convey my love of Country and the deep respect, pride and love I feel for my people and culture. I wanted to yarn with the audience, to take them on the journey Geoff shared with me. I am particularly thrilled it sits with several chapters that highlight the plight of my Baaka (Darling River). I hope those who take time to read it will enjoy seeing the world through my eyes as much as I enjoyed sharing the stories I have incorporated.

ZENA CUMPSTON IS A BAAKANDJI WOMAN CURRENTLY WORKING AS A RESEARCH FELLOW FOR THE CLEAN AIR URBAN LANDSCAPES HUB AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, UNDERTAKING RESEARCH WHICH EXPLORES ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES ON BIODIVERSITY IN URBAN AREAS.



**Beastly beauty: ecological entanglement via colour separation**  
Tessa Laird

I chose to write about Carnovsky's *Extinctions* because colour and animals are my twin passions. I have written about both: *A Rainbow Reader*<sup>1</sup> and *Bat*<sup>2</sup>, but often wonder where these two disparate

fields of study intersect. The anthropologist Michael Taussig once suggested that 'Colour is an animal'<sup>3</sup>, which encourages me to imagine the ways in which animals colour the world, while colour animates it.

I have been interested in colour separation since clumsily attempting screen-printing at art school. Interest became fascination when I moved to Melbourne and watched Arthur and Corinne Cantrill's colour separation films in their original luminescent celluloid format. Scenes were filmed three times on different coloured stock, so static objects were full colour, while moving objects became monochrome ghosts. Such 'ghosts' abound in Carnovsky's *Extinctions*; they jump out or recede as lights change colour, just as animals can either camouflage themselves or put on a dazzling show.

What I didn't know when writing about Carnovsky's *Extinctions*, was how it would be installed. On the opening weekend I saw a snake slithering over a curved wall reminiscent of a nineteenth-century panorama. A tiger prowled around collections of tableware from wealthy European households; portraits of bewigged gentlemen were set up opposite to enjoy the spectacle of deer, hyenas, palms and cacti. These landed gentry were part of the colonial, imperialist project that continues to this day, the very reason so many species are becoming extinct. Carnovsky mines tropes of the Enlightenment – optics and taxonomies – to point towards a toxic heritage of categorisation, ownership and surveillance. *Extinctions* bathes us in beauty, while reminding us that the Sixth Great Extinction event is a consequence of extractive ways of inhabiting this irreplaceable planet. I hope *Extinctions* gives us pause, creating a space to mourn, as well as impetus to act.

TESSA LAIRD IS AN ARTIST, WRITER AND LECTURER IN CRITICAL AND THEORETICAL STUDIES AT THE VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE.

(p. 98, left) Zena Cumpston. Photo: Damien Rowett  
(p. 98, right) Tessa Laird. Photo: courtesy of author  
(p. 99, left) Peter Otto. Photo: Gai Wilson  
(p. 99, right) Claire Collie. Photo: Zsuzsa Collie



**Light, moonlight, darkness and the world**  
Peter Otto

At first glance, Faye Toogood's *Day tapestry* and *Night tapestry* seemed to me reasonably straightforward evocations of contrasting moods or atmospheres. My gaze moved to and fro between the sun-drenched world of the first and the moonlit world of the second. But when I turned from the whole to its parts, these landscapes became scenes of visual quotation and therefore memory, ruin and revision. *Night tapestry* quotes from Hendrick Goltzius's *The untangling of Chaos*, 1589, and *The adoration of the Shepherds*, c. 1600, and *Day tapestry* from Jean-François van Dael's *Flowerpiece*, 1811, and Jan Davidsz. de Heem's *Still life with fruit*, c. 1640–1650. As Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben writes, the 'power of quotations arises ... not from their ability to transmit the past ... but ... from their capacity to "make a clean sweep, to expel from the context, to destroy"<sup>4</sup>. In this case, the quotations bring to mind the world evoked by Goltzius, van Dael and de Heem – an unchanging world created by God, the 'all-wise architect'. But they also represent that world in ruins, the parts of which having been assembled in different order to create a new one. This tri-focal scene (ancient order/recent ruin/present revision) provided the starting point for my essay in the NGV Triennial publication on 'Light, moonlight, darkness and the world', namely the shift in the locus of creation, between the seventeenth- and twenty-first century, from God to the artist/designer, imagined as the inventor of new

possibilities for life. This provided a frame for thinking about Toogood's work, her interest in assemblage, three-dimensional space, and *Gesamtkunstwerk* (a total work of art, in which audiences are immersed). And this, in turn, set me thinking about the world we inhabit, in which it is often now the programmer/artist or marketer/artist who designs the environments – whether online or offline; virtual or actual; social, commercial, or entertaining – that variously open or narrow the possibilities of life. As I conclude, the question then becomes one that takes us outside the gallery, namely what role audiences/consumers ought to have in shaping the environments that shape us?

PETER OTTO IS REDMOND BARRY DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ARTS FACULTY'S RESEARCH UNIT IN ENLIGHTENMENT, ROMANTICISM, AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE.



**The cost of living: rethinking urbanity**  
Claire Collie

The piece I wrote for the NGV Triennial publication, titled 'The cost of living: rethinking urbanity', draws on the resounding themes of separation, hospitality, loneliness and 'liveability' in post-pandemic cities. It questions how an emerging *epidemiological urbanism* will influence the ways in which people occupy and appropriate urban landscapes, determining means of relating with one another and thus effectively redefining our urban condition. The new, normalising social-distancing requirements and ingrained habits will no doubt have long-lasting impacts on urban design and planning.

I drew on the writing of Arundhati Roy, Deborah Levy, J. G. Ballard and John Berger to inform my thinking. In the piece I gesture towards Roy's and Levy's notions of 'the cost of living', Ballard's erratic and almost crazed encouragement to encounter catastrophe head on, and Berger's always implicit call to remain acutely aware of the *space that separates* while considering the effect this has on our need for intimacy.

Mostly I wanted the reader to query the cost of alienation, a characteristic that has come to define the urban state of mind during COVID-19. And more than this, to realise that alienation has been a commonplace experience in cities, felt consistently by the banished and the marginalised. Separations have always been enforced, violently and perniciously, in urban planning and city building. Is this now, I propose, the time to rethink the costs of urbanity in public conversation? To return to the ledger and confirm that reconfiguring cities for a shared, hospitable Urban Age will be far more worthwhile and, dare I say profitable, than continuing with a flawed, exclusive model of neglect dominating current urban design and growth.

When I wrote the piece in mid-2020, Melbourne was on the cusp of the second wave of the pandemic. I wasn't aware then of the push that would be forthcoming to preserve the urban political economy as we know it, to not meddle too much with the urban fabric and function beyond the instalment of alfresco dining and widened footpaths. I have hope, however, that there might be more policy development and investment into urban infrastructures of care, infrastructures that are essential to help us weather what will undoubtedly be increasingly chaotic urban futures.

The pandemic has shown, among various fracturings, that a city designed primarily to serve a consumerist lifestyle is anything but a 'liveable' city.

CLAIRE COLLIE IS A LANDSCAPE SOCIOLOGIST, WRITING ABOUT SPATIAL JUSTICE, THE ANTHROPOCENE AND CITIES, AND A PHD CANDIDATE, URBAN PLANNING, ARCHITECTURE, BUILDING AND PLANNING, MELBOURNE SCHOOL OF DESIGN, AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS TRIENNIAL MAJOR SUPPORTERS WENDY AND PAUL BONNICI AND FAMILY FOR THEIR SUPPORT, TRIENNIAL SUPPORTER BEATRICE MOIGNARD AND RESEARCH PARTNER THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE FOR SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO NGV TRIENNIAL 2020. ESSAYS COMMISSIONED FOR NGV TRIENNIAL 2020, AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE AT NGV DESIGN STORE AND ONLINE AT NGV.MELBOURNE/STORE.

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Izabela Pluta, 'Iterative composition 1979 (pages 17-18 Australia)', 2020, pigment print on Eco Solvent Cotton Rag Paper, mounted on dibond, 124 x 200 cm, image courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney.

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## Captain Cook & the Art of Memorabilia


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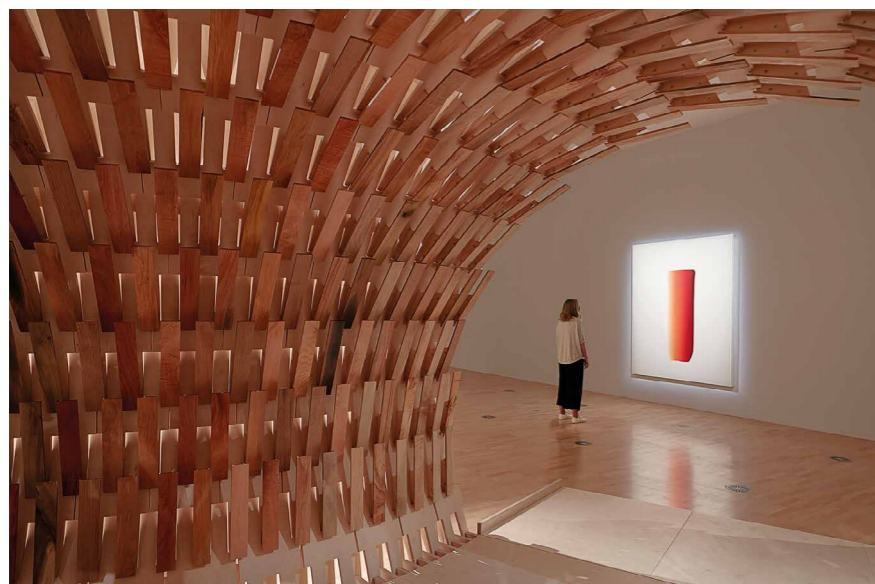
Visit [www.rochefoundation.com.au](http://www.rochefoundation.com.au) for more information and to buy joint tickets to Captain Cook and Fermoy House.

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## MAKING NEWS



### NGV COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

#### YANN GERSTBERGER

Cara Becker

Inspired by Mexican art history and popular culture, Mexico City-based French artist Yann Gerstberger's contemporary tapestry paintings intertwine traditional imagery with abstraction and graffiti.

Neither woven nor painted, Gerstberger's tapestries are created by hand through a technique he developed himself. Taking fibres of cotton that have been dyed with natural Mexican dyes along with more readily available industrial dyes, he mixes these with patterned or textured fabrics and glues them onto vinyl, creating a vibrant surface.

Through the support of NGV Triennial Major Supporters Vivien and Graham Knowles and Katrina Knowles and Adam Karras the Gallery has been able to introduce this innovative contemporary artist into the NGV Collection and we acknowledge their generosity.

CARA BECKER IS NGV SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, FUNDRAISING. GERTSBERGER'S WORK IS ON DISPLAY ON LEVEL 3 AT NGV INTERNATIONAL UNTIL 18 APRIL 2020.

#### KENGO KUMA AND GEOFF NEES X LEE UFAN

Misha Agzarian

*Botanical pavilion*, 2020, a collaboration between Japanese architect Kengo Kuma and Australian artist Geoff Nees, acts as a sensorial walkway towards the meditative painting *Dialogue*, 2017, by Korean artist Lee Ufan.

Kuma and Nees's striking architectural installation uses traditional Japanese wooden architecture techniques, where pieces interlock and are held together through tension. Made from timber, collected from trees felled from Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens, the olfactory experience is palpable, with the scent of timber. The surrounding light shines through the structure to create a mesmerising pattern underfoot.

As you exit the pavilion, Lee Ufan's contemplative work appears as a single multicoloured brush stroke. A leading figure in the avant-garde 1960s Japanese movement Mono-ha, Ufan explores the relationship between object and space and challenges the viewer's perception. While the painting appears to be a single brush stroke, it is in fact created through many repetitive markings, reflecting Ufan's restraint and focus on gesture.

The Gallery is delighted to welcome the work of Kengo Kuma and Geoff Nees to the Collection through the generous support of NGV Triennial Major Supporters Connie Kimberley and Craig Kimberley OAM and warmly thanks NGV Triennial Major

Supporters Andrew and Judy Rogers and Professor AGL Shaw AO Bequest and NGV Triennial Supporter Korea Foundation for their significant support of Lee Ufan's work.

MISHA AGZARIAN IS NGV ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, FUNDRAISING. THESE WORKS ARE ON DISPLAY ON LEVEL 1 AT NGV INTERNATIONAL UNTIL 18 APRIL 2020.

### THE IAN POTTER CENTRE: NGV AUSTRALIA

#### NICHOLAS CAIRE

Maggie Finch

Nicholas Caire migrated to Australia in 1858. In 1876 he moved to Melbourne and gained recognition as a commercial portrait photographer. That same year, Caire began operating the Anglo-Australasian Photographic Company through which he published landscape and city scenes.

Caire was passionate about documenting bushland in Victoria, and also wrote extensively to promote what he perceived as the virtues of the vitality and beauty of Australia. One of his publications was a volume of photographs entitled 'Views of Victoria: General Series' – a selection of which will be on display as part of a new collection hang at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia. The photographs were originally published with an accompanying text, which provide a colonial perspective of the scenes – these texts will be reproduced in the collection display. An example is Caire's *Scene at Studley Park*, c. 1876, taken on Wurundjeri Country and described, contemporaneously, as follows:

Studley Park is about two miles distant from Melbourne, and is considered the most romantic rendezvous to be found near the Metropolis. The River Yarra flows through the Park, and is extremely eccentric and torturous in its course. The present illustration is taken from the hill near the Johnston-street Tollgate. On the right-hand side of the picture may be seen the Johnston-street new Bridge. The left-hand side of the picture shows a portion of the Abbotsford Convent grounds.

MAGGIE FINCH IS NGV CURATOR, PHOTOGRAPHY. NICHOLAS CAIRE'S WORKS ARE ON DISPLAY ON LEVEL 2 AT THE IAN POTTER CENTRE: NGV AUSTRALIA.



#### TOP ARTS 2021

Theresa Powles

*Top Arts 2021* reflects on the achievements of forty-six Art and Studio Arts students from across Victoria. These emerging young artists' works echo the feelings of the wider community during the challenges of 2020, revealing two overarching themes explored in the *Top Arts* exhibition: 'outside' and 'inside'. To create their works, the students utilised a vast range of materials and processes to vividly express their ideas and messages. Working in isolation for much of the year brought its own unique challenges, leading to resourceful and innovative thinking. For many of the young artists in *Top Arts*, art became a place of solace and escapism, as did the labour of love of making their artworks. As a result, the artists in *Top Arts* have courageously embraced challenging questions, expressed their points of view and delved deeply into ideas of contemporary life, the everyday, nature and environment, and identity.

This annual exhibition is presented as part of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) Season of Excellence festival. It continues NGV's proud commitment to fostering arts education and offers a forum for young people to creatively express themselves through art.

TERESA POWLES IS NGV EDUCATOR. *TOP ARTS 2021* IS ON DISPLAY ON GROUND LEVEL AT THE IAN POTTER CENTRE: NGV AUSTRALIA FROM 26 MARCH UNTIL 11 JULY 2021. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS PRINCIPAL PARTNER MACQUARIE GROUP AND MAJOR PARTNER DEAKIN UNIVERSITY FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THIS EXHIBITION.

#### CONSERVATION

#### A NEW FRAME FOR ARTHUR STREETON'S SPRING 1890

Jason King

The earliest known image of the frame that appears on Arthur Streeton's *Spring*, 1890, is of the Baldwin Spencer Collection being exhibited at the Prahran Town Hall 1912. This frame was different to the one that had bordered the painting in the NGV Collection for many years. To create this historically accurate frame shown in the old photograph, I studied many scale drawings, measured images and made timber mock-ups. I discussed the various options with conservation and curatorial colleagues. The resulting reproduction frame is large and plain with minimal ornament and appears more architectural than the previous frame on the painting. I made the frame in three sections. Section one, which is the main section is rounded at the top outer edge, with a steep inside bevel leading to second section of a flat sanded area, which is actual sand adhered to the frame, and section three finishes with a slip (inner frame), which acts as a gentle visual joining of the painting to the frame.

To recreate this earlier frame, I constructed the main section out of three pieces of softwood joined in a triangular way that left a hollow inside, creating a lighter stable frame section. I created the ornament frame profiles using woodwork

machinery, and mitred and joined them. I then placed together and fixed the three frame sections.

The step next was to complete the gilding (gold leaf coating). In preparation I applied foundation layers of gesso (rabbit skin glue and chalk) to the frame, creating a smooth, full surface and then a coating of coloured bole (clay and glue), which is what gold leaf adheres to. The 23 carat gold leaf was added to the frame sections using both oil and water gilding methods, and with a gilder's tip I carefully picked up each thin gold leaf and placed it on the frame. I toned and distressed the frame's bright gold surface to give it an aged appearance, working harmoniously with the palette of Streeton's painting.

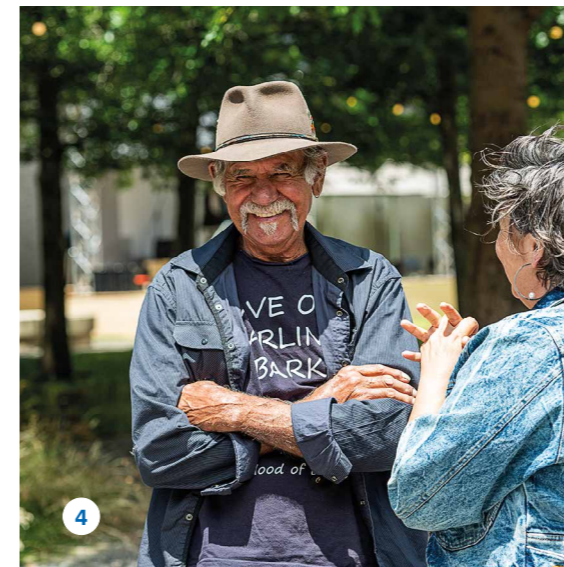
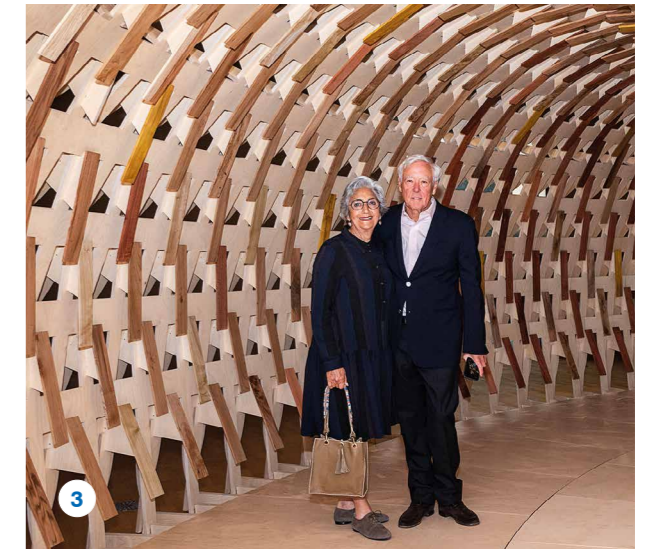
JASON KING IS NGV FRAME MAKER.

(left) NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of **Kengo Kuma & Associates, Tokyo and Paris (architecture studio); Kengo Kuma (designer); Geoff Nees (artist)** *Botanical pavilion* 2020 (left) Purchased with funds donated by Connie Kimberley and Craig Kimberley OAM, 2020 and **Lee Ufan** *Dialogue* 2017 (right) Purchased with funds donated by Andrew and Judy Rogers and Professor AGL Shaw AO Bequest, 2020. Presented by Korea Foundation © Kengo Kuma and Geoff Nees © Lee Ufan, courtesy of Pace Gallery. Photo: Tom Ross (above) **Arthur Streeton** *Spring* 1890 and its new frame. Gift of Mrs Margery Pierce, 1978

PEOPLE



1. A visitor enjoying Cecile Bendixen's *Cloud Formations* collection 2020 at the NGV Triennial 2020. Photo: Liz Sunshine 2. NGV Triennial Major Supporters Vicki Vidor OAM & Peter Avery with Hannah Brontë's video installation *EYE HEAR U MAGIK*, 2020 3. NGV Triennial Major Supporters Connie Kimberley and Craig Kimberley OAM in *Botanical pavilion*, 2020 by Kengo Kuma and Geoff Nees 4. Artist and Baakandji Elder William Badger Bates attending the NGV Triennial 2020 opening weekend in December 2020 5. NGV Foundation Governors, John and Cecily Adams with a selection of the Pablo Picasso ceramics they have generously supported, on display on Level 2 of NGV International. 6. Representatives from NGV Triennial Champion, the NGVWA in Alicja Kwade's installation *WeltenLinie*, 2020. From left to right: Alexandra Brownlow, Georgie Lynch, Esther Frenkiel OAM, Belinda Hope, Laura Kininmonth, Dr Sheryl Coughlin, Nicci Baker and Maria Smith 7. Visitors enjoying the NGV Triennial opening weekend in the NGV Grollo Esquiset Garden at NGV International



## AROUND VICTORIA



Lara Chamas *Vegemite is Halal 2.0*, 560g Vegemite jar, vinyl print label, 2019

### DAMIEN SHEN: A STONE FROM ANOTHER MOUNTAIN

Until 21 March 2021

**Venue** Benalla Art Gallery  
Benalla Botanical Gardens, Bridge Street,  
Benalla

benallaartgallery.com.au

Born from the rich combined heritages of mainland China and the Ngarrindjeri peoples of South Australia, Damien Shen combines drawing and photographic process to explore traditional imagery through a personal, documentary lens. For this exhibition, an extensive search through archival images of ancient Chinese paintings led Shen to discover that his family name harks from China's Song dynasty period, and the resulting works reconcile forgotten ancestry, known heritage, ancient past and the present.

### LARA CHAMAS: THROUGH WATER AS SMOKE

27 February – 25 April 2021

**Venue** Warrnambool Art Gallery  
26 Liebig Street, Warrnambool

thewag.com.au

*through water as smoke* continues Birraranga (Melbourne) based artist, Lara Chamas's ongoing investigation into objects of ritual. A Lebanese-Australian, Chamas's practice interweaves film and sculpture to explore notions of transnational identity, family and culture. Echoing the legacy of Levantine glassmaking, alongside displaying humorous and, often, vulnerable performances of prayer and caretaking, the exhibition is a tender story of grappling identity politics.

### THE STUDIO OF KARL DULDIG: A LIVING LEGACY

Through March and April 2021

**Venue** Duldig Studio  
92 Burke Road, East Malvern

duldig.org.au

This exhibition tells the story of the sculptor Karl Duldig, his journey from Europe to Australia and the studios he established along the way. Stone, clay, plaster, bronze, wood and photography are the mediums he worked with to create a powerful body of modernist works and to communicate the impact of the Second World War, displacement and survival through art.

### YHONNIE SCARCE: MISSILE PARK

27 March – 14 June 2021

**Venue** Australian Centre for Contemporary Art  
111 Sturt Street, Southbank

acca.melbourne

Featuring new commissions and works from the past fifteen years, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, and the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, are collaborating to present the most comprehensive survey of contemporary artist Yhonnie Scarce's work to date. Yhonnie Scarce is known for sculptural installations that span architecturally scaled public art projects to intimately scaled assemblages. As a master glassblower, Scarce imbues her work with aesthetic, cultural and political significance and often incorporates photographic archives and found objects to explore the impact and legacies of colonial and family histories and memory. *Yhonnie Scarce: Missile Park* is developed by ACCA and IMA Directors Max Delany and Liz Nowell, working in collaboration with guest curator Lisa Waup.

WITH THANKS TO THE PUBLIC GALLERIES ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA (PGAV). VISIT PGAV.ORG.AU FOR MORE EXHIBITIONS AND THE LATEST COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR VISITORS ATTENDING PUBLIC GALLERIES.



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Artwork: Roger Kemp, "Untitled", c.1970, acrylic on canvas, 169 x 227cm. Courtesy of Eastgate Gallery, Melbourne.

“Playing Nuro primes the brain for new ideas. The NGV Triennial is the perfect time to try it out.”

Dr Craig Deed  
Associate Head of School,  
School of Education,  
La Trobe University.

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## IN THE NEXT ISSUE

### French Impressionism from The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The May-June issue of *NGV Magazine* covers the 2021 Melbourne Winter Masterpieces exhibition.

BY DR TED GOTT



In an international exclusive, the National Gallery of Victoria presents a major exhibition of more than 100 masterworks of French Impressionism in partnership with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, an institution recognised worldwide for its rich holdings of Impressionist paintings. Opening in June 2021 as part of the Melbourne Winter Masterpieces exhibition series, *French Impressionism from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* features major works by Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Paul Cézanne, Gustave Courbet, Edgar Degas, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, Mary Cassatt, Paul Signac and Alfred Sisley and more – the majority of which have never before been exhibited in Australia.

In addition to surprising audiences by abandoning ‘important’ art subjects (such as history painting, mythological scenes and portraits of dignitaries) in favour of more humble scenes presented in radically new informal compositions, the French Impressionists also confounded critics with their use of bright and often undiluted colours, at times applied in a seemingly non-naturalistic manner. Majestic paintings by Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Cézanne, Sisley, Signac, Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh will captivate visitors with their daring light-filled compositions and dazzling surfaces. Many of the French Impressionist artists also placed equal weight on recording movement and

change in urban and domestic realms. Still life paintings, intimate interiors and street scenes by such artists as Édouard Manet, Berthe Morisot, Edgar Degas, Mary Cassatt and Gustave Caillebotte will also feature. *French Impressionism* will evoke the artistic energy and intellectual dynamism of the period by placing emphasis on the thoughts and observations of the artists themselves, revealing the social connections, artistic influences and personal relationships that united the group of radical practitioners at the centre of this new art movement.

In the upcoming May–June issue of *NGV Magazine*, Miranda Wallace, NGV Senior Curator, Meg Slater, NGV Assistant Curator, and Julia Welch, Curatorial Research Fellow, Paintings, Art of Europe at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, will each write on the exhibition, providing unique insights into the movement, including how it was ‘feminised’ by the critics of the time and why Boston art collectors were among the first supporters of Impressionism during the late 1900s.

DR TED GOTT IS NGV SENIOR CURATOR, INTERNATIONAL ART. THE NGV WARMLY THANKS PRESENTING PARTNER VISIT VICTORIA, PREMIUM PARTNER HSBC, MAJOR PARTNERS EY AND TELSTRA; AND LEARNING PARTNER THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THIS EXHIBITION.

**Pierre-Auguste Renoir** *Woman with a Parasol and Small Child on a Sunlit Hillside* 1874–6. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Bequest of John T. Spaulding

## LIST OF REPRODUCED WORKS AND END NOTES

(cover)

**Kim Sihyun**

*Untitled from the Identification (ID) Photo Project*

series 2017– (detail)

inkjet print

(dimensions variable)

Collection of the artist. Presented by Korea

Foundation

© Kim Sihyun

pp. 14–15

**JR**

*Homily to Country 2020*

steel, timber, glass, aluminium, paint, self-adhesive

vinyl, polyvinyl chloride, digital print, colour digital

video, sound

800.0 × 1000.0 × 1000.0 cm

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria,

Melbourne

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, Loti & Victor Smorgon Fund, 2020

© JR

Photo: Tom Ross

p. 17

**JR**

*Badger 2020*

Courtesy of the artist

© JR

p. 18 and pp. 20–1

**Glenda Nicholls**

*Miwi Millaō (Good Spirit of the Murray River) 2020*

cotton, leathers, wire

(dimensions variable)

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria,

Melbourne

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Lisa Fox, 2020

© Glenda Nicholls

Photo: Tom Ross

p. 22

**Bruce Gilden**

*Robert, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA 2018*

inkjet print

183.0 × 122.0 cm

Collection of the artist

© Bruce Gilden

p. 23

**Bruce Gilden**

*Jean, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA 2013*

inkjet print

183.0 × 122.0 cm

Collection of the artist

© Bruce Gilden

p. 25

**Aida Muluneh**

*Seed of the soul 2017 from the A Memory of Hope*

series 2017

inkjet print, ed. 4/7

80.1 × 80.1 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Bowness Family Fund for Photography, 2018

© Aida Muluneh

p. 26

NGV Triennial 2020 installation view of Ayana V.

Jackson's *Intimate Justice in the Stolen Moment*

series 2017, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Purchased with funds donated by Wendy and Paul

Bonnici and Family, Trawalla Foundation, Nadia

Breuer Sopher and Ed Breuer, Douglas Baxter and

Brian Hastings and the NGV American Friends,

2018 © Ayana V. Jackson, courtesy Mariane

Ibrahim Gallery. Photo: Tom Ross

p. 27

**Phumzile Khanyile**

*Untitled 2016*

from the *Plastic Crowns* series 2016

inkjet print, ed. 8/8

69.2 × 104.4 cm irreg. (image)

74.1 × 109.4 cm irreg. (sheet)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Bowness Family Fund for Photography, 2019

© Phumzile Khanyile

p. 28

**Lakin Ogunbanwo**

*Are We Good Enough* series 2015–17

inkjet print

119.0 × 79.5 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Bowness Family Fund for Photography, 2019

© Lakin Ogunbanwo, courtesy WHATIFTHEWORLD

Gallery, Cape Town

Photo: Tom Ross

p. 29

**Kim Sihyun**

*Untitled from the Identification (ID) Photo Project*

series 2017–

inkjet print

(dimensions variable)

Collection of the artist. Presented by Korea

Foundation

© Kim Sihyun

pp. 32–3 and pp. 34–5

**Carnovsky, Milan (design studio)**

**Francesco Rugi (designer)**

**Silvia Quintanilla (designer)**

*Extinctions 2020* (detail)

digital print on self-adhesive polyester fabric

276.0 × 7424.0 cm (overall)

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria,

Melbourne

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Anne Ross, 2020

© Carnovsky

Photo: Tom Ross

pp. 36–7

**Dhambit Mununggurr**

*Can we all have a happy life?* series 2019–20

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria,

Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Orloff Family

Charitable Trust, 2020

© Dhambit Mununggurr, courtesy Salon Indigenous

Art Projects, Darwin

Photo: Tom Ross

pp. 38–9 and p. 40

**Makiko Ryujin**

**Michael Gittings**

*Samsāra 2020*

steel, timber, gold leaf, lighting componentry

260.0 × 580.0 × 80.0 cm

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria,

Melbourne

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Karen McLeod

Adair and Anthony Adair, 2020

© Makiko Ryujin and Michael Gittings

Photo: Tom Ross

**Makiko Ryujin**

**Michael Gittings**

*Samsāra branch ceiling light 2020*

steel, timber, gold leaf, lighting

componentry

25.0 × 600.0 × 100.0 cm

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria,

Melbourne

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Karen McLeod

Adair and Anthony Adair, 2020

© Makiko Ryujin and Michael Gittings

Photo: Tom Ross

p. 45

**Danielle Brustman**

*Chromatic fantastic cabinet light 2020*

Oak (*Quercus* sp.), oil stain, acrylic enamel,

aluminium, composition board, acrylic, LED

150.0 × 150.0 × 8.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Sophie Gannon 2020

© Danielle Brustman

Photo: Sean Fennessy

**Danielle Brustman**

*Chromatic fantastic cabinet 1, 2, 3, 4 2020*

Oak (*Quercus* sp.), oil stain, steel, acrylic enamel

100.0 × 200.0 × 42.0 cm

Collection of the artist

© Danielle Brustman

Photo: Sean Fennessy

**Danielle Brustman**

*Chromatic fantastic cabinet 5, 6, 7, 8 2020*

Oak (*Quercus* sp.), oil stain, steel, acrylic enamel

100.0 × 200.0 × 42.0 cm

Collection of the artist

© Danielle Brustman

Photo: Sean Fennessy

**Danielle Brustman**

*Chromatic fantastic cabinet 9, 10, 11 2020*

Oak (*Quercus* sp.), oil stain, steel, acrylic enamel

100.0 × 155.0 × 42.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of Sophie Gannon 2020

© Danielle Brustman

Photo: Sean Fennessy

**Danielle Brustman**

*Chromatic fantastic cabinet 12, 13, 14 2020*

Oak (*Quercus* sp.), oil stain, steel, acrylic enamel

100.0 × 155.0 × 42.0 cm

Collection of the artist

© Danielle Brustman

Photo: Sean Fennessy

**Danielle Brustman**

*Chromatic fantastic cabinet 17 2020*

Oak (*Quercus* sp.), oil stain, steel, acrylic

enamel

100.0 × 60.0 42.0 cm

Collection of the artist

© Danielle Brustman

Photo: Sean Fennessy

**Danielle Brustman**

*Coloured in 2020*

wood, acrylic, Tretford goat hair carpet, lighting

(dimensions variable)

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria,

Melbourne

Collection of the artist

© Danielle Brustman

Photo: Sean Fennessy

p. 46

**Yann Gerstberger**

*Queen Niya Yoruba Corona xxx3 2018*

textile

250.0 × 220.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Vivien and

Graham Knowles, Katrina Knowles and

Adam Karras, 2019

© Yann Gerstberger / Courtesy the artist and OMR

Gallery

p. 47

**Adrian Piper**

*The humming room 2012*

voluntary group performance: full-time museum

guard, empty room equipped to echo, two signs,

one above and one adjacent to the door

(dimensions variable)

Collection of the Adrian Piper Research Archive

Foundation Berlin

© APRA Foundation Berlin

Photo: Tom Ross

p. 48

**Steven Rhall**

*Air dancer as black body 2018*

nylon, fan, brass, steel, electronic

components, ed. 1/2

398.0 × 405.0 × 45.0 cm (variable) (overall)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living

Australian Artists, 2019

© Steven Rhall

Photo: Tobias Titz Photography

p. 49

(foreground)

**Henry Moore**

*Reclining figure no. 7 1979–80*

bronze

54.9 × 100.0 × 58.0 cm (overall)

Gift of Ginny Green, Sandra Bardas OAM family,

Vicki Vidor OAM and Bindy Koadlow in memory of

their parents Loti Smorgon AO and Victor Smorgon

AC through the Australian Government's Cultural

Gifts Program, 2014

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Photo: Tom Ross

(background)

**Studio Sabine Marcellis, Rotterdam (manufacturer)**

**Sabine Marcellis (designer)**

*Dawn XXXIII* designed 2015, manufactured 2018

from the *Dawn Light* series 2015

polyester resin, neon, electrical componentry

190.0 × 50.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Esther

Frenkiel OAM and David Frenkiel, 2019

© Sabine Marcellis

Photo: Tom Ross

pp. 50–1

**Siji Krishnan**

*Father's portrait 2016* (detail)

watercolour on rice paper

134.6 × 315.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Ruth Margaret

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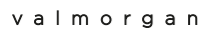
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# MARY QUANT



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Tom Roberts *She-oak and sunlight*, 1889 (detail) National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Jean Margaret Williams Bequest, K. M. Christensen and A. E. Bond Bequest, Eleanor M. Borrow Bequest, The Thomas Rubie Purcell and Olive Esma Purcell Trust and Warren Clark Bequest, 2019