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Melbourne Winter Masterpieces® 2024
Pharaoh

Assignment, Rome:
Photography by Les Gray



Africa Fashion

A CONTINENTAL JOURNEY

ISSUE 46
MAY–JUN 2024
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Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery
Photographer: Carl Warner

IMAGE LEFT
Robert Tommy PAU
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Installation view of Aidan Hartshorn's work *'These violent delights'* 2024 on display in *My Country:* Country Road + NGV First Nations Commissions from 22 March to 4 August 2024 at the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Melbourne. Photo: Tom Ross

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Every effort has been made to obtain accurate information for this publication. The views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the NGV. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this publication may contain names of people who have passed away.

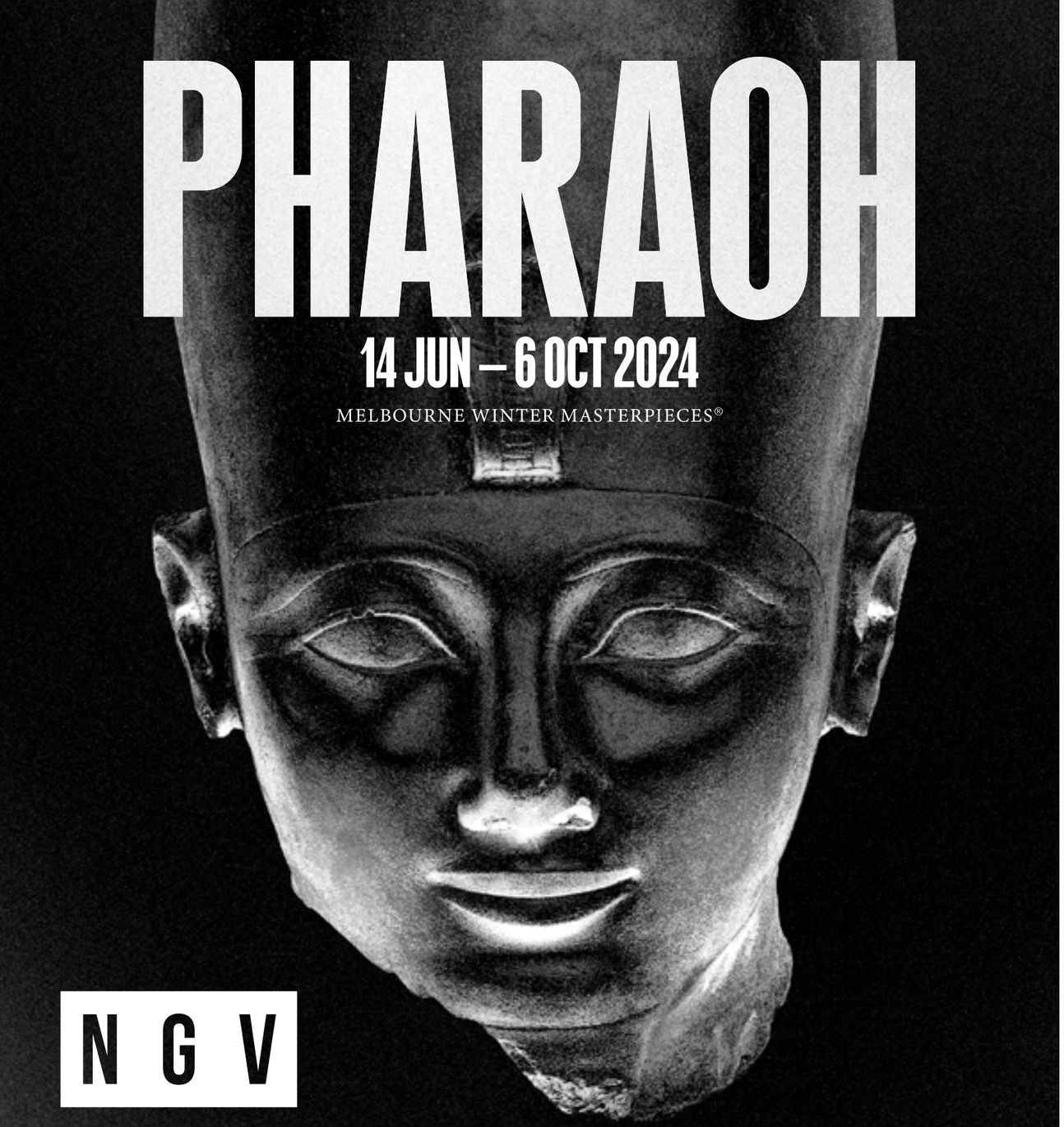
The National Gallery of Victoria acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Peoples of the Kulin nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which the NGV is built.

(cover)
Thebe Magugu *17* from the *Alchemy* collection, autumn–winter 2021, Johannesburg, South Africa. Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
© Thebe Magugu and Tatenda Chidora

(p. 6, above) **Stephen Tayo** *Models holding hands, Lagos, Nigeria* 2019. Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London and Lagos Fashion Week © Stephen Tayo

(p. 6, below)Yayoi Kusama 2022
© YAYOI KUSAMA

(above) **Bartolomé Esteban Murillo** *The Immaculate Conception* c. 1665 (detail)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1948
This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of Digitisation Champion Ms Carol Grigor through Metal Manufactures Limited



Head of a statue of Thutmose III wearing the white crown (detail) 18th Dynasty, reign of Thutmose III c. 1479–1425 BCE, Karnak, Thebes, Egypt
© The Trustees of the British Museum

From the NGV

The cover story for the May–June edition of *NGV Magazine* is *Africa Fashion*, developed by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and presented here in Melbourne in partnership with NGV. *Africa Fashion* explores fashion from the African continent, with more than twenty African countries represented through fifty creative practitioners. We celebrate the exhibition with Dr Christine Checinska, Senior Curator of Africa and Diaspora: Textiles and Fashion at the V&A, and Lead Curator of *Africa Fashion* with Project Curator Elisabeth Murray. We also introduce outstanding new acquisitions to the NGV Collection on the occasion of the exhibition. Read interviews with these designers, as well as Dr Checinska's essay, from page 16.

The Melbourne Winter Masterpieces® 2024 exhibition, presented in partnership with The British Museum, London, is *Pharaoh*, opening 14 June. The exhibition takes an expansive and awe-inspiring journey across three thousand years of ancient Egyptian art through more than 500 works, making this the largest loan exhibition in the British Museum's history, and will span the entire ground level of NGV International. Prepare for the experience now by reading a sneak peek on page 30. An exhibition of this scale and depth would not be possible without the support of Presenting Parter Visit Victoria, Exhibition Partner The British Museum, Premium Partner HSBC and our Major Partners Ernst and Young, Telstra and Qantas, and Learning Partner University of Melbourne.

At The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, meet the inimitable Grace Crowley and Ralph Balson, pioneers of Australian abstract art, on display from 23 May, and don't miss the next generation of Australian creatives in Top Arts, on display until 14 July. Melbourne Design Week returns on 23 May with a dynamic eleven-day program of design and architecture exhibitions, conversations, events and more throughout Melbourne and across Victoria.
Running since 2015, Melbourne Design Week is an initiative of the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria. Alongside Melbourne Design Week, the NGV Melbourne Art Book Fair also opens on 23 May and this year celebrates ten years of showcasing the best of art book publishing from Australia and across the globe, extending in 2024 to Geelong and the Surf Coast. Read about both events from page 48.

I would like to extend sincere thanks to Leigh Clifford AC, outgoing Chair of the NGV Foundation Board, for a decade of service and philanthropic leadership at the NGV, and welcome new Chair John Higgins AO, who has played an instrumental role as a major donor. John also joins Professor Gaye Sculthorpe and Preet Bains as recent appointees to the NGV Council of Trustees. I welcome John, Gaye and Preet and thank Leigh Clifford AC and the Clifford family for their continued support of the NGV.

I look forward to welcoming you very soon to enjoy an exciting autumn and winter season at NGV.

Tony Ellwood AM
Director

Welcome to the May–June issue of *NGV Magazine*. In this issue, we welcome into the NGV Collection two incredible works by women artists – the first is a portrait of American artist Man Ray, photographed by fellow Surrealist artist Lee Miller in 1933. Miller was, as Senior Curator Susan van Wyk writes on page 70, 'one of those glittering individuals who had an uncanny knack for being in the right place at the right time'. She was a model and a muse, a war correspondent and a photojournalist with an incisive eye, finding beauty in everyday life. Her photograph of Ray, captured the year before they separated as lovers and colleagues, is tightly cropped, his gaze intense and focused. The work joins the NGV Collection with funds generously donated by Joy Anderson.

The second work celebrates a four-decades-long story of friendship and love immortalised in bronze. French painter, sculptor and designer of the Belle Époque Louise Abbéma met Sarah Bernhardt in 1875, and Bernhardt's bronze sculpture *Embracing hands of Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Abbéma*, c. 1908, joins the NGV Collection through the generous support of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family, and the M.G. Chapman Bequest, 2024. Read about the work and Abbéma and Berhardt's story on page 66.

Elsewhere in this issue, we take a look at the career of Albert Lesage, a couture embroiderer for some of the world's leading designers, including French fashion house Madeleine Vionnet. A new display from the Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection features twenty-two embroidery samples. See the works on display at NGV International from June.

And, we celebrate the release of *Observations: Moments in Design History*, the latest Collection publication from the NGV. Featuring essays by authors, commentators and art historians, this volume weaves through almost 400 years of design innovation across Europe, Asia and the Americas to explore the materials and technologies that shaped global design in times of change, and the key manufacturers who defined the course of design history. You can read an extract on Surrealism by Dr Kathryn Johnson on page 82 and purchase a copy of *Observations: Moments in Design History* online and at the design store from mid-May.

I hope you enjoy this latest issue of *NGV Magazine* as we share new stories of art and design from the NGV Collection.

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



lost in palm springs

4 May –
1 September

Discover the connection between Palm Springs and Australia, and how contemporary artists engage with and respond to modernism's aesthetic and influence.

image: **Kate Ballis *2350*** 2017. Archival pigment ink on cotton rag. 103 x 153 cm. Image courtesy of the artist

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Contributors

ADEBAYO OKE-LAWAL
Lagos, Nigeria

Adebayo Oke-Lawal is the founder, creative director and chief executive of Orange Culture. By blending Nigerian and other African references with universal streetwear silhouettes in unexpected fabric choices, Oke-Lawal challenges societal norms, stereotypical notions of masculinity and the suppression of expressions of Africanism.

ADEJU THOMPSON
Lagos, Nigeria

Adeju Thompson is the founder and creative force behind Lagos Space Programme, a non-binary fashion design project and multidisciplinary art practice that explores the overlooked traditions of the Yorùbá culture of south-western Nigeria. The label aims to explore design through a cultural lens and contribute to the global conversation around gender and sexuality from an Indigenous perspective.

DR CHRISTINE CHECINSKA
London, UK

Dr Christine Checinska is a British artist, designer, curator and storyteller. Her PhD, *Colonizin' in Reverse!* (Goldsmiths, London, 2009), examines the impact of creolised Caribbean culture on English male dress and questions the relative absence of culturally diverse voices within Global North fashion and textiles studies. She is Senior Curator of Africa and Diaspora: Textiles and Fashion, Lead Curator of *Africa Fashion* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and a research associate at the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre, University of Johannesburg.

DR KATHRYN JOHNSON
Bristol, UK

Dr Kathryn Johnson is Curator and Head of Exhibitions at the Royal West of England Academy in Bristol. She is the editor of *Surrealism and Design Now: From Dali to AI* (2022) and curated the touring exhibition *Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 – today* for its run at the Design Museum, London. She holds a PhD in modernist British literature.

IMANE AYISSI
Paris, France

Imane Ayissi is a Cameroonian dancer, performer, model and haute couture fashion designer. Ayissi's work sits at the crossroads of two fashion systems, connecting Africa and its global diaspora with artisanal craft making and haute couture. Ayissi's collections showcase the designer's interest in silhouette and tailoring with respect for natural materials, specifically raffia and *kente* cloth.

PETER KING
Melbourne, Australia

Peter King has more than a decade's experience working in interior and exhibition design. He has undertaken a number of exhibition and design projects with the NGV, Museums Victoria, Bendigo Art Gallery and Zoos Victoria.

URIAH GRAY AND PAUL FUOG
Melbourne, Australia

Uriah Gray and Paul Fuog are creative directors specialising in branding and graphic design, digital design and development, environment and exhibition design and art direction and photography. U-P identifies and explores the unique opportunities within each project to create work that is purposeful, relevant and inspiring.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

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Annabel Dyson
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Carl Villis
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Charlotte Botica
Cora Diviny
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Dr Ted Gott
Eleanor Jordan-Gahan
Elisa Scarton
Georgia Smedley
Michael Gentle
Misha Agzarian
Stephanie Pohlman
Susan van Wyk
Wayne Crothers

Making News

AFRICA FASHION OPENING WEEKEND
Stephanie Pohlman

On 1 June, we celebrate the opening of *Africa Fashion* with a free day of music, dance and discussion for all ages curated by South African-born Mopedi creative producer Dorcas Maphakela. Dr Christine Checinska, Senior Curator of African and Diaspora Textiles and Fashion, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and curator of the exhibition, will open the day with an introduction to *Africa Fashion* followed by a full program of performance and workshops in the Great Hall. Catch a series of drop-by music, poetry and dance performances, uniting local African voices and highlighting themes of love, life and politics in Africa, in a rich celebration of African heritage and contemporary creativity.

NGV PREMIUM MEMBERS SEE *AFRICA FASHION* FOR FREE
Annabel Dyson

Africa Fashion showcases the creativity, ingenuity and global impact of contemporary African fashions from the mid twentieth century to the present day, featuring over 200 works of fashion, textiles, adornment, photography, music and film. NGV Premium Members can experience *Africa Fashion* (and all ticketed NGV exhibitions)as many times as they like for free – simply show your NGV Premium Membership card upon entry to enjoy the exhibition.

For more information about NGV Membership, scan the code.



Artist Bushra Hasan during Indian Community Day 2023. Photo: Tim Carrafa

INDIAN COMMUNITY DAY
Stephanie Pohlman

Indian Community Day is one of the most anticipated events held at NGV International each year. On 8 June, enjoy a free day of art, dance and music, along with activities for kids. This one-day festival celebrates Victoria's Indian communities and highlights the rich cultural diversity of the subcontinent, featuring workshops with local artists and performers of Indian heritage, talks in the galleries and a menu of Indian snacks to sample throughout the day.

DAVID SHRIGLEY'S *REALLY GOOD* ACQUISITION
Misha Agzarian

It is with sincere thanks to Triennial Champions the Felton Bequest that the NGV has acquired renowned British artist David Shrigley OBE's monumental public sculpture, *Really good,* 2016. Measuring at an astounding seven metres high and greeting visitors upon their arrival at NGV International, *Really good* was a much-loved feature of the summer blockbuster Triennial. The Gallery is delighted to welcome this work into the NGV Collection, where it will be enjoyed by visitors for generations to follow.

In 2016 Shrigley was awarded the prestigious Fourth Plinth Commission in Trafalgar Square, London, where *Really good* originated as a satirical response to Brexit. The NGV thanks Felton Bequest Committee Chairman Rupert Myer AO, alongside Committee members Janet Whiting AM, President of the NGV Council of Trustees, Carol Schwartz AO and Fred Grimwade, for continuing to strengthen the Gallery's Collection through thought-provoking acquisitions.

The NGV recognises former Chairman, the Late Sir Andrew Grimwade CBE, along with former Trustee Sally Walker AM for their instrumental involvement in the Triennial series.



Installation view of David Shrigley's work *Really good* on display as part of NGV Triennial 2023 at NGV International, Melbourne. Photo: Sean Fennessy

NGV TRIENNIAL: MORE THAN 1,060,000 VISITORS SEE BLOCKBUSTER EXHIBITION

The third NGV Triennial has welcomed 1,063,675 people, making it one of the most popular exhibitions in the NGV's history and cementing the blockbuster series as a major cultural highlight for Victoria.

On display from 3 December 2023 to 7 April 2024, and completely free, the NGV Triennial enlivened all levels of NGV International with powerful contemporary works by more than 120 artists, designers and collectives from more than thirty countries and regions. The final attendance figure includes the nearly 40,000 visitors who attended Triennial EXTRA, the free after-hours festival of performance, talks, DJs and more, which ran from 19–28 January, as well as the week-long NGV Kids Summer Festival, which saw over 14,000 children participate in all-ages events, workshops and activities.



PRECARIOUS MOVEMENTS: CHOREOGRAPHY AND THE MUSEUM
Adele D'Souza

Since the mid twentieth century, dance has entered galleries and museums in many forms. *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum* is a publication resulting from a major research project that aims to bring artists, researchers and cultural institutions into dialogue about supporting choreographers and museums to sustain momentum in dance and the visual arts.

Edited by Erin Brannigan, Pip Wallis, Hannah Mathews and Louise Lawson with NGV Curator of Contemporary Art Amita Kirpalani, the publication features more than twenty contributions from performers, scholars, critics, choreographers and arts professionals working across archives, conservation, curating and producing performance. The publication was produced for the Australian Research Council project *Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum*, in conjunction with partner organisations The University of New South Wales, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Monash University Museum of Art, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Tate, independent researcher Shelley Lasica and the National Gallery of Victoria.

Pick up your copy of the publication online or in the NGV design store.

Precarious Movements: Choreography and the Museum, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2024.

NGV ITALIA CELEBRATES ITALIAN LANGUAGE AND ART AT THE GALLERY IN MAY
Elisa Scarton

NGV Italia is a new program, developed with the generous support of the Italian Australian Foundation, which highlights the more than 3000 works in the NGV Collection, including painting, sculpture, prints and drawings, decorative arts and textiles by Italian artists and designers from antiquity to the present day. *NGV Italia* offers audiences of all ages the chance to learn about, understand and celebrate Italian creativity, language and culture.

Here's what's on in May:

PORTRAIT OF VENICE – MAJESTIC MURANO KEYNOTE
Monday 8 May, 6:30–7:30pm

From the tiny island of Murano to museums all over the world, Venetian glass has a long and innovative history. Join University of Melbourne Professor Catherine Kovesi for a journey to the Italian city of Venice, introducing the complex stories of Venetian glass.

CHAT ITALIANO
Thursday 16 May, 5:30–7pm

Immerse yourself in the Italian collection at the NGV, meet new people and use your language skills in this special after-hours conversation series. On 16 May, learn about Venetian painter Giovanni Battista Tiepolo and his *Banquet of Cleopatra*. The evening will begin with wine and cheese, before heading into the galleries for an intimate viewing experience and facilitated conversation.

Please note: This event will be presented in Italian and it is advised that participants have intermediate Italian language skills.

For more information and to book tickets, scan the code.



Canaletto *Bacino di S. Marco: From the Piazzetta* c. 1750, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1986. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of Digitisation Champion Ms Carol Grigor through Metal Manufactures Limited

GUILLAUME DILLÉE

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ACADEMY TRAVEL



AFRICA FASHION: DIALOGUE BETWEEN CULTURES

Spanning iconic mid twentieth-century to contemporary creatives through fashion, textiles, adornment, photography, music and film, the Victoria and Albert Museum's exhibition *Africa Fashion* explores the vitality and global impact of a fashion scene as dynamic and varied as the continent itself. It opens at the NGV on 31 May.

Words by **Dr Christine Checinska**

‘Africa Fashion tells a story of abundance rather than lack, of agency and of unbounded creativity.’

Dr Christine Checinska

The title of this article is borrowed from that of a unique commission made for *Africa Fashion* by maverick fashion creative Artsi Ifrach of Maison ARTC. The work was inspired by the curatorial narrative of the exhibition and the sentiment that underlines it. Constructed from yards of organza and embellished with hand embroidery and shimmering sequins applied by local Moroccan artisans, *A Dialogue Between Cultures* is a meditation on the common humanity found across all cultures, despite differences and complex cross-cultural entanglements. It is ‘a journey between East and West cultures, a combination of symbols and culture codes that inspire’, to use Ifrach’s words. This is our hope for the NGV iteration of *Africa Fashion*: that the exhibition will spark conversations from which will emerge new and unexpected but lasting connections.

Africa Fashion is a landmark exhibition that consciously celebrates the irresistible creativity, ingenuity and unstoppable global impact of contemporary African fashions. The exhibition will be Australia’s most extensive exhibition of African fashions to date, platforming the vitality and innovation of this buzzing cosmopolitan scene. To showcase all fashions across such a vast region would be to attempt the impossible. Instead, *Africa Fashion* explores the work of a selection of iconic mid twentieth-century designers – Fólashadé ‘Shade’ Thomas-Fahm, Chris Seydou, Kofi Ansah, Naïma Bennis and Alphadi – and marks the first time their work will be shown in an Australian art museum. Between them, these vanguard designers laid the foundations of today’s scene with its dizzying array of designers, photographers and stylists, many of whom are represented in the exhibition. More than 200 objects will be on display, presenting work from over fifty designers and artists from more than twenty countries. Most of the items are from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, but there are some wonderful new additions from the NGV’s growing collection of works by fashion creatives of African descent, such as the jet-black raffia-trimmed gown created by the contemporary couturier Imane Ayissi of Cameroonian heritage.

There are many stories to be told about the African fashion scene and many ways to tell them. *Africa Fashion* tells a story of abundance rather than lack, of agency and of unbounded creativity. The route into this visually compelling narrative is provided by an essential overview of the African independence and liberation years – the mid to late 1950s to 1994 – when fashion, music and the visual arts looked towards self-rule with an unforgettable exuberance of spirit. The radical social and political reordering that took place sparked a cultural renaissance across the continent. The fashion industry became professionalised during this period as new presidents like Senegal’s Léopold Sédar Senghor recognised the economic potential of home-grown fashion and textile production. It was also during this time that the vanguard designers came of age. Some, like Thomas-Fahm and Ansah, had studied abroad at art schools such as Saint Martins and Chelsea in London before returning to Nigeria and Ghana respectively to play their part in building the newly independent African nations.

The ‘African cultural renaissance’ section of the show invokes this sense of hope and determination, which is best captured by the words of the then-president of independent Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah: ‘we face forward’. Fashion is set into this context through memorabilia such as OSPAAAL protest posters (Organisation of Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America), albums such as those by Fela Kuti, suggesting a soundtrack of independence, and Mbari Club publications. Textiles bring this era to life further, from multicoloured *kente* cloth to indigo *àdìrẹ* print fabrics and Dutch-wax cottons. Excerpts from filmmaker William Greaves’





documentary shot at the First World Festival of Black Art in Dakar in 1966, alongside studio portraits from the likes of Rachidi Bissiriou, James Barnor and Hamidou Maiga, transport you back to these years of post-colonial liberation.

From my point of view, one of the highlights of the 'African cultural renaissance' section of *Africa Fashion* are the family portraits on loan from local families of African heritage. As someone of the African diaspora myself, I know how important fashion and textiles are, and I know how vital it is to tell your own story in your own words. Many of us growing up in the diaspora have family albums bursting with snapshots of dapperly dressed aunties and uncles from back home. Vernacular photography like this allows us to share specific local stories. The fashions worn in everyday family portraits express who we are, our beliefs and values and how we want to be read. Photographic portraits of the late twentieth century, whether vernacular or professional, are affirmations of agency and self-representation that make the pride in being Black and African visible on our own terms. They allow us to show the world who we've always known ourselves to be – individuals with diverse beliefs, values and nuanced identities, individuals with style. I look forward to seeing photographs from local families who respond to the NGV's public call-out for participation in this section.

The 'Cutting edge' section of *Africa Fashion*, which explores contemporary fashion, presents an abundance of creativity and a diversity of perspectives, processes, backgrounds and aesthetics. Here you will find the work of fashion designers, stylists, artists, photographers and industry leads. The curatorial team and I – Sunny Dolat of the Nest Collective, Elisabeth Murray, Connie Carol Burks, Stephanie Wood and Jessica Harpley spent months in conversation with these fashion creatives before organising the works according to aesthetic and type. We wanted to hear how practitioners defined themselves and their work and how they wanted to be represented in the exhibition.

The first group focuses on Minimalist fashions like the architectural creations of Mmusomaxwell. This deliberately challenges narrow definitions of African design, demonstrating that there is much more to fashion on the continent than Dutch-wax or print cloth. In direct opposition, Mixologist designers mix multiple patterns, textures and cultural references. Creatives here include fibre artist and designer Bubu Ogisi of IAMISIGO, who uses deconstruction as a way of materialising the process of decolonisation, her frayed seams and unfinished edges forming an elegant liberatory act. The Artisanal group features designers like Lagos Space Programme and Awa Meité, for whom showing the handmade element is central to their practice. Afrotopia forms the largest group, with fourteen designers represented within it. Some engage with Afrofuturism, drawing on African histories, spiritualities and philosophies to imagine and invoke a future in which we all thrive. Others explore pressing political concerns such as LGBTQIA+ rights, the environmental crisis and the erasure of Black women in Global North histories.

That said, it is important to note that not all fashion creatives of African descent make political works or works with hidden meanings. I am always wary of falling into what scholar Darby English calls the trap of 'the black representational space', where creative work is tethered to a narrative of racial uplift rather than acknowledged for its own merit. Some fashion creatives just want to create beautiful clothes or adornments, or beautiful imagery, whether in the form of film or still photography. *Who Dey Shake*, a film commissioned by the Victorian and Albert Museum and created by contemporary artist Lakin Ogunbanwo, occupies the space between these seemingly opposite motivations. The graceful movements and gestures of the fashionably dressed dancers in Ogunbanwo's film echo the zest for life witnessed in the post-Independence studio portraits from photographers such as Malick Sidibé. The result is unforgettable.

This conscious celebration of African fashions culminates in the 'Global Africa' section of the exhibition, which explores the way in which multidimensional digital platforms, together with the allure of Black and African music and film, have accelerated the impact of African fashions. Here you will find a *xibelani*-inspired ensemble worn by South African rapper, singer and songwriter Sho Madjozi and a version of the Tongoro playsuit worn by Tiwa Savage, the singer and songwriter from Nigeria.

Summing up, to the teams at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the NGV, *Africa Fashion* is more than an exhibition. *Africa Fashion* opens one's eyes to the brilliance of African creativity. Importantly, it facilitates a dialogue. It presents a multilayered story of the richness and diversity of African histories and cultures, both on the continent and across the global diaspora, using fashion as a catalyst. It does so from many varied and nuanced African perspectives, including my own, to push against stereotypes and complexify understandings of who we are and what fashion is and can be.

Dr Christine Checinska is Senior Curator of Africa and Diaspora: Textiles and Fashion at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, and Lead Curator of *Africa Fashion* with Project Curator Elisabeth Murray.

Africa Fashion is organised by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, where it was presented from 2 July 2022 to 16 April 2023.

Africa Fashion opens on Level 3, NGV International on 31 May. For more information about this exhibition, scan the code.

(p. 16) **Kofi Ansah** *Indigo couture* 1997, Ghana. Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London © 1997 Eric Don-Arthur

(p. 19) **Imane Ayissi**, Cameroon and France, *Look 16, trousers and cape* from the *Mbeuk Idourrou* collection, autumn–winter 2019. Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo © Fabrice Malard, courtesy of Imane Ayissi

(p. 20) **IAMISIGO** *Gods of the Wilderness* collection, spring–summer 2019. Courtesy IAMISIGO. Photo: Ines Valle.

More than fifty designers and artists from twenty African countries are represented in *Africa Fashion*, from the vanguards who first gained worldwide attention to the newest generation of cutting-edge creatives. Here, *NGV Magazine* meets three of the designers.

Imane Ayissi

Cameroonian-born designer Imane Ayissi's work sits at the crossroads of two fashion systems, connecting Africa and its global diaspora with artisanal craft making and haute couture. Working from his Paris-based atelier, Ayissi's collections showcase the designer's interest in silhouette and tailoring with respect for natural materials, specifically raffia and *kente* cloth.

Interview by **Danielle Whitfield** *and* **Charlotte Botica**

DANIELLE WHITFIELD **Tell us about Imane Ayissi.**

IMANE AYISSI I am a fashion designer, more precisely a couturier, as I am mostly doing couture. When I design a collection, what is important for me is to change the world's vision of African fashion – and more generally of African cultures – and to show that African know-how and craftsmanship is just as sophisticated and valuable as that of the rest of the world.

DW **Your work celebrates artisanal practices and materials, specifically, the signature use of raffia, *obom* bark and *kente*. What informed this choice?**

IA Living in Paris, I realised the West's vision of African fashion was completely uniform and univocal, seen solely through the prism of wax prints – which are in fact a legacy of the colonial period – whereas Africa's textile heritage is very rich and diverse, reflecting the continent's many cultures. So, I started researching what was left of this heritage and began working with craftspeople who were still making these textiles or using these traditional materials.

For example, the shape of the garments I make from *kente*, an artisanal fabric woven by hand in Ghana, is guided by my respect for the specific structure of this textile. *Kente* is made up of small strips joined together, a structure that would be damaged by a traditional Western cut and pattern with clips and cut-outs.

DW **You have described your work as a form of social commentary about cultural exchange and dialogue. How does this manifest in your designs?**

IA Conceptually, I am fascinated by the links that we can observe between a certain Japanese aesthetic and certain African aesthetics, links that Issey Miyake already explored in the early 1980s. Once again, my idea is to put the African continent back in its place in fashion, and at the same height as the other continents.

DW **What was the inspiration for the *Mguilguidigueu-Mteun* autumn–winter 2023–24 couture collection and, specifically, the work in *Africa Fashion*?**

IA The inspiration was my discovery of the work of Russian painter Paul Chmaroff in the Thierry Schneider collection. I knew absolutely nothing about him, but I was immediately able to appreciate the beauty of his painting.

For *Look 22*, the work in *Africa Fashion*, the starting point was a fitted sheath dress, creating a line with circular shapes on the sleeves. But the inspiration was also to mix a very elegant, haute couture dress with details reminiscent of Africa – a mix of a Parisian model and Fang witch. The result is this very simple, austere black sheath dress with a cascade of raffia fringes that comes to life every time the wearer moves.

DW **In January 2020 you were the first designer from sub-Saharan Africa to show on the official couture calendar in Paris as a guest, and now you show regularly. What does it mean to present your work in this context?**

IA It's recognition, in one of the most important fashion cities in the world, of the work I've been doing all these years, but beyond this I hope it will change the way the world looks at African design. Although this creativity is increasingly recognised, it is still not associated with the idea of luxury, perfection or high-quality know-how. The 'haute couture' label shows that African know-how has the same value as that of other continents.

DW **What does it mean to be profiled in *Africa Fashion*?**

IA It is important to show that African fashion design with international ambition didn't appear suddenly five or ten years ago, but that pioneers like Chris Seydou, for example, were already there forty years ago. Of course, I'm very proud to be part of this exhibition that shows just how diverse fashion is on this continent.



Imane Ayissi, France (fashion house) est. 2004, and **Imane Ayissi** (designer) *Look 22, dress,* from the *Mguilguidigueu-Mteun*, from the *couture* collection, autumn–winter 2023–24, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Photo © Fabrice Malard, courtesy of Imane Ayissi



Orange Culture, Nigeria (fashion house) est. 2010 and **Adebayo Oke-Lawal** (designer) *Top and pants with cummerbund* from the *It Comes in Waves* collection, spring–summer 2024 silk, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Photo courtesy of Orange Culture

Orange Culture

Orange Culture is a Nigerian fashion label established by Adebayo Oke-Lawal in 2010, and known for its vibrant printed textiles and genderless silhouettes. Through his practice, Oke-Lawal challenges societal norms, stereotypical notions of masculinity and the suppression of expressions of Africanism.

CHARLOTTE BOTICA ADEBAYO OKE-LAWAL **Tell us about Orange Culture.**
My name is Adebayo Oke-Lawal and I own a brand called Orange Culture based and produced in Lagos, Nigeria. Orange Culture is a team of amazing tailors, *àdìrẹ* dyers, and cotton weavers working with a sustainable ethos and a love of print.

Orange Culture challenges traditional notions of gendered fashion. By blending Nigerian and other African references with universal streetwear silhouettes in unexpected fabric choices, I produce collections that blur boundaries across both culture and gender. I love to create work that interrogates the cues that masculine dress broadcasts to society.

CB **What is your design philosophy and inspiration and what does your work celebrate?**

AO I believe fashion can and should save lives. I believe clothing should be fluid and be worn by everyone. I grew up with a passion for confronting societal norms and have used fashion as my chosen platform to combat hypermasculinity, injustice and the suppression of expressions of Africanism.

CB **Your work is about challenging gender conventions. How does this manifest in your designs?**

AO From fabric or colour selection, to silhouettes, casting, and shooting style, I intentionally ensure that all of these are woven together to express emotions and to start conversations! I have always believed that fabric and colours should not be assigned a gender. I remember in 2012 when we introduced men wearing organza and chiffon, people could not believe that men would ever wear these fabrics. We were criticised for feminising men. Fast forward to 2024 and stores everywhere are carrying sheer light pieces for men.

CB **How do you think about heritage and tradition in your work?**

AO I have lived in Lagos all my life and my collections are very introspective. I am conscious that my story isn't every African's story or the only African story; I am one narrative of a Nigerian man's expression of his culture and tradition.

From the silhouettes and fabric manipulations to the textile techniques we use – such as *àdìrẹ* or *aso-òkè* – we explore old Nigerian traditions and stories, expressing them in a contemporary Orange Culture way. Even the prints we design are inspired by nostalgic Nigerian feelings, stories that I have been told, or things I have seen or personally experienced growing up. In the lines and threads, and in the hands of those who make the Orange Culture clothes, there is Nigerian heritage and tradition.

CB **What was your inspiration for the *It Comes in Waves* spring–summer 2024 collection?**

AO This collection has been one of the hardest I've had to create, not because of the technicality of it, but because of self-questioning.

I think this collection is about realising it is okay to question and fall in and out of love once in a while, to feel drained and to re-energise and step right up again. *It Comes in Waves* is really about celebrating a realistic journey on one's path. This collection helped me celebrate resilience, to see the beauty in the calm after every storm and experience it more excitedly.

CB **How do these ideas translate to the work on display in *Africa Fashion*?**

AO The *Top and pants with cummerbund* is a celebration of the importance of connecting with and celebrating both your masculine and feminine sides despite resistance. The piece is inspired by a perfect marriage of both these sides – the pants are inspired by a groom's wedding pant with a cummerbund, and the top with the extended train is inspired by a bride's dress.

CB **What does it mean to be profiled in *Africa Fashion*?**

AO I love that our voices are being amplified by the platform and the global tour. It is such a beautiful exhibition – from fashion to music to film – and it is truly an ode to how amazingly diverse and intricate African fashions are, and to the amazing impact they have had on the world. For the first time in a long time, it is not a case of appropriation but of an appreciation of African fashions.

Lagos Space Programme

Lagos Space Programme is a non-binary fashion design project and multidisciplinary art practice exploring the overlooked traditions of the Yorùbá culture of south-western Nigeria. Founded in 2018 by Adeju Thompson, the label aims to explore design through a cultural lens and to contribute to the global conversation around gender and sexuality from an Indigenous perspective.

DANIELLE WHITFIELD **Tell us about Lagos Space Programme.**

ADEJU THOMPSON The name Lagos Space Programme reflects the ethos behind my creative process; it's a name grounded in my roots but is still looking outwards. By reviving cultural knowledge in the garments and objects we design, we identify overlooked potentialities for the present and create fashion archives that store cultural memories for the future.

The concept of decolonising design has informed my evolution and my practice. Through our work, we highlight an alternative side to the African narrative and contribute to the global conversation around gender and sexuality from an Indigenous perspective, by exploring design through a cultural lens in a well-researched manner. In doing this, we educate people and highlight Africa's progressive past in pre-colonisation times. There are many inaccurate misconceptions regarding African perspectives on gender. We believe fashion can shift cultural prejudices and retire these outdated beliefs.

DW **Would you describe your work as autobiographical?**

AT Yes, all my collections are informed in some way by my life and view of world.

DW **Your work blends ideas of futurism with a celebration of craft skills and ancient artisanal practices, specifically, the use of *àdìrẹ*, a textile dyeing technique, which you call 'post-*àdìrẹ*'. What was behind this choice?**

AT Through post-*àdìrẹ* we explore a centuries-old craft in a disruptive manner by designing motifs that communicate my triumphs and burdens and which tell stories that are very pertinent to our community. For example, in our *Project 8, Cloth as a Queer Archive*, spring–summer 2024 collection, we explored the aesthetic and spiritual significance of Yorùbá textile culture within the context of and alongside queer adornment practices, highlighting how dressing functions as both decoration and protection.

We focused on the art of *àdìrẹ*, a resist-dye technique used to create indigo-dyed cloth by the Yorùbá women of south-western Nigeria. In traditional *àdìrẹ* practice, the artist would engage with the medium as a means of storytelling, thus creating a parallel with modern-day subcultures where queer communities share their stories through languages, symbols and gestures exclusively to their own groups.

DW **The collection also challenges other misconceptions through cut and silhouette.**

AT In addition to exploring queer semiotics, the collection is also a study of minimalism from an African point of view. In the popular imagination, the African aesthetic is colourful, robust and sometimes dynamic, in contrast to a 'cleaner', pared-down European style. While these styles are present throughout African art, minimalism existed as an essential part of Yorùbá expression for centuries, long before Europeans impacted Nigerian society.

DW **This is a theme that you continue to explore in your most recent collection *Project 9, Invitation to Ojude Oba,* autumn–winter collection, right?**

AT *Project 9, Invitation to Ojude Oba* draws inspiration from the vibrant Ojude Oba festival in south-western Nigeria and showcases deconstructed and re-imagined Yorùbá garments alongside nods to quintessential British menswear. The collection melds British and Nigerian heritage in the use of *àdìrẹ* and in tailoring and romantic flourishes that recall the era of the two cultures' first encounters, but which also reflect my personal journey exploring and embracing both cultural landscapes.

DW **How do you think the fashion scene has evolved since you established your practice?**

AT My collections really push people to see African design as rigorous. I'm constantly collaging ideas and I see myself as magpie artist. I like the idea that people can see my work and expand their visual references of what they think African design is. I do believe my work is moving the needle forward, but I think I need more time to get a better perspective.

Danielle Whitfield is NGV Curator, Fashion and Textiles.
Charlotte Botica is NGV Curatorial Project Officer, Fashion and Textiles.

Africa Fashion opens on Level 3, NGV International 31 May.
For more information about this exhibition, scan the code.



Lagos Space Programme, Lagos (fashion house) est. 2018 and **Adeju Thompson** (designer) *Coat, waistcoat and wrapper and shoes,* from *Project 8, Cloth as a Queer Archive*, spring–summer 2024.
© Lagos Space Programme

Sally Scales

Ngayuku Manta Ngayuku Wangka.

May 2024



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Natasha Walsh

Hysteria.

June 2024

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PHARAOH

For the Melbourne Winter Masterpieces® 2024 exhibition *Pharaoh*, the British Museum has partnered with the NGV to present the largest exhibition the former has ever staged internationally, bringing more than 500 ancient Egyptian artefacts to Melbourne. So how do you capture three millennia of divine rule in one exhibition? *NGV Magazine* sits down with *Pharaoh* exhibition designer Peter King and NGV curators Amanda Dunsmore and Miranda Wallace to find out more in this exclusive preview.

Interview with **Elisa Scarton**

ELISA SCARTON **_Pharaoh_ explores the realities, mythologies and iconographies of king and queenship over thousands of years. That is a monumental brief. How did you translate it into a succinct exhibition design, Peter?**

PETER KING The process begins, honestly, with mood boards. I like to put random things together to reveal big human ideas. These are interwoven with the sense of power and authority of the ancient Egyptian pharaoh, the feelings of grandeur and the vast architecture of ancient Egypt, which we couldn't recreate stone for stone in the exhibition. From this big expansive thinking, you can then see what fits with the works and keep refining over time until the strongest concept comes through.

ES **What was that lead concept for _Pharaoh_?**

PK Time. As visitors move through the exhibition, they'll feel as if they're travelling from early morning to night. But it's not a literal touchpoint. We won't show the sun or the moon but will use subtle shifts through exhibition lighting, sound and multimedia.

ES **This idea of day to night is a simplified representation of the passage of time covered in the exhibition. Amanda and Miranda, as the NGV curators who worked on _Pharaoh_, is that how you would interpret it?**

AMANDA DUNSMORE Yes, exactly. _Pharaoh_ spans 3000 years of ancient Egyptian culture. The day-to-night design concept is a reference to the passing of time over this enormous period. But it also relates very particularly to the sun, which was such a key element of ancient Egyptian symbology and belief systems – seen literally in the rising and setting of the sun and the journey of the sun through the sky, and then symbolically in the journey through the underworld during the night. In that sense, the design ties in very beautifully with the content of the exhibition.

MIRANDA WALLACE It's also about the journey that _Pharaoh_ can take you on. It might take you ten minutes or two hours to walk through the exhibition, but either way you've been on an epic journey. Through the different times of day, you also get a sense of the different roles the pharaoh played in relation to the different aspects of their world, whether it's their public persona or the more private aspect of the royal family and palace life. This design concept helps to articulate the exhibition's narrative in an understated and sophisticated way, I think.

ES ***Pharaoh* unpacks the phenomenon of the pharaoh as an all-powerful king claiming a divine origin. Within this is an exploration of propaganda – is that right, Amanda and Miranda?**

AD Much of what has been handed down to us from ancient Egyptian civilisation could be seen as propaganda at the end of the day, whether it's architecture, sculpture, papyri or objects. These works had a very specific purpose: to convey a message and an ideology to the people of ancient Egypt. It was about reinforcing the all-powerful position of the pharaoh.

‘Much of what has been handed down to us from ancient Egyptian civilisation could be seen as propaganda at the end of the day, whether it's architecture, sculpture or text-based works.’
Amanda Dunsmore

‘I hope they'll walk in the door and say, ‘Oh, I didn't expect an exhibition on ancient Egypt to look like this’.
Peter King

MW And interestingly, it's not only the pharaoh reinforcing his position to the people, but he is also declaring it to the gods, because a lot of the imagery that the pharaohs commissioned featured offerings to the gods as a way to reaffirm that they were successful in appeasing the gods. It was both propaganda and self-serving, to keep themselves in power and to preserve themselves in the afterlife. It changes greatly over this long period of time, but the story of the pharaoh is an epic saga of power, based on images of military power, of might and of superiority in the classic propaganda we still see today.

ES **Materials are central to the storytelling in _Pharaoh_. How are they used, Peter?**

PK In exhibition design, there is a temptation to try to recreate fake stone using materials and renders, but it can, in my mind, look a little bit cheesy. There's also the temptation to do the opposite, where you turn the lights off, so all the works are exhibited in a black-box environment.

For _Pharaoh_, we wanted to find a middle ground. In one space, we look at the royal family in a more domestic and private way. Often, royal palaces would have had a courtyard or a water garden, a place where you could retreat from the heat of the day. Using water in galleries can be fraught, so, for _Pharaoh_, we've created a gesture to water, using rippled stainless-steel materials that refract the light and create a shimmering water-like pattern. On our day-to-night journey, this particular exhibition space sits in the early afternoon. It's the hottest part of the day and the halfway point in the exhibition, so it's the perfect spot to sit and reflect.

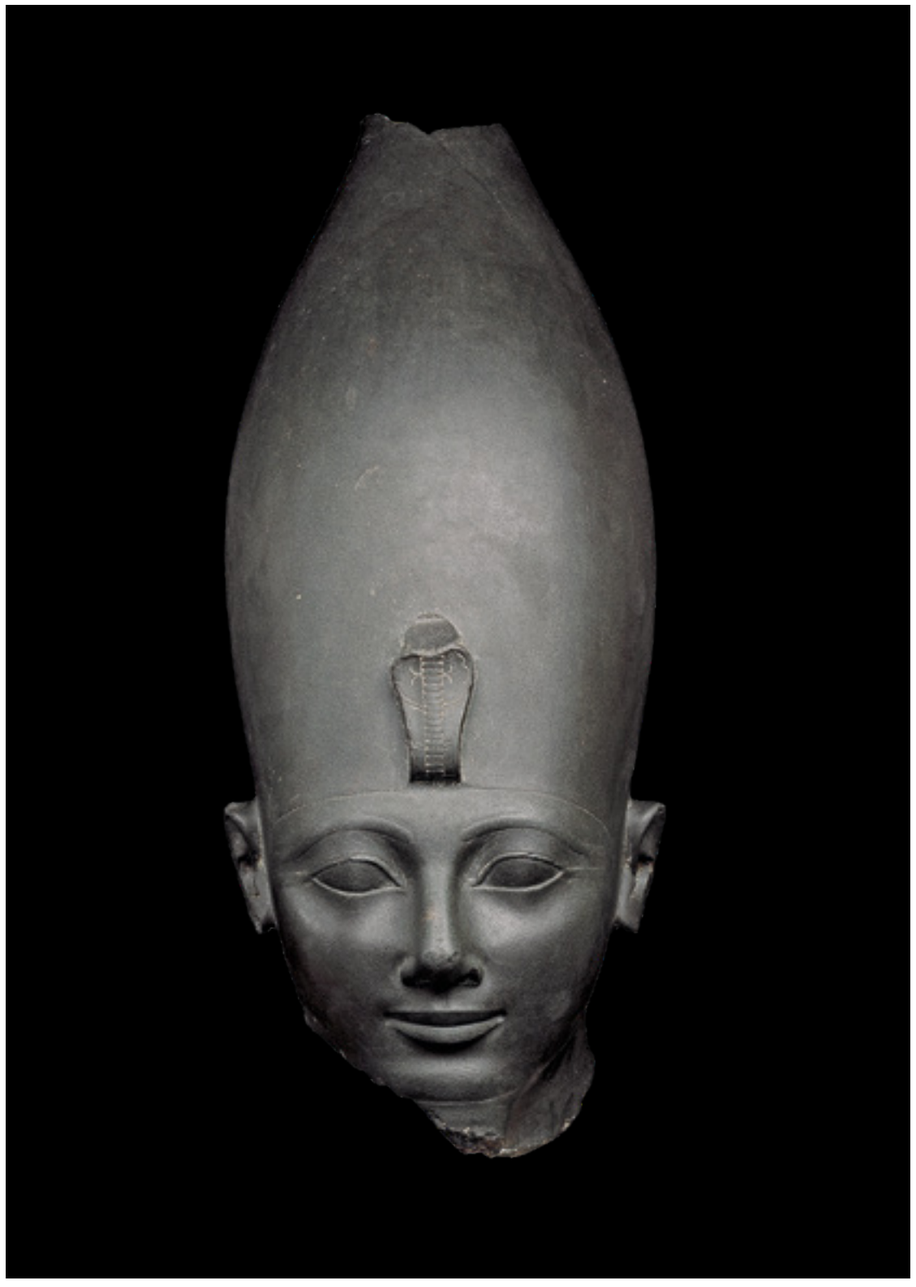
ES **Do you have a favourite part of the exhibition?**

PK I think the start of the exhibition because I want to hook people straight away. I hope they'll walk in the door and say, ‘Oh, I didn't expect an exhibition on ancient Egypt to look like this’. I really want to turn up the dial on the emotions from the beginning. Continuing on from our conversation about materials, this first room is carpeted in an abstraction of sand. As people's footprints move across it, it shifts to create patterns just as sand would. The walls have quite a strong textural finish, which as we rake light across them, mimics a stone-like texture. Mirror finishes bring in the language of glass from showcases, and the multimedia has a sharpness about it too.

AD I agree with Peter. The opening room has such an amazing atmosphere. It's the only carpeted room in the exhibition, and it's a dreamlike stage with six objects that represent the pharaoh in different scale and from different periods. It's the perfect opener for _Pharaoh_ as you feel like you're entering another world.

Elisa Scarton is NGV Senior Editorial Coordinator. Peter King is principal of Studio Peter King, a Melbourne-based design practice. Amanda Dunsmore is NGV Senior Curator, International Decorative Arts & Antiquities. Miranda Wallace is NGV Senior Curator, International Exhibition Projects.

The Melbourne Winter Masterpieces® 2024 exhibition _Pharaoh_ opens on 14 June. NGV Members enjoy discounted entry to the exhibition and NGV Premium Members receive unlimited complimentary entry to the exhibition. For more information, scan the code.



Head of a royal statue, probably Pharaoh Thutmose III Egypt, Thebes, Karnak, 18th Dynasty, reign of Thutmose III, about 1479–1457 BC, green siltstone © The Trustees of the British Museum

Who was Thutmose III?

The Melbourne Winter Masterpieces® 2024 exhibition at NGV features the powerful face of a certain pharaoh staring back with piercing eyes, a striking serpent adorning his crown. But who was this man behind the marketing campaign?

Words by **Amanda Dunsmore**

Thutmose III was one of the longest-reigning pharaohs in ancient Egyptian history, ruling for fifty-four years (1479–1425 BCE) during the early New Kingdom, one of Egypt's most prosperous periods. In this sense, it could be said that we know quite a lot about him.

Due to the early death of his father, Thutmose III ascended the throne as a young child, perhaps even an infant. Too young to govern in his own right, his aunt and step-mother, Hatshepsut, acted as regent for the first few years of his reign. But by year seven, Hatshepsut had assumed the full powers of kingship and ruled as pharaoh along with Thutmose III for the next twenty-one years.

During this time of nominal co-regency, Thutmose III acquired extensive military expertise and upon becoming sole ruler after Hatshepsut's death, he wasted no time in launching a major military expedition to the north to confront the growing threat of an alliance of Syrian and Mitanni chiefdoms, whose reach was creeping southward towards Egypt. From this single campaign, culminating in the Battle of Megiddo, Thutmose III reaped extraordinary spoils, reportedly including 924 chariots, 202 leather and scale armour tunics, and more than 2200 horses and 25,000 other animals.

Over the next twenty years, Thutmose III continued to campaign in the regions north of Egypt, as far east as the Euphrates River, as well as leading incursions south into Nubia. He is celebrated as the pharaoh who enlarged Egypt's borders to their greatest extent. In the forty-second year of his reign, Thutmose III recorded his battles on the walls of the temple of Karnak, detailing specific episodes of his campaigns and listing the spoils of war, including precious metals, timber, oils and cereal harvests, as well as animals, military supplies and prisoners of war. Such was Thutmose III's military success that he continued to be venerated for hundreds of years.

Thutmose III also undertook an extensive building program during the thirty years of his sole rule, constructing temples and monuments the length of the Nile Valley and south into Nubia. The temple of Karnak at Thebes (modern-day Luxor) was a particular focus, where he undertook major building works, including the addition of a large temple complex and two pylon gateways. His reputation as a temple builder meant that he continued to be referenced as the founder or rejuvenator of certain cults more than a thousand years later.

We know that Thutmose III had at least two Great Royal Wives, his successor, Amenhotep II, being born to his second wife, Merytra Hatshepsut. He had a tomb cut for himself in the Valley of the Kings, hewn high up in the cliffs and descending deep into the rock face; his mummy survives but was not found in situ in the burial chamber, having been moved in antiquity.

Thutmose III's prosperous reign is reflected in the many high-quality sculptures that were produced by the workshops. This sublime head pictured on the opposite page shows him wearing the white crown of Upper (southern) Egypt. Despite its youthful idealism, it reveals certain features that perhaps suggest an element of realism, such as his long nose that curves down slightly, his almond-shaped eyes and his wide mouth with a slightly protruding upper lip, which is thought to reflect an overbite, a feature that ran in the family and is identifiable on his mummy.

Nevertheless, despite all this information that has come down to us we may still wonder, what do we really know about the man himself? Ultimately, like all pharaohs, we know what Thutmose III wanted us to know, as detailed in his extensive military activity, his prolific building program and the sculptures that have survived. As to Thutmose III's character, his personal foibles and his likes or dislikes, the historical record is silent. Like all Egyptian pharaohs, Thutmose III remains an enigma, immortalised in the sculptures and images that we are left to ponder.

Amanda Dunsmore is NGV Senior Curator, International Decorative Arts & Antiquities.

IT'S YAYOI KUSAMA'S WORLD

This summer, the NGV celebrates one of the world's most exciting contemporary artists, Yayoi Kusama, in a world-exclusive exhibition that opens at NGV International in December. Exhibition curator Wayne Crothers shares more in this special preview.

Words by **Wayne Crothers**



Yayoi Kusama, 2022 © YAYOI KUSAMA

Active for more than eight decades, Yayoi Kusama's work has contributed to key art movements, including minimalism, Pop Art, performance and feminist art in the United States, Europe and Japan, transcending borders to establish a global presence. In December, Australian audiences will experience the breadth of Kusama's remarkable lifelong body of work, including early works and recent commissions, in what promises to be among the most ambitious international presentations of Kusama's complex and groundbreaking practice to date.

The summer exhibition, spanning the entire ground floor of NGV International, includes loans from the artist's own collection and numerous major institutions and private collections from Japan and across the world. It will feature almost two hundred of Kusama's works that represent the most pivotal moments in her career, including painting, sculpture, fashion and installation, shown side-by-side with works from the artist's archive of important performances, activism and ephemera.

Yayoi Kusama spans four major periods of Kusama's life and practice, commencing with an exploration of her mind and inner world during her adolescence in her hometown of Matsumoto in Japan. Paintings, drawings and ephemera from this formative period of Kusama's life include drawings made as a teenager during the 1930s, sketches from the 1940s and paintings from the 1950s, which formed her first solo exhibitions in Matsumoto and Tokyo. These works also demonstrate the artist's earliest experimentation with her infamous net motifs, which reflect Kusama's experience of visual hallucinations. These experimentations would go on to form the conceptual basis of the *Infinity Net* series, painted from 1958 to the late 1960s, for which she later gained great recognition.

The exhibition follows Kusama's relocation to the United States in 1957 at the age of twenty-eight, coinciding with her growing fascination with the human body and the spaces it occupies. Here she became situated in the New York arts community, which included, among others, Andy Warhol, Donald Judd and Claes Oldenburg – a creative community within which she had significant influence. Kusama's work developed from her large monochrome *Infinity Net* paintings into collage and three-dimensional *Accumulation* objects, which she began making in 1962, and later into immersive installations – all essential to understanding the artist and all comprehensively represented in the exhibition. Most notably, the exhibition will explore Kusama's use of phallic-shaped forms, which signify her complicated relationship with physical intimacy and the male physique. This topic was explored in her first mirror room, *Phalli's field*, first presented in 1965.

Works from this period also challenged the strong gestures of the popular Abstract Expressionist movement and served as a precursor to minimalism and feminist art movements. Central to these works is the artist's guiding philosophy of 'self-obliteration' – to dissolve oneself into infinity and become one with the universe.

Supported by a significant open archive of documentation, photography and ephemera from the Kusama archives in Tokyo, the NGV exhibition also presents the socially engaged and politically charged performance-based activities and 'happenings' of Kusama's work throughout the 1960s. This part of the exhibition includes fashion, works exploring sexual liberation, and rarely displayed portraits of iconic actors like Marilyn Monroe, Danny La Rue and Matahari.

Yayoi Kusama then follows Kusama's return to Japan in the early 1970s and displays collages produced as therapy for her mental health struggles. Following a publicly quieter period, the artist's resurgence in the 1980s was aptly signalled by new works celebrating propagation and transcendence through nature. Motifs from this period include plant life, flowers, reproductive organs and most notably the artist's emblem of the pumpkin, depicted in the exhibition in paintings, sculptures and an immersive pumpkin 'mirror room'.

The exhibition also marks a celebration of the ethereal universe, oneness with our surroundings and ascendence into infinite realms through major works. Audiences will experience infinity rooms, immersive experiences and out-of-body experiences that establish Kusama's enduring impact along with vibrant recent paintings from *My Eternal Soul*, Kusama's ongoing series initiated in 2010.

Kusama has garnered international acclaim in recent decades and the title of 'World's most popular artist' in a 2014 census of international museum attendance.

Yayoi Kusama will be the Gallery's most ambitious presentation of Kusama's famed installation practice to date and will include immersive installations, outdoor sculpture and a never-before-seen room created by the artist specifically for Melbourne audiences. The exhibition will also expand into public spaces with newly commissioned city-responsive works. Prepare to be transported into the imaginative and captivating world of Yayoi Kusama in this unmissable celebration of one of the most influential artists of our time.

Wayne Crothers is NGV Senior Curator, Asian Art

The NGV warmly thanks the Loti & Victor Smorgon Fund for their support towards works displayed in the *Yayoi Kusama* exhibition, along with those who have made leadership gifts towards the 2024 NGV Annual Appeal, Decjuba Foundation, Paula Fox AO & the Fox Family, and Chris Thomas AM & Cheryl Thomas.

Narcissus Garden

At the centre of the 2024 NGV Annual Appeal is Yayoi Kusama's large-scale installation, *Narcissus Garden*. Consisting of 1,400 stainless steel spheres, each 30 centimetres in diameter, *Narcissus Garden*, 1966–2024, is as poignant for audiences today as it was when first conceived by the artist almost sixty years ago.

Words by **Misha Agzarian**

Presented as a part of the *Yayoi Kusama* summer exhibition, *Narcissus Garden* will greet every visitor to the NGV International and eventually be housed in The Fox NGV: Contemporary, Australia's newest and largest home of contemporary art and design.

Narcissus Garden is a definitive work in Yayoi Kusama's career and an important acquisition for the NGV Collection. Its unofficial inclusion in the 1966 Venice Biennale came early in Kusama's career as she was defining her style and unique voice within a global art world.

Referencing the Greek myth of Narcissus, who was so captivated by his own reflection in a body of water that he drowned in it, *Narcissus Garden* infinitely reflects the viewer within the artwork itself. Through the experience of this installation, Kusama gives audiences the power to see their own reflection and, in turn, fall in love with it. The enduring beauty and relevance of *Narcissus Garden*, reimagined for the NGV, is a testament to Kusama's steadfast artistic vision.

The NGV warmly thanks the following supporters who have made leadership gifts towards the 2024 NGV Annual Appeal: Decjuba Foundation, Paula Fox AO & the Fox Family, and Chris Thomas AM & Cheryl Thomas.

To help us secure this significant work for the NGV Collection and for generations to come, we warmly invite you to make a donation towards the 2024 NGV Annual Appeal.



Installation view of Yayoi Kusama's *Narcissus Garden* 1966 at the 33rd Venice Biennale. Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo © YAYOI KUSAMA

We are sincerely grateful for contributions of any size. On behalf of everyone at the NGV, thank you for your support.

Misha Agzarian is Assistant Director, Fundraising and Events.

Scan the code to find out more about the work and to donate.

Installation view of **Yayoi Kusama** *Narcissus Garden* 1966–2022, Photo: Masatomo Moriyama © Yayoi Kusama



Assignment, Rome

NGV Italia is an ongoing series sharing stories of Italian art, design, culture and life from the NGV Collection. In this feature, we explore photographs of the Vatican City, captured through the lens of Melbourne photographer Les Gray.

Words by **Elisa Scarton**

Les Gray *Resting, number two* 1972, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973 © The artist This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of Professor AGL Shaw AO Bequest

The story of these black-and-white photographs is carefully bound in a single manila folder that landed on my desk at the NGV on a Tuesday afternoon. The pages are yellow with age, written in the jittery cadence of an unaligned typewriter, the odd letter jumping out of formation to rest just slightly higher or lower than its bedfellows.

The hand that typed these pages is the same one I imagine resting on a camera in St Mark's Square, patiently waiting to press the shutter and immortalise these anonymous men and women in their quiet acts of devotion, their stolen moments of repose and daily errands performed beneath the architectural splendour and religious pageantry of the Vatican City.

As a first-generation Italian-Australian, I was drawn to these photographs because their subjects reminded me of my grandparents, in particular, my grandmother, a woman who looked remarkably like the nonna captured in *Resting, number two*, 1972, on the opposite page, a newspaper draped across her lap, her head resting gently on her chest. This is the Italy of my ancestors and of the many Italians who left their homeland in the 1950s, '60s and '70s to make a life for themselves on the other side of the world. No matter the decades that passed, my grandparents would remember Italy like this, not as a place that embraced tourism and globalism, McDonald's and baggy jeans, the music of Madonna and the delights of sushi trains and English slang. To my grandparents, Italy remained, as if preserved in a snow globe, exactly as they had left it – a place where widows wore black and young women matched sensible shoes with knee-length skirts; where men wore hats with perfectly ironed slacks and spotless blazers every day. A place populated by *i fedeli* (the devout) – the very people so perfectly captured by Melbourne graphic designer, turned professional photographer, Leslie Robert Gray in 1972.

The photographs featured on these pages are a snapshot of a series called *Assignment*, *Rome* 1972. They are available to view on the NGV Collection online, which is where I discovered them.

Everything I know about Leslie Gray, better known as Les, comes from that one manila folder stored carefully in the NGV's records department for more than five decades. From its typewritten pages, I learn that Gray was commissioned by the Gallery to travel to the Vatican City. His photographs, thirty in total, were part of an NGV exhibition called *Sistine Chapel: a photographic exploration* held in 1973 to coincide with the Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne.

Gray taught himself photography as an extension of his graphic design training. The NGV commission comes just five years after he turns pro. Born in Melbourne in 1920, Gray is fifty-two when he travels to Rome. He's the chairman of the NGV's photography subcommittee and an 'occasional lecturer at the Prahran College of Technology'. His photographs have been published in a handful of books, some of which he has designed, and he describes his fields of specialisation as 'architectural, art and portraiture'.



Les Gray *Carozza, number two* 1972, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973 © The artist. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of Professor AGL Shaw AO Bequest

In the folder, each photograph in the *Assignment, Rome* series has its own hand-typed record with title (*Three Nuns*, *Looking Up*, *Carozza 1*), date (November 1972) and process (Dektol 1:2). Typos are crossed out in a series of dark XXXXs in the typewriting equivalent of a backspace. Amendments are added in light blue pen. And at the very back of the folder, I find a short note from the inaugural NGV curator of photography Jennie Boddington, dated 1973. In it, Boddington describes Gray's work as a 'deeply personal response to human beings within the scene', praising his juxtaposition of hands and faces with the stone of the colonnades and steps. Gray's emphasis of scale, she writes, 'arouses a vivid appreciation in the beholder'. In 2024, I am struck by her very last sentence. A line that stays with me long after I have returned the folder to the NGV's fastidious records coordinator, Arthur Slinwinski:

> [Gray's] photographs render the devout in a moving chiaroscuro, which confirms in human beings, the timeless, the momentary and universal.

It's a fitting summation of my own perception of Gray. I never met the artist. He passed away in 2013. This story is gleaned from a handful of pages gathered in a neatly bound folder in the mid-1970s. It is, like the people captured in *Assignment, Rome,* like my grandparents' memories of Italy, momentary. The world outside continued to turn and change and adapt and evolve, but these photographs, those memories and this manila folder did not. It's a story that is, without a doubt, incomplete but feels timeless, nonetheless. A story that captivated me and I hope will captivate you, as the latest beholders of Gray's *Assignment Rome*.

Elisa Scarton is NGV Senior Editorial Coordinator.

See all Les Gray's photographs from *Assignment, Rome*, 1972, online at ngv.melbourne/explore/collection/artist/2333

NGV Italia is supported by the Italian Australian Foundation. Discover more stories from the NGV's Italian Collection, as well as a list of upcoming events, workshops, tours and seminars in Italian and English at ngv.melbourne/ngv-italia or by scanning the code.

(p. 43) **Les Gray** *Pilgrims* 1972, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973 © The artist. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of Professor AGL Shaw AO Bequest

(pp. 44–5) **Les Gray** *Map Gallery, Museo Vaticano* 1972, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973 © The artist. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of Professor AGL Shaw AO Bequest





Les Gray *The luncheon party* 1972, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973 © The artist. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of Professor AGL Shaw AO Bequest



Les Gray *Cupola, St. Peters, Rome* 1972, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973 © The artist. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of Professor AGL Shaw AO Bequest

What not to miss at Melbourne Design Week 2024

Melbourne Design Week is Australia's largest annual international design event presenting innovative and engaging projects across an 11-day program, beginning on 23 May.

Now in its eighth year, Melbourne Design Week is a critical platform to profile the breadth of Australian talent, from emerging to established designers, and celebrates the diversity and excellence of Australian design and architecture.

Continuing to explore the overarching theme of 'Design the world you want', the 2024 edition brings into focus the use of energy, ethics and ecology to encourage positive change, reimagine existing systems and offer innovative design solutions to complex global challenges.

Words by **Georgia Smedley**

MATERIAL MATTERS 02
PRESENTED BY **ELLA SADDINGTON**

Now in its second year, *Material Matters* at Hanover House examines the development and application of sustainable materials within the context of retail spaces. Highlighting the work of architects, designers and makers who contribute to the sustainable transformation of our built environment, this exhibition offers an overview of materials at various stages of innovation, from conceptual ideas to solutions that are ready for commercial use. Contributing participants include Breathe Architecture, Cordon Salon, Cubic Products, Design Futures Lab, DnJ Paper, Heliotape, Hempanel, Jordan James Kaye, Other Matter and more.

REFLECTIONS OF HOME
PRESENTED BY **BOLAJI TENIOLA**

Housed within the Coco Flip gallery space in Northcote, Australian and international designer-makers invite contemplation on the question: What defines 'home'? Through a thoughtfully curated selection of objects, lighting installations, photographs and video presentations, each artist offers a unique perspective on home. Although separated by continents and borders, heritage and culture, *Reflections of Home* utilises art and design to share ideas, to communicate and to celebrate diversity of thought.

ALUMINIUM
PRESENTED BY **CRAFT VICTORIA**

Six artists, makers and designers respond to the allure, practicality, and ethics of aluminium and showcase the versatile applications of this metal within contemporary material practice at Craft Victoria's space in Melbourne's CBD.

With a shared sense of resourcefulness and ingenuity, exhibitors exclusively use recycled aluminium. They have each gathered their material from local sources, whether post-industrial waste sites, seconds from hyperintelligent machine manufacturing or discarded soda cans and studio offcuts. The exhibition joins the discussion on the complexities of working with raw materials while drawing particular attention to aluminium processing, and encourages the broader design and creative industries to follow suit and be more mindful of material provenance. Contributing designers include Abdé Nouamani, Alexander Brown, Andrew Carvolth, Annie Paxton, Bel Williams, and Welfe Bowyer.

CALL OUT
PRESENTED BY **DO WORKS**

DO WORKS presents its second project, *Call Out*, at the historic Union Bank, Prahran. Drawing on the rich history and cultural significance of furniture, *Call Out* serves to track the contemporary trajectory of the architect as designer at the human scale. *Call Out* presents the work of several local and far-reaching design firms, exploring how the design of furniture and objects has the potential to address ecological, energetic and aesthetic systems through distinct material, formal and social research.

BIRRARUNG X ABBOTSFORD CONVENT PRESENTED BY **ABBOTSFORD CONVENT**

Abbotsford Convent presents a series of cultural walks across two days, guided by Wurundjeri educators, who share their extensive knowledge of land, history and ecology. Each of the walks follows Birrarung, meaning 'river of mists and shadows', moving through place to reflect on the relationship between land and story, and past and present histories. Walk one is a Dights Falls Walk with Wurundjeri man and educator, Thane Garvey-Gannaway and Aboriginal educator, Tully Gibbon. While walk two is a powerful Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony and Dights Falls Walk hosted by Wurundjeri Elder, Uncle Bill Nicholson Jnr.

RED | A STUDY OF COLOUR IN CULTURE AND DESIGN
PRESENTED BY **THE COMPANY YOU KEEP**

Join Australian design studio The Company You Keep and UK colour theorist Jane Boddy for a live keynote at TCYK, Collingwood, as they unpack the universal and transient messages encoded in the colour red, and its influence on perception and behaviour.

The talk is partnered with an exhibition of red materiality and form curated by OIGÅLL PROJECTS, including objects from Brud Studia, Cordon Salon, Anna Varandorff, Olivia Bossy, Henry Wilson and more. *RED* is the first chapter in Applied Semiotics by The Company You Keep, a research project that examines the etymology of semiotic codes across culture and design.

FORWARD FOCUS | STUDENT BUILT CHAIRS CREATED FROM WASTE
PRESENTED BY **ZACHARY FRANKEL**

View the transformative power of collaboration and sustainability and discover the ingenious creations of tomorrow's generation when young students from the Hester Hornbrook Academy, mentored by Melbourne-based creatives, unveil their innovative chairs crafted entirely from waste materials and limited tools.

Curated by Zachary Frankel and hosted in the Tait Melbourne Showroom in Collingwood, the exhibition is the result of a two-day workshop providing a unique chance for the students of the Academy to support each other, brainstorm as a collective and put together interesting and thought-provoking pieces to explore the pillars of Melbourne Design Week 2024.

HOUSE EDITIONS SHOWROOM
LAUNCH AND EXHIBITION

This collaboration between Claudia Lau (House Editions) and Joseph Gauci-Seddon (Collective Territories) explores the practice of looking closely and openly in order to facilitate diverse outcomes of chance and subtlety.

The exhibition offers material tests, conceptual objects and scale models, presented within House Editions's new showroom space in Collingwood. A new powder room, containing a series of custom ceramic bathroom fixtures, harnesses the precious glaze catalogue of House Editions.

THE URBAN LANDSCAPE DESIGN CAKE COMPETITION
PRESENTED BY **SECOND PLACE**

In the first of its kind in Melbourne Design Week, join Second Place at Enlocus, Fitzroy North, for *The Urban Landscape Design Cake Competition* exploring climate change, the biodiversity crisis and built environment practice in Australian cities.

A selection of Melbourne-based landscape architecture studios including TCL, Bush Projects, ASPECT Studios, OCULUS (and many more) have been invited to select a site currently under development in the Melbourne CBD and re-envision it as parkland through the edible medium of cake.

The exhibition of cakes will be accompanied by a live judging by a panel of built-environment experts, including Ana Abram, Katrina Simon, and Azin Emampour, and there will be a panel discussion around designing for biodiversity and non-human ecologies in the CBD, with speakers including City of Melbourne's Jocelyn Chiew.

WANDERING OFF-MENU (2)
PRESENTED BY **LONG PRAWN**

Long Prawn and food history expert Jan O'Connell host a cultural 'passeggiata' for Melbourne Design Week guests departing from Alexander Street Reserve, Clifton Hill—a walking meal allowing for variance in pace, taste, texture and context. The walk will include the telling of historic tales, from the defiance of the dim sim to the once widely popular chop picnic—food yarns, attached to place and time.

With body and digestion in motion together, convivial culinary rest and snack stops will take place throughout the former Gold Street Precinct.

The event will pause to recognise that all food grown, shared and consumed here does so on unceded Aboriginal land and that this remains an important place to the longest-living food culture in the world, a culture rich in techniques of cooking, trading, farming and preserving. Mob are welcome to attend for free.



Some of the treats in *Wandering off-menu*. Photo: Ed Gorwell.



Still from **Karin Bucher** and **Thomas Karrer** *The Power of Utopia: Living with Le Corbusier in Chandigarh*, 2023, part of Melbourne Design Week Film Festival 2024

MULTIFUNCTION PET FURNITURE FOR SMALL SPACE LIVING PRESENTED BY **NEVER TOO SMALL**

In an era where many of us are transitioning to smaller, more compact homes, how can pet owners create a dedicated sanctuary for their pets while still making the most of available space? Is it possible to conceptualise pet housing that seamlessly combines aesthetics, versatility and affordability?

Nearly two-thirds of Australians share their homes with beloved pets. In the City of Melbourne alone, there are approximately 5400 registered dogs and 4800 cats, marking a notable surge of nearly 50 per cent since 2018. Never Too Small collaborates with ten designers from around the world who each design a piece of multifunctional pet furniture from a single piece of plywood. The designs, on display at the Never Too Small studio in Collingwood, are templated and cut out using CNC Machinery, a design process dedicated to democratising good designs and making them accessible to anyone in the world.

OVERLAY: A NEW AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE PRESENTED BY **CJ CORNISH AND LOCKI HUMPHREY**

An examination of Australian heritage, aesthetic, architectural history and collective memory are presented in an exhibition by CJ Cornish and Locki Humphrey. In addressing increased population density, material access and sustainability, the contributing designers-makers are turning their focus to improving connection to community and country.

Overlay presents visions of a new Australian heritage at Hawker Space, Fitzroy, through the eyes of architects, interior and object designers. The work presented is an interpretation of an Australian heritage aesthetic from the inside out, investigating how we may more authentically reflect our climate and context.

MELBOURNE DESIGN WEEK FILM FESTIVAL PRESENTED BY **MELBOURNE DESIGN WEEK FILM FESTIVAL AND LIDO AND CLASSIC CINEMAS**

The Melbourne Design Week Film Festival explores the impact of architecture and design and its power to innovate and affect change while shaping communities, cities and the environment. Program highlights include *Green City Life* and *Mexity*, which examine the role that urban planners, environmentalists and architects play in creating a more sustainable future. *The Power of Utopia: Living with Le Corbusier in Chandigar* and *Skin of Glass* examine the complexity of creating utopian ideals and architectural monuments that can hold up to an ever-changing city. Catch screenings at various venues throughout the city.

AESOP: IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHER MATTER PRESENTED BY **AESOP**

Aesop and Jessie French of OTHER MATTER have partnered to activate stores across Australia and New Zealand for two significant skincare campaigns in 2024, which has seen storefronts activated with jar and bottle-shaped applications and window decals of French's algae works. This world-first retail application of algae-based bioplastic, removing petrochemical PVC materials from the campaign cycle, has the potential to be an industry game changer rolled out globally. An in-conversation event at Aesop Collins Street, Melbourne, will speak to French and Aesop's shared commitment to sustainability and explore this collaboration as well the artist's practice at large.

MAGGIE EDMOND – A.S. HOOK GOLD MEDAL ADDRESS

In October 2023, the Australian Institute of Architects made an unexpected announcement: the Gold Medal, originally awarded to the late Peter Corrigan LFRAIA, was amended to include Corrigan's business and life partner, Maggie Edmond LFRAIA, as joint recipients. Exactly twenty years after the 2003 Gold Medal was given, its Gold Medal jury reconvened to redress the oversight in previously acknowledging only one member of the duo.

During Melbourne Design Week in 2024, Maggie Edmond will make her highly anticipated A.S. Hook Gold Medal address within the Great Hall at NGV International.

Georgia Smedley is NGV Program Coordinator, Melbourne Design Week.

Melbourne Design Week runs from 23 May – 2 June. For more information, scan the code. MDW is an initiative of the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria and delivered by the NGV.



U-P creative directors Uriah Gray (U) and Paul Fuog (P). Photo courtesy of UP

Meet U-P

The branding for Melbourne Design Week and Melbourne Art Book Fair is an unexpected experiment in sophistication and speculative fiction. Here, *NGV Magazine* meets the designers behind the designs.

Interview by **Elisa Scarton**

ELISA SCARTON
Tell us a little about U-P.

URIAH GRAY AND PAUL FUOG (U-P)
U-P is a creative practice in Collingwood working across brand development, creative direction and graphic design for cultural and educational institutions and design-led organisations. It's a partnership between Uriah Gray (U) and Paul Fuog (P). We met around fifteen years ago and have been working as U-P for the past twelve years.

ES **How did the Melbourne Design Week and Melbourne Art Book Fair collaboration come about?**

U-P The NGV reached out to see if we'd be interested in collaborating for 2024. By seeking an outside perspective, I believe the NGV's aim was to introduce alternative interpretations and approaches to communicating both events.

ES **What was the brief?**

U-P Our design approach and process for both were largely informed by the overall theme for Melbourne Design Week, 'Design the world you want'. We explored the idea of design fictions, using speculative narratives to generate suppositional design assets. For Melbourne Art Book Fair, we experimented with the concept of modularity, using adaptable design elements.

ES **You've worked with some incredible brands and creative practitioners. How do you approach the collaboration?**

U-P Our work with Melbourne architecture practice Edition Office [the architects behind the 2019 Architecture Commission with artist Yhonnie Scarce] is a good example of how we like to work, particularly with other designers and creatives. We began by analysing the outputs they already created through their design process and worked with them to refine the design language of these assets to reflect their approach and philosophy. Before adding any additional element, we always take a moment to explore and appreciate the existing resources and materials we have.

ES **Are there designers, books or brands that inspire you?**

U-P To steal a quote from British designer Jasper Morrison, 'I draw a lot of inspiration from anonymously designed things and natural atmospheres'.

ES **Do you have any recommendations for readers on what not to miss at Melbourne Book Art Fair?**

U-P We've previously been involved in the fair selling our own publications. There is something wonderful about the energy in the Great Hall with all the local and international publishers and publications. We try not to miss this. The associated symposiums and events are also terrific.

Designing for death with Robbie Neville

Revival Projects under Robbie Neville's stewardship serves as a conduit for storytelling, contemplation and advocacy. Through *100 Circles*, to be presented as part of Melbourne Design Week, Neville considers a future where every urn carries new life, every tree symbolises a legacy and every material consideration propels us towards living and dying in the world we want.

Words by **Georgia Smedley**

Designing for death is a process of intimate reflection of ever-evolving value systems around the end of life, layered with pressing environmental considerations. As we navigate a global landscape marked by increasing awareness of climate change, resource depletion and cultural shifts surrounding end-of-life practices, designers are compelled to re-evaluate their role in shaping sustainable and meaningful solutions and must address the lifecycle implications of their creations. Designing for death encompasses not only the physical artifacts associated with funerary practices but also broader considerations of environmental impact, cultural sensitivities and community response to intervention.

Projects such as Robbie Neville's *100 Circles* examine how we can breathe new life into the world once we're no longer part of it. Neville, of Revival Projects, invites us – the living – to consider our mortality and the environmental implications of our own physical legacy. In 2022, Neville received the celebrated Mercedes-Benz Melbourne Design Week Award in recognition of Revival Projects' innovative Zero Footprint Repurposing hub. Spanning 2000 square metres in Collingwood, the facility is a nexus for architects, developers and builders to salvage and store demolished building materials for future projects, fostering sustainable construction practices and mitigating landfill contributions. The facility is embraced by industry leaders such as Grimshaw Architects, HIP V. HYPE and Assemble Communities.

Now working at a steady pace, Robbie presents *100 Circles*, his newest project, during Melbourne Design Week 2024. This project reflects a material resource being born from the space set aside for death. For *100 Circles*, Revival Projects recently salvaged five large cypress macrocarpa trees from Box Hill cemetery in Melbourne. The trees were growing within one metre of adjacent graves, their roots sharing the soil with departed members of our community. Neville was present at the moment of tree removal, capturing the transition from tree to resource, as it was significant to his personal process.

As the new custodians of the macrocarpa trees, Revival Projects has milled the smaller logs to manufacture 100 timber urns. The urns are designed with twine and interlocking joints to ensure a swift and all-encompassing decomposition process. A seed from Australia's national tree, the golden wattle, is delicately housed within the lid of each urn. When buried, the urn will completely decompose and the cremated ashes will give life to a new tree, gently forging new pathways towards regenerative design lifecycles.

To neutralise the pH levels of cremated remains, each urn contains a small amount of activated charcoal to ensure the levels of sodium (typical to cremated remains) do not impede the growth of the golden wattle seedling. The charcoal has been salvaged from a timber sculpture built from storm-fallen trees, which was subsequently vandalised in Docklands in 2022. The repurposed charcoal thus serves a dual purpose and ensures an environmentally mindful final resting place.

When asked where he'd like to see the urns end up, Neville shared that he hopes we end up with 100 very special golden wattle trees at people's homes and sacred places, and in the stories shared and cherished by family and friends of the deceased.

Georgia Smedley is NGV Program Coordinator, Melbourne Design Week.

See *100 Circles* as part of Melbourne Design Week at the Revival Projects warehouse in Collingwood.

Fifty per cent of the sale of each urn is being donated to Firesticks, a not-for-profit Indigenous network that facilitates traditional cultural fire-management practices in the Australian landscape.

(left) Robbie Neville. Photo: Stephanie Neville

2024 Melbourne Art Book Fair highlights

Celebrating ten years in 2024, the Melbourne Art Book Fair brings together local and international publishers, artists and designers, fostering exchanges of ideas and collaborations between industry professionals and printed-matter enthusiasts alike. In this special anniversary edition, emerging publishers, local and national publishers and international makers converge at NGV International for an exciting multi-day event celebrating all things publishing.

Words by **Cora Diviny**

AT NGV INTERNATIONAL

KATY HESSEL IN CONVERSATION: THE STORY OF ART WITHOUT MEN
WEDNESDAY 29 MAY

Presented in partnership with the Wheeler Centre

Esteemed British author, art historian and founder of *The Great Women Artists* podcast series, Katy Hessel, will be joined by NGV Curator of Contemporary Design and Architecture Simone LeAmon for a live conversation.

Following the release of her book *The Story of Art Without Men* (2022), Hessell discusses her extensive work in uncovering women artists throughout history, from Australia and across the world.

FUTURE PRESS
FRIDAY 23 MAY – SUNDAY 2 JUNE

The art of bookmaking comes alive in a vibrant and creative space for children and families, presented by Kids' Own Publishing. With a focus on imagination, collaboration and multilingualism, children are invited to tell their own stories through the process of making their own book. Young publishers also have the opportunity to launch their books to the Melbourne Art Book Fair audience on the main stage.

INDONESIAN PUBLISHING FOCUS
FRIDAY 23 – SUNDAY 26 MAY

Special guests from Indonesia join the Melbourne Art Book Fair for the first time. Krack! (Yogyakarta) and Binatang Press (Jakarta) showcase their work and share the unique publishing landscape of their cities. In a talk with art historian and curator Bianca Winataputri, publishers discuss the Indonesian arts and publishing community and contextualise its influence within and beyond South-East Asia.

TYPE SET
FRIDAY 23 - SUNDAY 26 MAY

Bringing entertainment and humour to the art and design sector, Type-Set at the Melbourne Art Book Fair delivers a publishing twist on all your favourite game shows. Join a live audience over three days to witness and participate in segments like Pub(lishing) Trivia, Matcher in the Rye, Art Smitten Live Radio, book launches and interviews with your favourite artists, designers and book makers.

OUTSIDE MELBOURNE

PUBLISHING IN GEELONG AND THE SURF COAST
MONDAY 27 MAY – SUNDAY 2 JUNE

In 2024, the Melbourne Art Book Fair satellite program expands into the Geelong and Surf Coast region, with a special publishing edition of May'd Festival taking place on Friday 31 May. Geelong zine collective GZines launch their new zine vending machine and host zine-making workshops at the Geelong Library, while Geelong Arts Centre presents an enchanting adventure for children and families, based on the book *How to Catch a Star* by Oliver Jeffers.

Regional Arts Victoria team up with the Melbourne Art Book Fair to present an extended panel discussion with local talent about independent publishing on the Surf Coast. Barwon Heads bookstore Heads & Tales explores regional living, arts and culture with *Galah Magazine*.

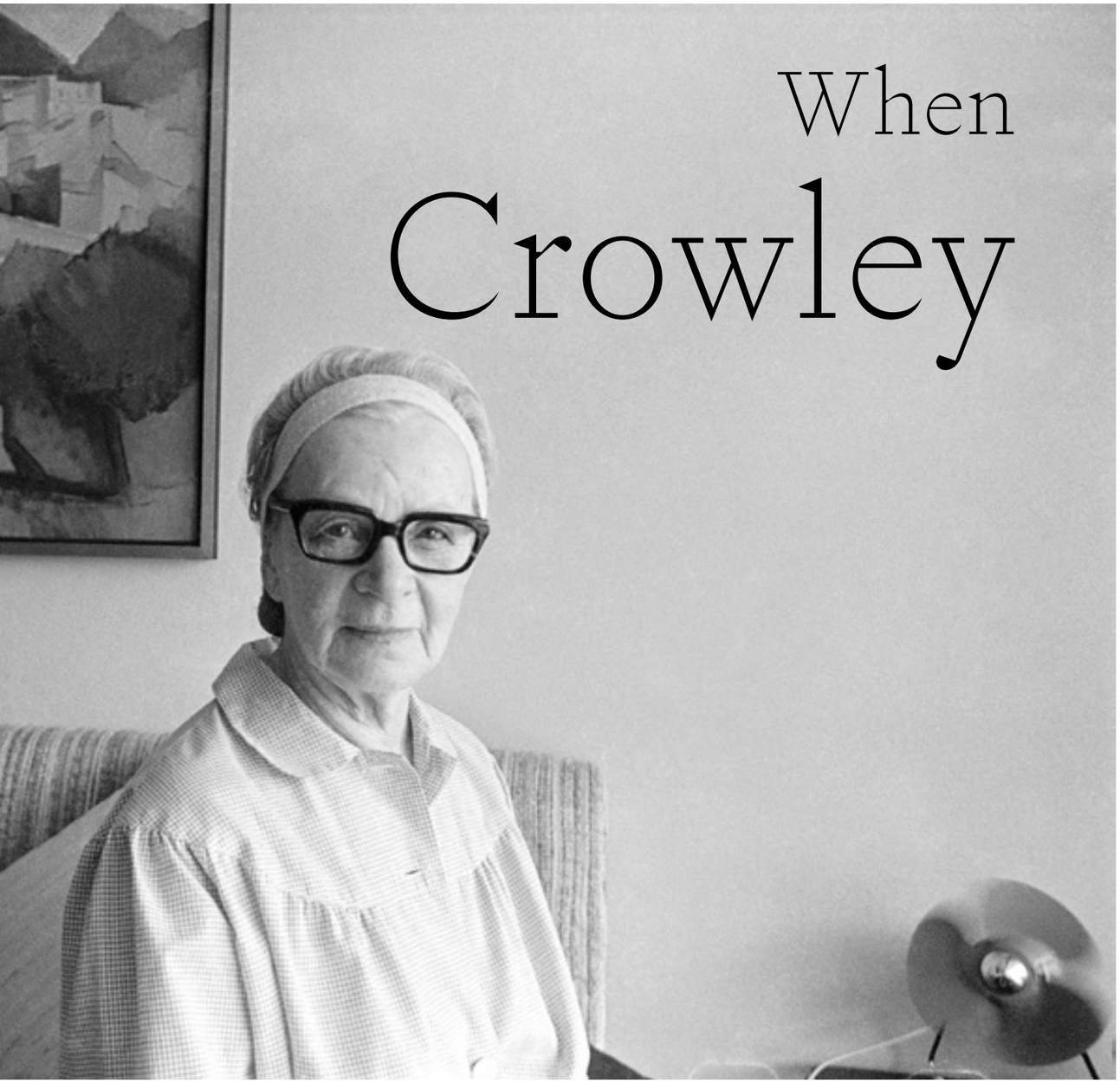
Cora Diviny is Melbourne Art Book Fair Co-Curator.

Since 2015, the NGV has curated and presented the annual Melbourne Art Book Fair to recognise and celebrate the city's vibrant art publishing scene as well as publishers from across the nation and the globe. The fair is now a highly anticipated recurring annual event focused on art book publishing, joining those in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Singapore, Berlin, Frankfurt, Tokyo and more.

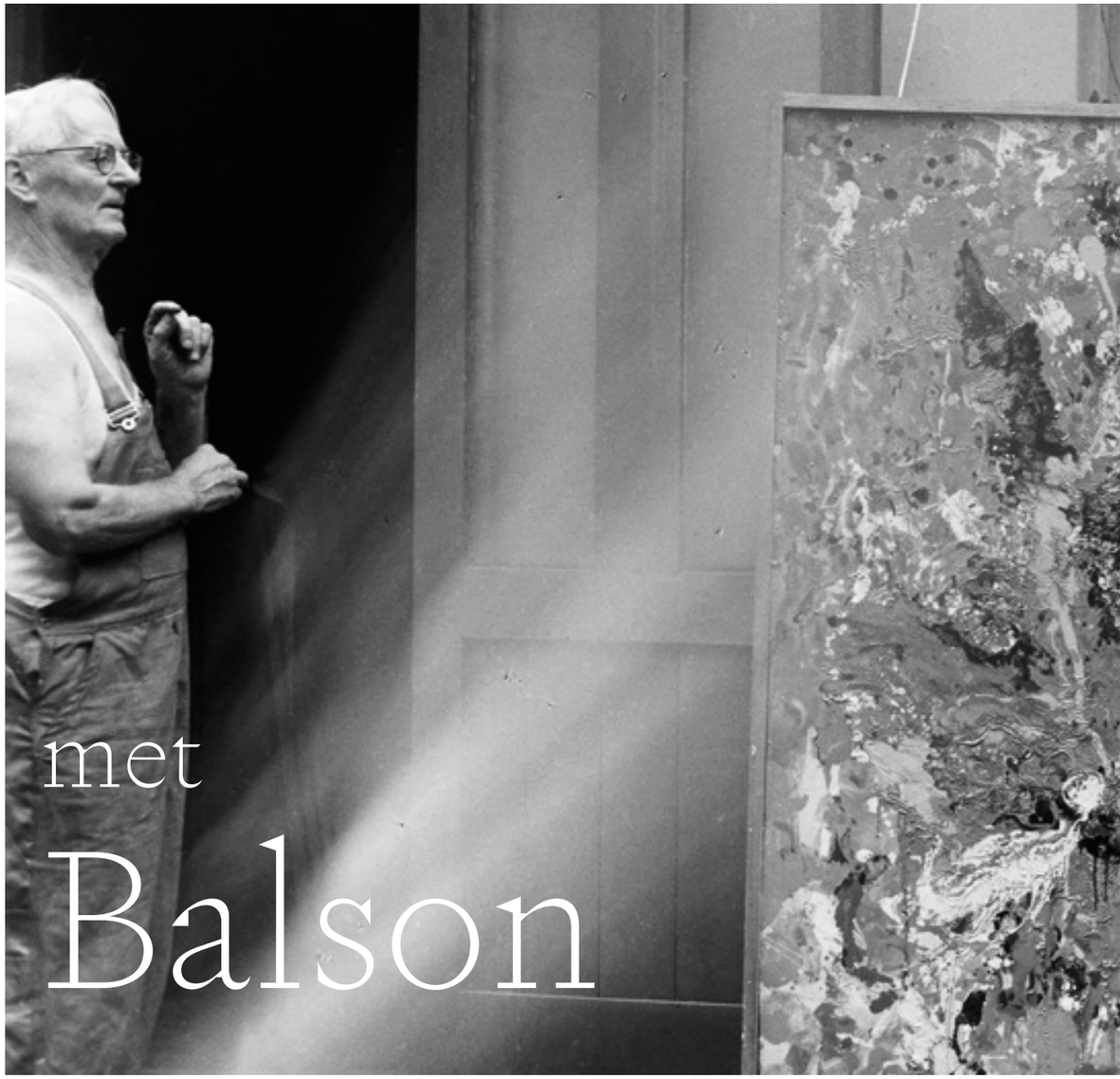
For the full Melbourne Art Book Fair 2024 program, scan the code.



Curator, art historian and founder of *The Great Women Artists* podcast series Katy Hessel. Photo courtesy of Katy Hessel.



When Crowley met Balson



Despite the romantic image of the 'lone genius', few artists work without the support of some form of community. For Grace Crowley and Ralph Balson, collaboration and a common vision were integral to their respective artistic approaches from the 1930s. On occasion of the opening of a dedicated exhibition to the artists at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, *NGV Magazine* dives into the relationship between two Australian powerhouses whose shared stylistic and technical language have shaped the art world for generations to come.

Words by **Beckett Rozentals**

(p. 56) **Robert Walker** *Grace Crowley* 1970, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Robert Walker archive, donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Louise Walker 2008 National Art Archive, Art Gallery of New South Wales © Robert Walker/Copyright Agency, 2024

(above) **Peter Balson** *Ralph Balson in his studio with grandson Michael Balson*, National Art Archive, Art Gallery of New South Wales © Ralph Balson Estate

We find the path of an abstract painter an exceedingly difficult one here in Australia. In fact, Ralph Balson and I are the only two painters I am aware of who think seriously about abstract painting at all.

Grace Crowley to Albert Gleizes, 30 June 1947

Celebrated artists Grace Crowley and Ralph Balson played pivotal roles in the evolution of abstract art in Australia. Crowley was born in Barraba, New South Wales, in 1890, and commenced full-time studies at Julian Ashton's Sydney Art School in 1915 before being appointed head teacher in 1918. In 1926, Crowley and Anne Dangar, who had met at art school, travelled to France to further their academic pursuits. In Paris, Crowley studied under André Lhote and Albert Gleizes, pioneering artists of the Cubist movement.

Balson was born in Dorset, England, in 1890, and was apprenticed to a plumber and house painter at thirteen before moving to Australia ten years later. Primarily a self-taught artist, Balson enrolled in night classes at the Sydney Art School in the early 1920s, where Crowley was one of his teachers. The duo were reacquainted following her return to Australia in 1930, where Crowley became a central figure in the distribution of modernist ideas.

While teaching at the Sydney Art School, Crowley adopted a conservative approach to her own artistic endeavours. It was not until she travelled overseas with Dangar, who was keen to study developments in contemporary art in Europe, that Crowley was seduced by modernism.

In 1927, Crowley commenced studies under Lhote at his academy in Montparnasse. Crowley thrived under Lhote's tutelage, and it was here she first learnt about dynamic symmetry and the *Section d'or*, or 'golden section'. In 1928, with Dangar and fellow Australian artist Dorrit Black, Crowley attended Lhote's summer school held in the medieval village of Mirmande in the south of France. Lhote recorded each student's accommodation, noting that Crowley, Black and Dangar shared a room at the local butcher, the Urbillac premises.

The following year, Crowley was included in the French Salon des Indépendents, which led to the offer of exhibition at the prestigious Bernheim-Jeune Gallery, Paris. However, Crowley's family were appealing her to return to Australia to assist in the care of her ailing mother. Prior to her departure, Crowley participated in a series of classes with Gleizes. Although their time together was brief, Gleizes' teaching greatly impacted Crowley's practice, and would later feed into her move into non-representational art.

Crowley farewelled Europe in December 1929, and returning to country New South Wales was a shock after her four-year sojourn. In 1932, she took up a teaching position at Dorrit Black's Modern Art Centre. There, Crowley was reacquainted with Balson, and Rah (Fiz) Fizelle, whom she had met up with overseas.

Crowley and Fiz opened the Crowley-Fizelle School in 1932, and the school emerged as a leading centre for modernism in Australia. The school attracted artists who were increasingly interested in abstraction – including Balson and Frank and Margel Hinder – and was a place where Crowley was able to teach the abstract principles she had been introduced to while abroad. Following the closure of the school in 1937, Crowley and Balson began working together at Crowley's studio apartment, and soon after were painting exclusively together.

Exhibition 1, the inaugural display of semi-abstract painting and sculpture in Australia, opened at the David Jones Gallery in Sydney in 1939. Featuring numerous members of the Crowley-Fizelle circle, it opened just two weeks before the declaration of World War II. During this intensely experimental phase, Crowley and Balson became closer in painting style and direction. Despite a prevailing mood of uncertainty and anxiety, they continued pushing the direction of their works further still, making the radical leap into pure abstraction.

I look forward all the week to this one morning I am free to paint. I have trained myself to visualise and record what I see quickly, for no sooner has the moment arrived than it is gone.

Ralph Balson to Grace Crowley, quoted by Crowley in 1966

Balson was an intellectual artist who created works inspired by his knowledge of contemporary scientific and philosophical principles. While Balson did not commence painting until he was in his thirties, it was to become the major focus of his life, dedicating himself to his artistic practice outside of his work week.

In 1941, Balson held a solo exhibition at Anthony Hordern's Fine Art Gallery in Sydney, the first exhibition of purely abstract painting in the country. The exhibition comprised a series of sophisticated paintings featuring flattened and geometric motifs and were referred to as his *Constructive paintings*.

Although Balson's solo exhibition was relatively overlooked at the time, it is now recognised as a watershed moment in Australian art history. Intriguingly, Balson's works from this period were signed by Crowley, with his name inscribed in her distinctive geometric handwriting, reflecting the intimacy of their painting partnership.

'While the exact nature of their relationship remains an enigma, Crowley and Balson's dynamic exchange extended and challenged both artists, and together they formed one of the most important artistic partnerships in Australian art history.'

Beckett Rozentals



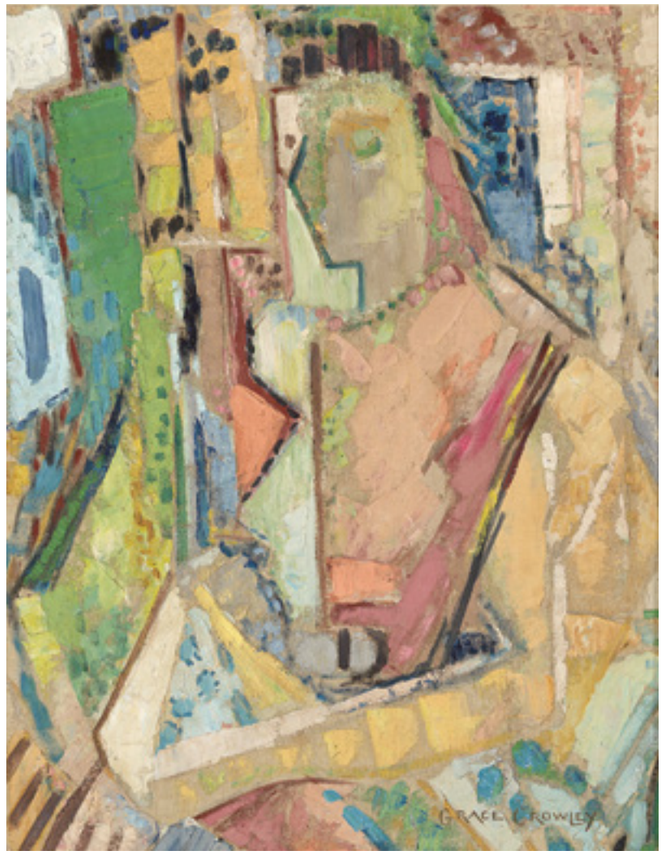
Grace Crowley *Girl with goats* 1928, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Presented by the National Gallery Society of Victoria, 1967 © National Gallery of Victoria
This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of The Vizard Foundation

Crowley and Balson's move into pure abstraction saw both artists experimenting with coloured paper as a form of inspiration for their compositions. While Crowley's semi-abstract works of the 1930s were meticulously planned, and based on sketches, her works from the 1940s saw the introduction of a more experimental approach to her arrangements.

Along with paper, Crowley also worked with ribbon or cord, and she used these physical elements as a working board for her final paintings. *Abstract painting*, 1947, exemplifies the balanced yet dynamic compositions Crowley was producing at this time. The geometric shapes and ribboned lines create a sense of rhythm, drawing the viewer's eye across the painting.

As Balson's *Constructive paintings* evolved, their compositions continued to be based on structured relationships of form and colour. However, following his solo exhibition, Balson introduced into his works the sense that the shapes were diaphanous, or filtering light, as show in *Constructive Elements*, 1944. From around 1946, Balson no longer included circular or oblique forms. Instead, his works of this period featured a reduction of forms towards right-angled geometry, reminiscent of the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian's abstract works.

The Australian art world at this time was relatively hostile towards abstraction, and Crowley and Balson's work received a lukewarm reception. While they all but disconnected from the local art scene, their artistic partnership was to prove to be one of the most important in the history of Australian art.



Grace Crowley *Portrait* 1939, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Bequest of the artist, 1981 © Grace Crowley Estate. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of The Vizard Foundation

Crowley purchased 'High Hill', a property in Mittagong, New South Wales, in 1954, and a studio was set up for Balson. Crowley painted very little from this point. Conversely, this was to be a prolific period for Balson, who retired the following year and was able to fully dedicate himself to his art. Balson's paintings began to embrace a more expressionist, painterly style of abstraction. Referred to as his *Non-objective paintings*, they featured elegant shifting areas of dappled colour. As the series progressed, the application of paint became looser, with more visible brushstrokes.

Between 1960 and 1961, Balson and Crowley travelled extensively overseas – Balson's first international travel since his move to Australia. Their return saw another shift in Balson's work, the beginning of his *Matter paintings*. These paintings showed the influence of his firsthand experience with international abstraction, such as the work by American abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock, and Informalist European artists, in particular Antoni Tàpies and Alberto Burri. Working with large pieces of hardboard, Balson employed a semiautomatic pouring technique, letting the paint glide across the picture plane.

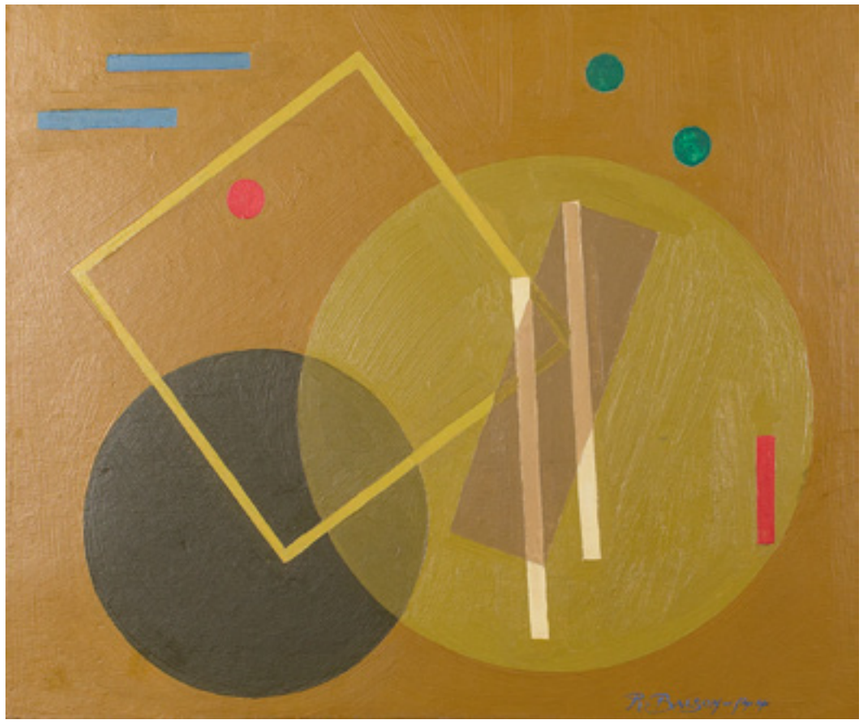
While planning a second trip overseas, Balson passed away in 1964. Following his death, Crowley promoted Balson's legacy and oversaw the acquisition of his work by major institutions and regional galleries. Despite Crowley's significant role in their artistic partnership, over the years she greatly underplayed her own contribution. The extent of her involvement was further obscured by large gaps in her oeuvre, and it is well documented that Crowley destroyed or discarded many of her own paintings.

In 1966, the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), Sydney, mounted *Balson Crowley Fizelle Hinder*. This recognition from a major institution put Crowley's work in the public eye, and she was further acknowledged with retrospectives by the AGNSW in 1975 and the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, in 2007. Curated by Elena Taylor, the 2007 retrospective solidified Crowley and Balson's transition into complete abstraction as a parallel move – a process of mutual collaboration. Crowley passed away in 1979. A Balson retrospective was held at Heide Museum of Modern Art in 1984.

While the exact nature of their relationship remains an enigma, Crowley and Balson's dynamic exchange extended and challenged both artists, and together they formed one of the most important artistic partnerships in Australian art history.



Grace Crowley *Abstract painting* 1947, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. Purchased 1959 © Grace Crowley Estate



Ralph Balson *Constructive elements* 1944, Penrith Regional Art Gallery, Penrith. Home of the Lewers Bequest Collection, 1979 © Ralph Balson Estate



Grace Crowley *Painting* 1950, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased, 1967 © National Gallery of Victoria
This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of The Vizard Foundation

Grace Crowley first encountered dynamic symmetry and the *Section d'or*, or 'golden section', while studying at André Lhote's Académie Lhote in Paris in the late 1920s. *Portrait*, 1950, is Crowley's most formal abstract work and has been arranged following the proportions of the golden section.

Dynamic symmetry refers to the use of geometric principles – basic geometric shapes such as rectangles, angles and triangles – to create balanced and harmonious compositions through mathematical relationships and proportions.

The golden section, also known as the golden ratio or mean, is a component of dynamic symmetry. Admired for its aesthetic harmony, the ratio is found in the natural world and has been applied in various fields including art and architecture.

The composition of *Portrait*, 1950, is harmonious. The bold red line sits at the intersection of the top and left vertical thirds of the painting, while the height of the white triangle is exactly three red bars in length.

If the two sides of the white triangle extended all the way to the top of the canvas and you divide the length between the two edges of white triangle with the distance between the top left corner of the canvas and the first edge of the protracted white triangle, the result is 1.618, the golden ratio.

The blue circle in the upper right sits in the distance of its radius from the painting edge, and the width of the painting is exactly eight blue circles. This beautifully composed painting is highly planned and structured, a skilful example of the implementation of dynamic symmetry within an abstract painting.

Painting no. 14, 1941, was included in Ralph Balson's groundbreaking solo exhibition held at Anthony Hordern's Fine Art Gallery in Sydney in the same year. It was the first exhibition of non-objective painting ever held in Australia. Non-objective art defines a type of abstract art that is usually, but not always, geometric and aims to convey a sense of simplicity and purity. The work on display in Balson's exhibition featured complex compositions with dynamic interplays of form and colour. Described as his *Constructive paintings*, these works were to form part of a major series that Balson continued to produce until the mid-1950s.

While Constructivism began as a modern art movement in Soviet Russia in the wake of the 1917 Revolution, it quickly moved through Europe and across the globe. Informed to a significant degree by the Cubist movement, Constructivism emphasised abstraction, geometric shapes and industrial materials, aiming to embody modern principles and social value.

The influential text on International Constructivism, *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, edited by the artists Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo and the architect Leslie Martin in London, was published in 1937. It was around this time that Australian abstract painters, including Balson and Frank Hinder, introduced the use of 'constructive', or variations thereof, in their own titles or to describe their work.

The compositions of Balson's *Constructive paintings* exhibited at Anthony Hordern's were planned out in pencil on the support. Despite their formalist structure, the paint layers were often applied freehand with great confidence and urgency, giving the surfaces a tactile painterly quality.

Featuring repeating geometric motifs of pure colour that sit across modulating forms, *Painting no. 14* is typical of Balson's works from the period. The elongated grey rectangles are punctuated by coloured circles, their rhythm guiding the eye across the picture plane and through the dynamic symphony of shapes.

Beckett Rozentals is NGV Curator, Australian Art.

This exhibition is supported by Major Partner Macquarie, and Creative Victoria.

See these works as part of *Grace Crowley & Ralph Balson* on display at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia from 23 May. For more information about this free exhibition, scan the code.



Ralph Balson *Painting no. 14* 1941, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Loti & Victor Smorgon Fund, 2012 © Ralph Balson Estate
This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of The Vizard Foundation

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Bessie Gibson 1868 – 1961 *La Robe Rouge* 1929 oil on canvas 100 x 81 cm Exhibited at the Paris Salon 1929

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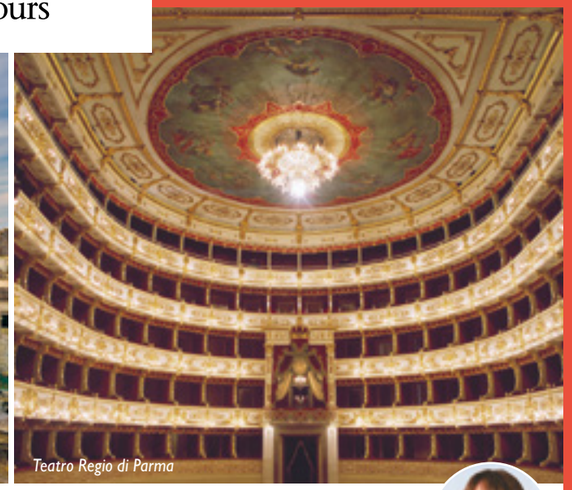

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The *Divine Sarah* and the *artist Louise*



Alfred Stevens *Fédora (Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt)* 1882 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2024

Sarah Bernhardt was more than just a famous actress. She was a businesswoman, a fashion icon, a sculptor, a theatre director and an influencer before we even knew the meaning of the word. She also bent gender norms, wearing pants when it was illegal for women to do so and potentially having a love affair with the artist Louise Abbéma, whom she met in 1875 after first catching sight of her in Paris two years earlier. Dr Ted Gott explores this relationship and Abbéma's remarkable career through a selection of works that have recently joined the NGV Collection thanks to the generous support of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family, and the M.G. Chapman Bequest, 2024.

Words by **Dr Ted Gott**

Late in her career, the painter Louise Abbéma recalled how at the age of twenty-one she first met the thirty-one-year-old legendary actress Sarah Bernhardt:

> One day – at the Salon – when I was a very young girl – I saw Sarah Bernhardt standing next to me. She was looking at a painting. I was seduced by her admirable silhouette and was overcome with an immense desire to paint her portrait. I worked hard to earn the necessary permission. At the next year's Salon [1874], I saw Sarah Bernhardt again, who had stopped in front of my first work: the portrait of my mother, which I was exhibiting at the time. I heard her ask, 'Who is this by?'. She was told, 'It's by a young girl. Mlle Louise Abbéma'. 'It's very good,' Sarah replied, 'and if it's a child who did it, it's even better'. The following year I had a model who, by a very happy coincidence, also happened to be modelling for my illustrious admirer. I spoke to her about Sarah, and the model passed on to Sarah the desire I had expressed to meet her. I then went to see Sarah and that's how I came to know her. In 1876, I began to paint her portrait. She was at that time rehearsing *L'Etrangère* [*The Foreigner*, a play by Alexandre Dumas fils] and came regularly to pose at my house. By a charming coincidence, this portrait was exhibited [in the Salon of 1876] in the same spot where my painting that she had been looking at a few years earlier had been placed.[1]

Abbéma's full-length portrait of Bernhardt in elegant street clothes, a work lost today and known only from a preparatory sketch, led to the actress being dubbed by one critic 'the lioness of the Salon' in 1876, and to Abbéma being declared 'a young talent full of energy and verve, who can only grow with further study'. [2] An aspiring painter and sculptress herself, as well as a renowned actress, Bernhardt returned the favour, sculpting a very faithful representation of Abbéma in 1877–78. This statue of Abbéma sits on the mantlepiece in Achille Mélandri's famous photograph of Bernhardt meditating in her coffin in 1879. The two women were to be friends from this moment on.

Born into a wealthy Parisian family, Abbéma studied painting with several noted academic masters: Charles Chaplin, Jean-Jacques Henner and Carolus-Duran. Largely, and unjustly, forgotten today, she was an ever-present figure in the art world of fin-de-siècle France, showing works in dozens of exhibitions throughout her career, and being feted as 'a "Glory". A glory of the studio, a glory of palette and light, a magician of floral painting, a happy, delicate and elegant artist'.[3] In 1906 she became only the fourth woman to be decorated with the Légion d'Honneur, France's highest order of merit.

Protected by wealth and by her increasing artistic celebrity, Abbéma led an open life as a lesbian, cropping her hair short and dressing habitually in men's waistcoats, jackets, shirts and ties. Although she was believed to have had a number of male amorous conquests, Bernhardt was also rumoured to have been involved romantically with Abbéma.[4] Whatever the truth of this, she was to be intimately associated with Abbéma for the rest of her life, the artist becoming virtually her official portraitist and diarising her theatrical life through costume and character sketches. The 'bow-tied and waistcoated' Abbéma has been described as 'the masculine foil to Bernhardt's carefully orchestrated femininity'.[5] She was known as 'l'intime de Sarah Bernhardt' in French art circles.[6]

In 1875, around the time the two met, Abbéma painted an exquisite portrait of Renée Delmas de Pont-Jest, which has been gifted to the NGV by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program. Born in 1858, and thus around seventeen when depicted in the work, Delmas is shown seated at a desk in a shimmering satin gown, holding a sheet of black-bordered mourning stationery. Delmas was the daughter of the celebrated former naval officer, writer and journalist Louis-René Delmas de Pont-Jest. Renée's son, in later years, described how his grandfather used to give masked balls four times a season in his house on the rue Condorcet. Everybody who was anybody in Paris crowded to them. In the course of the evening Christine Nilsson would sing, Sarah Bernhardt would enchant, [Gaston] Serpette would be at the piano, [Jean] Mounet-Sully would read verse, and Coquelin Cadet the younger would recite his first monologues.[7]



Louise Abbéma *Renée Delmas de Pont-Jest* 1875 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2022



Sarah Bernhardt French (1844–1923) *Embracing hands of Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Abbéma* c.1908.
Purchased with funds donated by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family, and the M.G. Chapman Bequest, 2024

On a fateful day in February 1881, Mounet-Sully invited a fellow actor, the handsome young Lucien Guitry, to perform at one of these grand soirées and, when Guitry laid eyes on Renée, what ensued was 'un double coup de foudre' (double love at first sight).[8] Guitry also dazzled Renée's parents with his charms and was soon a regular invitee to the Pont-Jest home.

Guitry was still finishing his military service, so could only see Renée on periods of furlough leave. When this was refused on one occasion, he went AWOL from the army barracks to see his beloved. The punishment for this was a prison sentence; however, all sorts of favours were called in on his behalf: 'René de Pont-Jest intervened in person… Louise Abbéma knew Guitry's commanding officer. Sarah Bernhardt knew the minister of war. The thing was arranged'.[9] So both Bernhardt and Abbéma, along with Renee's father, were involved in exonerating Guitry from serious prosecution for his flouting of military rules. For Delmas de Pont-Jest this was to prove a mistake, as the actor now began to seriously court his daughter.

Between January and April 1882, Guitry asked Delmas de Pont-Jest three times for Renée's hand in marriage but was three times refused, Delmas de Pont-Jest insisting that his daughter was never marrying an actor, of all things. In June 1882 Guitry and Bernhardt were performing together on the stage in London when Renée, unable to be parted from her new beau, fled the family home one night and crossed the Channel. On 10 June she married Guitry without her parents' consent, in the church of Saint Martin's in the Fields near Trafalgar Square. Bernhardt was their marriage witness. Back in Paris, Delmas de Pont-Jest was left to splutter: 'My daughter with that dandy! They will never set foot in this house again!'[10] He must have been horrified when, a few years later, Renée abandoned a marriage poisoned by her husband's constant affairs with other women, divorced Guitry and became an actress herself, taking as a stage name a fusion of her birth and marriage surnames: Mme de Pontry.

Meanwhile, in December 1882, back in Paris, Bernhardt appeared in a new play by Victorien Sardou, starring as the Russian Princess Fédora Romazoff, and sporting the soft felt man's hat that was to be known thereafter as the fedora. A play about murder, betrayal and tragedy, Sardou's *Fédora* was a smash hit in Paris in the winter of 1882–83. Bernhardt had for some time been taking painting lessons with Alfred Stevens, an artist originally from Belgium, who achieved acclaim in Paris for his elegant portraits. To commemorate the actress's new role, Stevens portrayed Bernhardt swathed in expensive fabrics and jewellery, and in character as the complex Fédora. This painting was reproduced in an article devoted to the play, which featured on the front page of *Le Gaulois, Supplément littéraire* on 11 December 1882, where Bernhardt described the Princess Fédora as 'a fallen angel with white wings'.[11] *Fédora* (*Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt*), 1882, by Alfred Stevens, has been generously gifted to the NGV by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family.

The three friends, Abbéma, Bernhardt and Delmas de Pont-Jest(later Mme de Pontry) were bound together by art and theatre for the rest of their lives. Renée and Lucien's son, Sacha Guitry, recalled how he was regularly taken by his mother to visit Bernhardt throughout the 1890s; the actress was to be a witness at his second marriage to the singer Yvonne Printemps in 1919.

Abbéma was ever-present in Bernhardt's daily life and at her death in 1923. Some fifteen years earlier, around 1908, Bernhardt and Abbéma had their hands, clasped together in friendship, copied in plaster and then cast as a bronze sculpture commemorating their many decades together. As Abbéma recalled in 1921:

> Just think, it has been more than forty years since the closest and most unfailing friendship united us. And for forty years, there has been not the slightest disagreement, not the slightest veil between the two of us.[12]

Embracing hands of Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Abbéma seems to have been cast by the French foundry Valsuani in an edition of just two bronzes, one for each of the friends, which both women have signed. Abbéma's copy was last known to be in a Paris collection in 1999, from where it was stolen, and its whereabouts remain unknown. Bernhardt's copy of this moving and powerful artistic statement of lifelong friendship has just been acquired for the NGV with funds donated by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family, and the M.G. Chapman Bequest, 2024. The Gallery is immensely fortunate to be able to tell the story of the network of friendship and support that united these three remarkable women, through three equally extraordinary and captivating artworks.

Dr Ted Gott is NGV Senior Curator, International Art. See these works on Level 2, NGV International from 1 June.

The NGV warmly thanks Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family and the M.G. Chapman Bequest for their generous support of these works.

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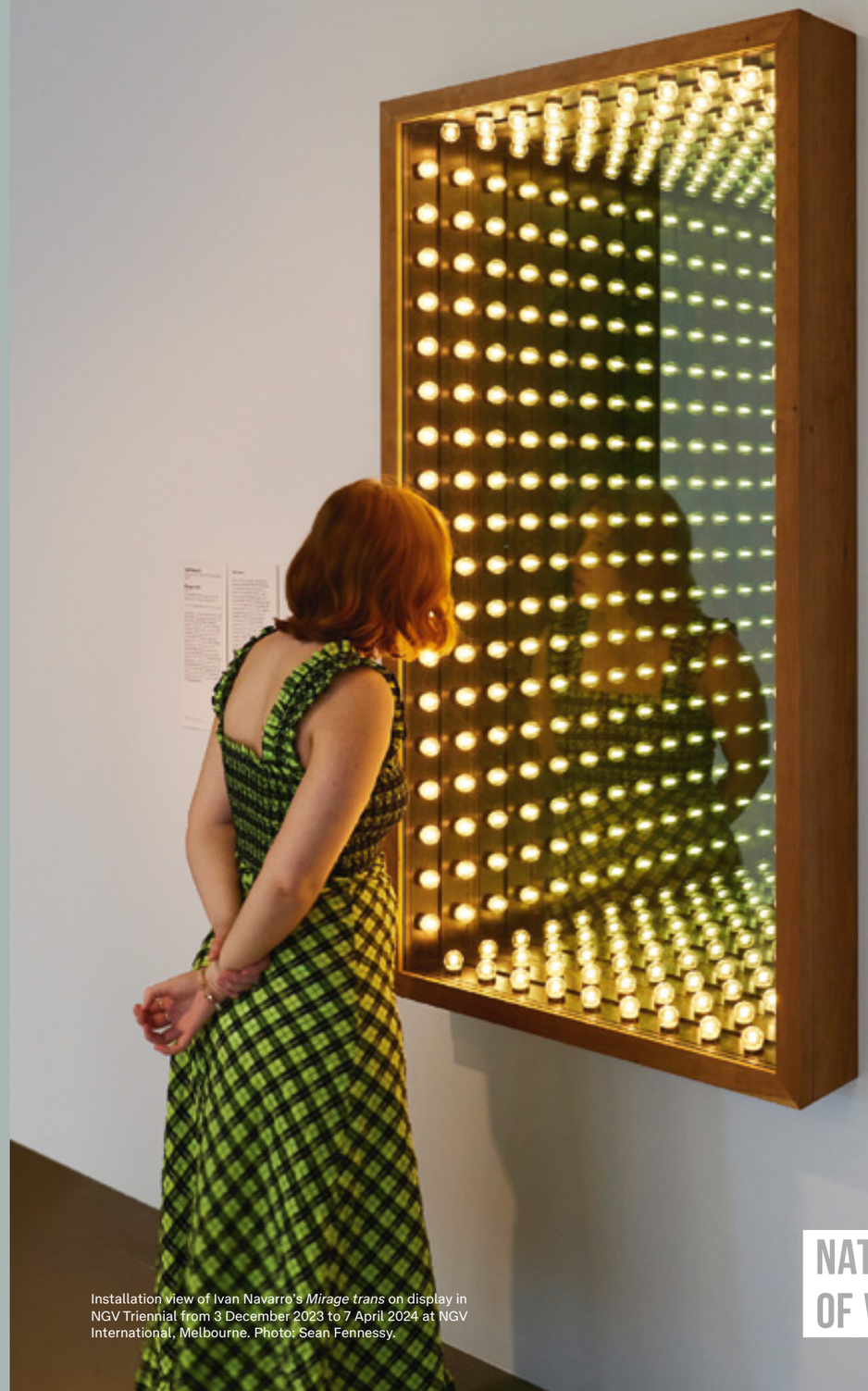

Installation view of Ivan Navarro's *Mirage trans* on display in NGV Triennial from 3 December 2023 to 7 April 2024 at NGV International, Melbourne. Photo: Sean Fennessy.

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THE MARVELLOUS MS. MILLER



Man Ray, *'Untitled (Portrait of Lee Miller)'* c.1929, from *'Photographs by Man Ray Paris 1920–1934',* Purchased, 1985

From model to muse, photographer to war correspondent, Lee Miller captured the world and her subjects with a Surrealist wit and feminist conviction. In 1931, she immortalised fellow American visual artist and then lover, Man Ray, in this work, which joins the NGV Collection through the generous support of Joy Anderson.

Words by **Susan van Wyk**



Lee Miller *Portrait of Man Ray* 1931. Purchased with funds donated by Joy Anderson, 2024
© Lee Miller Archives, England 2023.

American Lee Miller led a remarkable life. Born in New York in 1907, she was one of those glittering individuals who had an uncanny knack for being in the right place at the right time. After visiting Paris in 1925, Miller returned to New York in 1926 and enrolled to study at the Art Students League. She also began working as a fashion model, often appearing in American issues of *Vogue*.

By all accounts an ambitious and restless individual, Miller returned to Paris in 1929, determined to make her way in the city that was the centre of art and culture in Europe at that time. She did not arrive empty-handed; having been provided with a letter of introduction from renowned photographer Edward Steichen, she sought out the celebrated avant-garde artist and photographer Man Ray soon after she reached Paris.

Their first encounter reveals both the immediate impact he had on her, and Miller's tenacious approach to getting what she wanted. Describing the moment, she wrote,

> 'He looked like a bull, with an extraordinary torso and very dark eyebrows and dark hair. I told him boldly that I was his new student. He said he didn't take students, and anyway he was leaving for Paris for his holiday. I said, I know, I'm going with you – and I did'.[1]

Miller became Man Ray's photographic assistant, one of his favourite models and, ultimately, his lover. He taught her his meticulous darkroom technique, encouraged her to work on fashion and portrait photography and introduced her to the heady world of contemporary art and artists in 1920s Paris. But Miller did not just exist as an adjunct to her more celebrated partner; she developed her own photographic practice at this time, producing portraits distinguished by their intensity and creative images, which were influenced by the avant-garde and Surrealist aesthetics in which she was immersed.

Miller often used her apartment at 12 Rue Victor-Considérant to photograph her portrait commissions. This 1931 photograph of Man Ray, made two years after he and Miller first met and the year before they separated as lovers and colleagues, was created in this familiar domestic space. In this tightly cropped image, Man Ray is shown up close, his gaze directed not at the camera but looking right, fixed on something or someone out of the viewer's line of sight. He appears intense and focused, which may well be why this was the artist portrait selected for an article on Man Ray and his revolutionary approach to photography that was published in *Time* magazine on 18 April 1932.

Susan van Wyk is NGV Senior Curator, Photography.

Lee Miller's *Man Ray*, 1931, was purchased with funds generously donated by Joy Anderson.

New to the First Nations Collection

Words by **Michael Gentle**





Hayley Millar Baker *Entr'acte*

Hayley Millar Baker is a Gunditjmara and Djabwurrung artist living in Naarm, whose work crosses photography and film. Millar Baker's portraiture and unconventional character studies highlight the importance of memory in contextualising experiences. Running at just over 11 minutes, *Entr'acte* 2023 is a silent monologue, a theatrical examination of grief, trauma and resilience, manifested through the gestural articulations of Wardandi, Kaniyang and Badimaya curator Clothilde Bullen. The short film's title refers to the French term for an interval or intermission between two acts in a performance. In the work, dramatic tension creates an atmosphere of grief and tenderness, and underlies the emotions and narratives that Millar Baker highlights to prioritise and celebrate First Nations women. This work, generously donated by Craig Semple, is the first of Millar Baker's to enter the NGV Collection.

Entr'acte, 2023, was purchased with funds generously donated by Craig Semple.

Lola Greeno *Ceremonial length shell necklace* (*lutruwita*)

Trawlwoolway artist Lola Greeno crafts maireener shell necklaces, a process adopted from her mother and grandmother. This practice is one of the oldest continuing customs in lutruwita (Tasmania); a meticulous, skilful and commanding mode of craft that illustrates First Peoples' enduring relationship with Country. A recent necklace of Greeno's, *Ceremonial length shell necklace* (*lutruwita*), 2022, joins the NGV Collection with the generous support of Jahn Buhrman. The rare and consistently large size of each shell in the necklace illustrates the skill and knowledge Greeno embodies while collecting her materials. Found on a species of native seagrass, most abundantly found on lutruwita's north-east coast and the Furneaux Group of Islands, the green maireener shell glimmers with a pearl-like iridescence. Sourcing the materials is dependent on knowledge of seasons and place. In preparing the shells to eventually thread them onto cotton, Greeno works with immense articulation; she cleanses the shells in an acid wash to reveal their luminosity, pierces them delicately and ensures she only gathers what is required for each necklace. Her commitment to this practice prioritises the cultural traditions of Tasmanian First Peoples, sustaining knowledge to be passed on over time.

Lola Greeno's *Ceremonial length shell necklace* (*lutruwita*) was purchased with funds generously donated by Jahn Buhrman, 2023.

Michael Gentle is NGV Curator, First Nations.

(left) **Hayley Millar Baker** *Entr'acte* 2023. Purchased with funds donated by Craig Semple, 2024.

(right) **Lola Greeno** *Ceremonial length shell necklace* (*lutruwita*) 2022 (detail), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased with funds donated by Jahn Buhrman, 2023 © Courtesy of the artist

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Imane Ayissi from the *Mbeuk Idourrou* collection, autumn–winter 2019, Paris, France. Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo © Fabrice Malard, courtesy of Imane Ayissi

Top Arts 2024

Celebrating its thirtieth anniversary in 2024, Top Arts has been a beacon for emerging young artists across Victoria, offering a space to unveil creativity, skill and innovation. Here, we meet some of this year's young finalists.

Interview by **Amelia Edwards**





Harrison Lucas
Dreaded imaginary expectations 2023
Bentleigh Secondary College, Bentleigh East, Boonwurrung Country



Harrison Lucas depicts the impending overwhelming sense of fear and anxiety through one's imagined and dreaded expectations.

AMELIA EDWARDS **Tell us about *Dreaded imaginary expectations*.**

HARRISON LUCAS *Dreaded imaginary expectations* uses a large quantity of characters and copious lines to create a visually overwhelming experience for the viewer, as a representation of anxiety and pressure. The surrounding characters reside outside of the centre figure's perspective, questioning whether these characters are real or a product of their dreaded imaginary expectations.

AE **What does it mean to have your work featured in Top Arts?**

HL I am very proud. I have seen the quality of work and artistic talent represented within past exhibitions, and it fills me with pride to have my work presented in the same exhibition as these talented artists.

AE **What was the most challenging or surprising part of your creative process?**

HL Producing and visualising the final product. During the creation of my characters, it became surprisingly difficult to consistently create fresh ideas. The production of my work wasn't just about finding enough time to make it but, rather, deciding on specific times when I could attack the canvas with fresh ideas to fill out the surrounding area.

Kate Jing
Portraits of my siblings 2023
Alkira Secondary College, Cranbourne North, Boonwurrung Country



Kate Jing encapsulates her siblings' essence through oil paintings to show the beauty of childhood joy and the timeless value of family.

AE **Can you tell us about *Portraits of my siblings*?**

KATE JING *Portraits of my siblings* consists of two oil-painting portraits of my younger sister and brother. I created them after some recent family events that allowed me to observe the importance of familial relationships, especially between siblings. Despite being separated through canvas, my sister and brother are connected through a shared curiosity and joy of childhood, as well as through the warm background of our aged family wall, which holds the composition, and my siblings, together.

AE **What does it mean to have your work featured in Top Arts?**

KJ I'm so grateful. My family comes from a very small, very poor town in China's countryside where it would have never occurred to anyone that something like this could happen. I think the universe must be watching over me. My work being selected brings me a lot more confidence to pursue a career in art. Being featured also makes me proud to represent Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs, and I hope to bring inspiration to students in my area.

AE **Was it difficult to convince your siblings to join in with the process?**

KJ No, it was the opposite. I'm frequently doing impromptu photoshoots with my siblings, and they enjoy it. My sister loves dressing up for photos and my brother is the dramatic type who is always posing and acting. The process was very natural, so they were happy to participate.

(p. 74) **Maya Donaldson** *Hugo, Hugo 2.0* 2023, Wurun Senior Campus, North Fitzroy, Wurundjeri Country © Maya Donaldson

Heidi Cahir
After the fact 2023
Northern Bay College, Corio,
Wathaurong Country



Heidi Cahir explores her potential for nuance in portrait painting. After graduating from Northern Bay College in Corio in 2023, Cahir hopes to continue delving into ideas of identity and belonging in her art practice.

AE **Tell us about *After the fact*.**
HEIDI CAHIR *After the fact* is a portrait of my mum and a love letter to single parenthood. Inspired by my mother's journey of self-love and independence after separating from her husband of twenty years following his infidelity, this work reflects not only her growth as an individual, but the fortitude of all single mothers who face an oftentimes unsupportive society.

AE **What does it mean to have your work featured in Top Arts?**
HC Being featured is the fulfilment of a lifelong dream. Growing up I was surrounded by art, in awe of the works and dresses created by my uncle Nay, or the drawings and knitted things from my nan. These early inspirations made it my favourite hobby. As I grew older, I honed my skills, studying everything there was to learn. After years of practice, having my art recognised by the NGV feels like the ultimate validation.

AE **What is the most rewarding part of seeing your work on a gallery wall?**
HC Art is the human way of expressing our most raw perspectives and feelings. To have that viewed by others is – in my opinion – one of the deepest ways we can connect as individuals. To have my work on a gallery wall is to have my story shared and find solidarity with the anonymous masses. It is deeply rewarding to have my messages heard.

Maya Donaldson
Hugo, Hugo 2.0 and
Tummy Beast and the Rotten Apple 2023
Wurun Senior Campus, Fitzroy North,
Wurundjeri Country



After graduating from Wurun Senior Campus in 2023, Maya Donaldson aims to further explore the richness of the extravagant personalities embedded in her favourite foods.

AE **Tell us about *Hugo, Hugo 2.0* and *Tummy beast and the rotten apple*.**
MAYA DONALDSON: *Tummy beast and the rotten apple* consists of one large humanoid doll and a set of fruit-shaped sculptures. It represents my complex relationship with food and how it gives me comfort, shown through the inviting colours and squishy forms, but also discomfort, represented through ugly faces and signs of mould. Both *Hugos* were preparatory pieces.

AE **What does it mean to have your work featured in Top Arts?**
MD It means so much! My dream career is to be a full-time artist, which could involve exhibiting. This experience – preparing my works, folios, forms, doing interviews – has been an awesome learning experience. It has also given me confidence, as it is a huge achievement to have work in such a renowned gallery.

AE **How long did each sculpture take to make?**
MD I started at the end of June 2023 and handed in the final at the end of August, so around two months. During that time, I focused on nothing else; I worked every day before, during, after school and on the weekends. I was even taking work into my non-art classes!

Amelia Edwards is NGV Program Assistant, Top Arts 2024.

See these works as part of Top Arts 2024 at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia until 14 July. For more information about this free exhibition, scan the code.

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A *stitch* in time

For more than five decades, Albert Lesage was a couture embroiderer for some of the world's leading haute couture houses, including French fashion house Madeleine Vionnet. The NGV's Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection holds twenty-two embroidery samples that capture the relationship between Lesage and Vionnet from 1922 to 1938, on display at NGV International in June.

Words by **Dr Maria Quirk**

'There is no couture without embroidery and no embroidery without Lesage.'
Karl Lagerfeld

In 1924 Albert Lesage purchased the celebrated Parisian embroidery house Michonet. Founded in Paris in 1858, Michonet was patronised by the court of Napoleon III and leading fashion designers Charles Frederick Worth, the Callot sisters of Callot Soeurs, and Jacques Douce. By the time Lesage purchased Michonet in the early 1920s, the firm was producing work for a new generation of couturiers, including Jeanne Paquin and Madeleine Vionnet.

Vionnet's pioneering innovations in design and construction introduced a language of modernity to fashion in the early decades of the twentieth century. With her technical ingenuity, Vionnet created fluid streamlined dresses that offered femininity and elegance without the need for complex underpinnings or fastenings. She prioritised movement and comfort in her designs, favouring materials which, when cut on the bias, delivered a greater elasticity and a close fit.

The NGV's Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection holds a unique record of the relationship between Lesage and Vionnet: twenty-two embroidery samples ranging in date from 1922 to 1938. The samples are a window into the creative, and personal, collaboration between the houses and reveal the technical innovations Lesage developed especially for Vionnet's modern, delicate designs.

Vionnet ran an expansive, five-story atelier and showroom on Avenue Montaigne, Paris. Accommodating more than 1,200 staff by the 1930s, the atelier housed specialist workrooms for different components of dressmaking. While Vionnet was a master of cut and drape, she hired and delegated to young artists and designers to develop surface and embellishment designs for her collections. These artists included Ernesto Michahelles – known as Thayaht – a young futurist who brought a modernist sensibility to Vionnet designs in the late 1910s, and Marie-Louise Favot, a graduate of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs. Known as 'Yo' within the fashion house, Favot became Vionnet's go-to designer of embroidery patterns and was trusted to collaborate with the Michonet and then Lesage ateliers to realise their execution on Vionnet's famously light fabrics. In 1924, Favot married Lesage, cementing the relationship between the two houses.

In 1921, Favot carried out research at the Louvre and its library for a series of classical motifs with which Vionnet was experimenting. The *Pronomos Vase* thus served as inspiration for an embroidery design depicting a rearing horse, incorporated into a frieze-like pattern. Arguably the most celebrated work associated with ancient Greek theatre, the *Pronomos Vase* was made in Athens ca. 400 BCE. It first featured on the *Greek vase dress* in 1921, with horses becoming a recurring motif in Vionnet's embellishments. The NGV holds an embroidery sample of this rearing horse motif realised by Lesage in glass beads on wool. This design was applied to a crepe evening dress listed in the Vionnet archives as model no. 4109, illustrated in a 1925 edition of the fashion magazine *La Gazette Du Bon Ton*.

This sample serves as an example of the division of labour and working methods of Vionnet, Favot and Lesage. Tasked with realising Vionnet's vision for the surface design of her garments, Favot carried out research and sourced reference materials as well as bringing her own artistic sensibility to Vionnet's designs. Along with Thayaht, she was trusted to sketch directly onto Vionnet's *toiles* (test garments made in muslin). Once a design was developed, Favot and Vionnet worked with another trusted expert within the atelier – Mademoiselle Petit – to determine what type of embellishment would best suit the design. If embroidery was chosen, Favot worked with Lesage to develop the embroidery pattern and transfer it onto the chosen textile.

Vionnet's designs and textiles challenged the long-held expertise and techniques of Lesage's atelier. Albert and Marie-Louise's son, François Lesage, who led the company from 1949, recalled, 'The big problem with Vionnet was the bias cut. How could the bias fall freely when the embroidery would inhibit the flow?'

To adapt to the delicate drape of Vionnet garments, the Lesage atelier developed new techniques of traditional vermicelli embroidery using angled stitches that followed the grain of the fabric.

This technique is seen in the 1931 bias cut dress, sparingly decorated with grey and green glass beads, in the NGV Collection. A sample for the same evening dress – *model 4330* – is held in the Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection, showing how the Lesage atelier delicately executed the Art Deco-inspired motif on the lightest of silk chiffon fabrics, and experimented with scale and colour gradation before executing the final garment. Colour gradation and shading were other technical innovations Lesage created for Vionnet at this time.

The samples held in the Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection are testament to the unique artistic and personal collaboration between Vionnet, Lesage and Favot at a time of radical change and innovation in the history of fashion.

Dr Maria Quirk is NGV Curator, Collections and Research.

See Lesage embroidery samples from the NGV Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection on Level 1 Mezzanine gallery, NGV International, from June.
Scan to find out more about the Research Collection.

Maison Lesage, Paris (embroidery house) and **Madeline Vionnet, Paris** (couture house) various embroidery samples from the Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection.

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Nicholas Mangan, *Dowiyogo's Ancient Coral Coffee Table* 2009–10, coral limestone from the island of Nauru, image courtesy the artist, Sutton Gallery, Australia and LABOR, Mexico © the artist, photograph: Nicholas Mangan

2014 marks the 100th anniversary of André Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto* and the official birth of the movement. In this extract from the newly released NGV publication *Observations: Moments in Design History*, Dr Kathryn Johnson explores the origins of Surrealism and its enduring appeal.

Words by **Dr Kathryn Johnson**



Salute to Surrealism

Surrealism is much more than an aesthetic. It's really an attitude, or a set of attitudes. Or, as one leading theorist of Surrealism, Professor Krzysztof Fijalkowski, puts it, it's not so much an art movement as a 'movement of the mind'.

Surrealism's aim in its original form was to liberate the imagination. André Breton, the movement's founder, talks in his *First Surrealist Manifesto* of 1924 of the imagination as an animal pacing its bars in a cage, an animal that needs to be set free. Many of the strategies that led to the creation of visual artworks and works of design were intended, really, to change the mind, and through that, to change the material world. I think it is as an attitude, as a philosophical approach to design and making, that Surrealism's impact is most widely still felt today.

It's important to remember that Breton was a poet, and that the word 'surrealism' was first invented by another poet, Apollinaire. The early Surrealists took as their ideal of beauty – or a way to express that ideal – a line from another poet, the French nineteenth-century poet Comte de Lautréamont. That line has since become famous and, translated into English, it reads, 'As beautiful as the chance encounter on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella'.

The photographer Man Ray was one of many to give these words physical form in a photograph of the same name taken in 1933. This line is so important to the Surrealists because it really captures the principles on which they made art and designed objects: the principles of unexpected juxtaposition, of humour, playfulness and the chance encounters of unexpected objects. It also illustrates the fact that objects were at the heart of Surrealism from the very beginning, even when it was primarily expressed through literature. There was always a fascination with the material world and the impact objects could have on the imagination and, vice versa, the impact the imagination could have on creating new objects.

It sounds rather megalomaniac, perhaps, but Surrealists really wanted to change the world, and change our relationship to the world. Breton, again in the *First Manifesto*, says that he imagines a future fusion of the states of dream and unconscious with the real world, and that these two will come together to create an absolute reality or surreality. I think that Surrealism's emphasis on the fantastical has led to the perception that it is escapist – that it is, somehow, something apart from the real world. But, in fact, that couldn't be further from the truth. What they were trying to get at was that dreams and the unconscious are always part of our experience of reality, and if we acknowledge that and represent it, we will arrive at a more absolute reality: a truer, less alienated version of what we actually experience in the world.

Looking at the design pieces that come out of Surrealism helps to correct that balance and underline the fact that Surrealism is not about escaping reality, it's about appreciating it in new ways. In the 1920s and early thirties, making objects – and assemblages of unexpected objects – became more and more important to Surrealist practice. In Man Ray's *Cadeau* (1972, image in the Vitra Design Museum, Rhein), we see a flatiron with nails glued into the base of it. This isn't the original – the original was created almost in a throwaway moment as a statement and has since been lost. In the early seventies, Man Ray re-created the piece after it had become famous through photographs. Pieces like this prompted the critic Walter Benjamin to note that Surrealism had found a way to subvert the commercial world by stripping objects of their original function and opening them up to new readings and new associations. They had liberated these pieces and, to an extent, liberated us as consumers and users from being constrained by the original manufacturer's intention. This apparently simple object, *Le Cadeau*, is, like many Surrealist works, rich in complex associations, potential readings and ambiguities. Who is this gift for? Is it intended to rip clothes? Is it a weapon? Is it something violent? Is it something more humorous? Is it intended to liberate us from domestic chores? All these interpretations are up for grabs and up for discussion.

Let's move on now to a very famous piece created by one of the most influential women associated with the movement: Meret Oppenheim. *Fur bracelet* was originally designed in 1936 for Elsa Schiaparelli. The story goes that Oppenheim was wearing this fur-covered bracelet when she met Picasso and others in a cafe in Paris. The discussion prompted by this bracelet led them to think of other things that could be covered in fur – for instance, the cup and saucer on the table in front of them. Oppenheim went on to make a fur-covered cup and saucer, which has a few different names – sometimes it's called *Breakfast in fur* or *Luncheon in fur*. These were names given to it by Breton, but Oppenheim herself tended to just refer to it as *Object*, 1936. *Object* was shown in an early Surrealist exhibition and immediately snapped up by Alfred Barr, the director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, who exhibited it in the mid 1930s in America. He wrote at the time:

> Few works of art in recent years have so captured the popular imagination...this fur-lined tea set makes concretely real, the most extreme, the most bizarre improbability. The tension and excitement caused by this object in the minds of tens of thousands of Americans have been expressed in rage, laughter, disgust or delight.

Breton, reviewing *Object* in the context of that original Surrealist exhibition, declared that this piece best fulfilled his demand to, as he put it, 'hunt down the mad beast of utility'. Obviously, it takes away the functional purpose of the cup and saucer and in its place starts to evoke erotic – perhaps unpleasant, perhaps pleasant – sensations of fur in the mouth, and a strange juxtaposition of textures and associations.

It's interesting to reflect that the success of *Object* drove Oppenheim, who was then only in her early twenties, into a period of retreat. I think it's worth remembering that it took genuine courage at the time, perhaps particularly for women, to break the rules and to create and exhibit pieces that could provoke rage and disgust, just as much as laughter and delight. There could be a very personal cost to success on those terms.

It's partly for that reason that the pieces that survive and the artists who went on to have the most commercially successful careers, like Salvador Dalí, were those who enjoyed the support of wealthy patrons and collectors. There were quite a few patrons active at the time, like the de Noailles couple in France and later Peggy Guggenheim and others, who supported Surrealist artists. Edward James, the British poet and aristocrat, was one of the most influential. He supported not just Dalí, but also Leonora Carrington, Magritte and many others associated with the movement. And he was more than a generous patron and a collector, he was also a collaborator and a like-minded ally in artistic experimentation of the wildest kind.

Mae West Lips sofa 1937–38 is not the craziest of James's planned collaborations with Dalí. The work recently joined the NGV Collection through the generous support of Paula Fox AO and Fox Family Foundation, Mavourneen Cowen, Tim Fairfax AC & Gina Fairfax AC, The Betsy and Ollie Polasek Endowment, King Family Foundation, John andJenny Fast, and Ralph Ward-Ambler AM and Barbara Ward-Ambler, donors to the 2023 NGV Foundation Annual Dinner and the 2023 NGV Annual Appeal in memory of Robert J. Wylde. Other unrealised projects included a house shaped like an artichoke, and a room with walls that would be lined with fur and would inflate and deflate slowly like the stomach of a dog. In the end they weren't able to practically realise the latter.



Andre Breton *Manifesto of Surrealism* (*Manifeste du Surrealism*) 1924, 1st edn, Editions du Sagittaire, 1924. NGV Research Collection. Purchased, NGV Foundation, 2024.

Magritte's portrait of James that we see in *The Pleasure Principle* (*Portrait of Edward James*) 1937 (DACS, London 2023), with his head obscured by an exploding flash of light, is wonderfully suggestive of the liberated range of James's imagination. AsJames says himself in alater film:

> If I'm a Surrealist, it's not because I got linked with the movement, it's because I was born one. A great number of people are Surrealist without ever having heard of the movement. But it is people who are close to their subconscious. The world is not completely logical all of the time.

He said these people, like himself, 'make the illogical, logical, and they make it more vivid than life, in the way that dreams can sometimes be more vivid than actuality'. It was in the service of making things 'more vivid than life' that James created objects like the *Mae West Lips sofa* for his own home, Monkton House in Sussex in the UK, which was one of the most complete examples of a Surrealist interior anywhere in the world. It housed James's wonderful art collection, but it was also an artwork in itself.

It took a very complicated process and a lot of craftspeople to make the *Mae West Lips sofa* 'more vivid than life'. The idea originally came from a painting by Dalí, the title of which is *Mae West's face which may be used as a Surrealist apartment*, 1934–35. James, having seen this, wanted to create a sofa in the shape of Mae West's lips, as seen in that painting.

We're only now realising the extent of James's involvement in the final look of the piece. You could say that if Dalí provided the catalyst, James actually saw it through and directed the craftspeople who were making this sofa. Pieces have recently been discovered – including a literal back-of-the-envelope sketch – that show James's specific instructions for details like the fringing.

James was closely involved with the worlds of dance and performance, and set designs informed many of his later room and interior design interventions. Surrealist interior design is, in many ways, like creating a stage set within your own home, and this is intended to have a very strong impact on your imaginative and creative life. There are some obvious parallels between the interior of the home and the interior of the mind that are enhanced and elaborated on through Surrealist interior design. It's an aesthetic that is characterised by unlikely juxtapositions, visual discontinuities, and surprises around every corner. It's not necessarily a cosy or welcoming or even relaxing aesthetic. It's quite challenging. To me, it seems that many of these designs, the *Mae West Lips sofa* included, are only completed in use. They invite performance, they invite you to sit on them, and by doing so, you bring the piece to its most complete realisation.

This style of Surrealist interior design quickly became popular, although not accessible. It was really in these quite wealthy spheres of James and others that it was adopted. Take the rooftop garden on Plaisir de France no.18 that that

‘It took a very complicated process and a lot of crafts-people to make the *Mae West Lips* sofa ‘more vivid than life’. The idea originally came from a painting by Dalí, the title of which is *Mae West’s face which may be used as a Surrealist apartment*, 1934–35. James, having seen this, wanted to create a sofa in the shape of Mae West’s lips.’

Dr Kathryn Johnson

Le Corbusier, the Swiss architect, created and designed for the – again, fabulously wealthy – patron Carlos de Beistegui in Paris in 1936. Through the unlikely juxtaposition of severe, clean-cut modernist lines and fantastical objects in this rooftop, we arrive at something which does spark the imagination, and invites us – the users, the performers – to enter into this stage set and think differently because of the environment in which we have put ourselves.

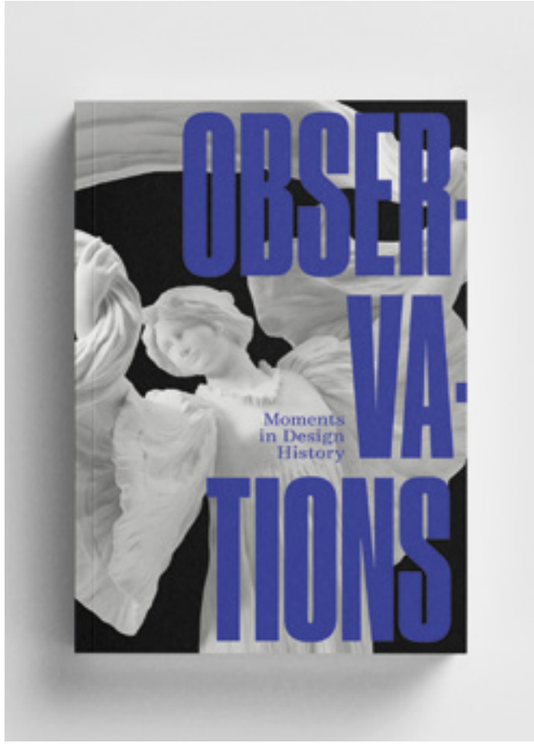
In perhaps Dalí’s most famous creation, again for Edward James, the *Lobster telephone*, 1934, you can see a similar dialogue between a severe aesthetic and a functional modern design, as exemplified by the telephone and the lobster, which is a symbol of dreams and subconscious erotic impulses – at least in Dalí’s mind, because he saw the lobster as an erotic symbol. The idea was that by picking up the telephone, you’re almost kissing the lobster – again, there’s that same performative element and challenge associated with this piece. In *Objects of Desire: Surrealism and Design 1924 – Today*, the exhibition I curated for the London Design Museum in 2022, we put an example of a *Mae West Lips sofa* next to a *Lobster telephone*. This was not how they would have been seen in real life because *Lobster telephone* was created for James’s London residence, whereas the *Lips sofa* stayed in his Sussex house. But the reason for the juxtaposition in this case is to highlight the fact that although we tend to see the telephone as a sculptural object, it is actually a functional piece of design as well. It was in use as a telephone, several of them in two colourways, throughout James’s house, and I just love to think of him sitting, having conversations, creative and otherwise, on this piece.

Dr Kathryn Johnson is Curator and Head of Exhibitions at the Royal West of England Academy in Bristol. This is an extract of an essay published in *Observations: Moments in Design History*, available online and in the NGV design store from 1 June.

The NGV warmly thanks Paula Fox AO and Fox Family Foundation, Mavourneen Cowen, Tim Fairfax AC & Gina Fairfax AC, The Betsy and Ollie Polasek Endowment, King Family Foundation, John and Jenny Fast, Ralph Ward-Ambler AM and Barbara Ward-Ambler, and donors to the 2023 NGV Foundation Annual Dinner and 2023 NGV Annual Appeal in memory of Robert J. Wylde, for their generous support towards the acquisition of Salvador Dalí’s *Mae West Lips sofa* 1937–38.

See Salvador Dalí’s *Mae West Lips Sofa* at NGV Interntional from July.

(pp. 82–3) **Salvador Dalí** *Mae West Lips sofa* designed 1938, manufactured 1938. Purchased with funds donated by Paula Fox AO and Fox Family Foundation, Mavourneen Cowen, Tim Fairfax AC & Gina Fairfax AC, The Betsy and Ollie Polasek Endowment, King Family Foundation, John and Jenny Fast, and Ralph Ward-Ambler AM and Barbara Ward-Ambler, donors to the 2023 NGV Foundation Annual Dinner and the 2023 NGV Annual Appeal in memory of Robert J. Wylde, 2023 © Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí. VEGAP/Copyright Agency, 2023



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This volume collates transcripts from the landmark NGV seminar series *Observations: Moments in Design History*, which took place online during 2023. It weaves through almost 400 years of design innovation across Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the Americas to explore the materials and technologies that shaped global design in times of change, and the key manufacturers who defined the course of design history.

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Featuring authors, commentators and art historians including Dr Kathryn Johnson, Alice Rawsthorn, John Whithead FSA, Dr Carolyn Sargentson and Divya Thakur.

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IMAGE:
PETER SMETS (born 1962)
City View 2022 (detail)
oil on canvas
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MURILLO'S

The Immaculate Conception

Words by **Carl Villis**

Since 1948 the NGV has been home to *The Immaculate Conception*, an example of the work of the great Spanish artist Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. His large altarpiece, thought to have been painted between 1665 and 1670, is one of many versions of this subject that Murillo painted for the churches of his birthplace, Seville. Despite Murillo's continual return to this theme throughout his career, he sought to revise and refine his compositions so that each version contained its own unique variations of its Virgin, clouds and floating angels. The NGV's large painting shows the Virgin's hands raised in prayer, in common with five key versions of the work, yet with her rich blue mantle draped differently in all but one of those other versions.

Scholars have known for many decades that the NGV painting was most closely related to a version called the *Esquilache Immaculate Conception*, 1645–55, which is now in the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. The *Esquilache* painting appears almost identical to the NGV painting except for the presence of additional seraphim in the top left, bottom right and centre background. The two paintings have never been seen side-by-side by Murillo scholars, so debate about which of the two versions could be considered the primary or first-painted version has been impeded by less reliable photographic reproductions.

A year-long major conservation treatment has provided the NGV conservation team with a unique opportunity to re-examine this important painting. The paint layers had previously been difficult to assess because of a thick, discoloured varnish layer that had covered the surface for more than seventy-five years. Once it was removed and replaced with a new layer of clear varnish, the artist's fluent brushwork reappeared, reaffirming Murillo's seemingly effortless skill in rendering soft forms in paint. An example of this can be seen in isolation in the beautifully executed angel wing of the putto in the lower left.

Conservation researchers have noted that Murillo habitually painted with such an assured hand that there are very few alterations, known as pentimenti, found in his paintings. Pentimenti are sometimes visible to the nakedeye but are usually best seen in x-ray images. The NGV painting was x-rayed in 2023, and it revealed a rare pentimento. In the top-right corner of the painting there is an angel holding a stem of white lilies in its raised right hand. The radiographic detail shows that Murillo originally painted this arm lower and with its wrist turned the other way as it held the lilies. This pentimento tells us that this figure's final pose was resolved on the canvas as Murillo worked, and as such is most likely the first time he attempted this exact arrangement. We do not have an x-ray image for the *Esquilache* version, but the fact that it replicates the final pose of the NGV putto suggests that it is the later version. This small but important detail may be the key to finally resolving the century-long debate over which painting was painted first. Further collaborative research with the Hermitage Museum will include a complete comparative assessment of the paintings, but for the time being visitors have the freshly restored painting back on display to experience Murillo's skill and bravura.

Carl Villis is NGV Senior Conservator of Paintings.

Scan the code to see x-rays and other details of Murillo's *The Immaculate Conception*.



Bartolomé Esteban Murillo *The Immaculate Conception* (c. 1665), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1948. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of Digitisation Champion Ms Carol Grigor through Metal Manufactures Limited

VALE

Jan Senbergs (1939–2024)



Jan Senbergs photographed in his studio, 2015. Photo: Predrag Cancar/NGV

Distinguished Australian artist Jan Senbergs passed away in Melbourne on 23 February 2024 at the age of eighty-four. Widely acclaimed for his paintings, drawings and prints, Senbergs enjoyed a close relationship with the NGV. His work is well represented in the NGV Collection, has been shown in numerous NGV exhibitions since 1965 and was the subject of a major retrospective in 2016, *Jan Senbergs: Observation – Imagination*. Senbergs also served as an NGV Trustee for five years in the 1980s, was a committee member of the Margaret Stewart Endowment for the purchase of contemporary art and in 2010 was inducted into Life Membership of the NGV.

Born in Riga, Latvia, in 1939, Senbergs arrived in Australia as a refugee in 1950 as part of the great wave of postwar migration. The family settled in Richmond and Senbergs attended the Richmond Technical College, where his interest in art was ignited by his substitute art teacher, Leonard French. In 1956 he began a five-year apprenticeship in screen-printing, simultaneously attending the Melbourne School of Printing and Graphic Art, and held his first solo exhibition of paintings and prints in 1960. Recognition followed swiftly, with exhibitions, sales and favourable reviews, and in 1966 he was awarded the prestigious Helena Rubinstein Travelling Art Scholarship, enabling him to spend a year studying art in the UK and Europe.

Senbergs cemented his reputation following his return to Melbourne with powerful screen prints and paintings of imaginary industrial landscapes that incorporated photographic imagery. In 1973 he represented Australia at the São Paolo Biennial in Brazil with eighteen screen-printed paintings of industrial dystopia, and later that decade spent three years on a major mural commission for the High Court of Australia (1977–80). A more direct and expressive manner emerged in paintings and drawings of the early 1980s depicting the gritty landscapes around Port Melbourne and Mount Lyell in Queenstown, Tasmania. Travel in the Australian outback and, in 1987, to Antarctica as an invited artist on the supply vessel *Icebird* led to important series of exuberantly painted large landscape paintings of wilderness areas. Senbergs ended the 1980s with a year in America, where he held the position of Visiting Professor, Chair in Australian Studies at Harvard University.

Senbergs gained great acclaim in the 1980s and 90s for his expressive drawings, often of vast scale, of landscapes, studio interiors and African and New Guinea sculptures. He also worked in printmaking, producing many etchings and aquatints at Melbourne's Australian Print Workshop. From the later 1990s aerial perspectives of city views became favoured subjects that Senbergs treated with a dynamic urgency. The observed and the imaginary are melded in these exuberant and often panoramic cityscapes, and also characterise his later landscapes of the Otway coast, which combine multiple perspectives. Inventiveness and a unique vision remained hallmarks of Senbergs's art throughout his long career.

Not only a successful and highly celebrated artist, Senbergs was also a much-loved teacher and mentor throughout his life as well as an advocate for art and artists. He was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia in January 2003 for services to the visual arts.

Cathy Leahy is NGV Senior Curator, Prints and Drawings.

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Phillip George - *Alexandria* 180cm x 112cm C-Type print



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Image: Kevin Chin, detail from 'Out Back', 2024, oil on Italian linen, 138 x 199 cm, image courtesy of the artist, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne.

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Öde Studio scented candles, $49.95

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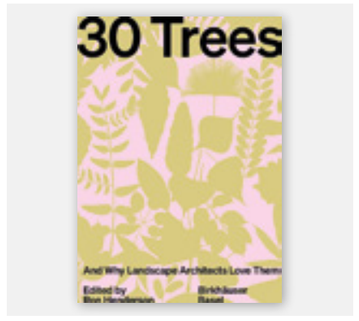
Rhiannon Gill Ceramics, from $45

Rhiannon Gill is a self-taught ceramicist based in Wollongong on Dharawal land. Made by hand in small batches, Gill’s functional homewares are all unique and utilise handcrafted glazes, making them an enduring keepsake.



Mola Sasa earrings and bracelets, from $109.95

Founded by Colombian designer, Yasmin Sabet, Mola Sasa celebrates the vibrancy of her home country. Through collaborating with Indigenous communities and local artisans from around Colombia, Mola Sasa champions traditional techniques.



***30 Trees: And Why Landscape Architects Love Them* edited by Ron Henderson, $110**

30 Trees presents the favourite trees of thirty internationally renowned landscape architects. For each pick, the designers describe the characteristics that represent the selected tree, the designed landscapes they associate with it, and how it was used in completed projects.



***Tasmanian Gardens* by Meg Bignell and Alice Bennett, $49.95**

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ngv.melbourne/plan-your-visit/dining



Chat Italiano, $80

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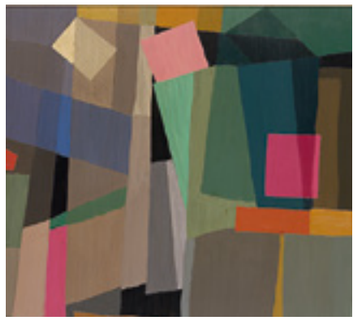
ngv.melbourne/ngv-italia



Scholars Series: Genji Painting and the Power of the Panorama, $40

Join Harvard University’s Melissa McCormick in a discussion of *The Tale of Genji*, often called the world’s first novel, and its place as one of the most popular painting subjects in the history of Japanese art.

ngv.melbourne/whatson



Members Talk: Curator’s Insights Grace Crowley & Ralph Balson, $30

In this exclusive introduction just for NGV Members discover the story of two of the most compelling artists in Australian art history. Join NGV Membership or sign up someone you love to be part of this inspiring Members-only program.

ngv.melbourne/whatson



Mother’s Day at the Garden Restaurant, $95

A special set menu of seasonal dishes are included in this five-course degustation menu, served with your choice of beverage.

ngv.melbourne/plan-your-visit/dining

(top right) **Giambattista Tiepolo** *The Banquet of Cleopatra* 1743–1744 (detail), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1933. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of Digitisation Champion Ms Carol Grigor through Metal Manufactures Limited

(bottom row left) **Japanese** *Tales of Genji* late 17th century (detail), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Gift of Jason Yeap through the Australian Government’s Cultural Gifts Program, 2011. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of The Gordon Darling Foundation

(middle bottom row) **Grace Crowley** *Abstract painting* 1952 (detail), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Bequest of the artist, 1981 © National Gallery of Victoria. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of The Vizard Foundation

On tour

The Land is Us: Stories, Place & Connection – Artworks from the NGV Collection



John Brack *The car* 1955 (detail), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased, 1956 © National Gallery of Victoria. This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of The Vizard Foundation

Curated by and presented exclusively at Shepparton Art Museum in partnership with the NGV, *The Land is Us: Stories, Place & Connection* brings together notable artworks from the NGV Collection that offer an expanded consideration of landscape art.

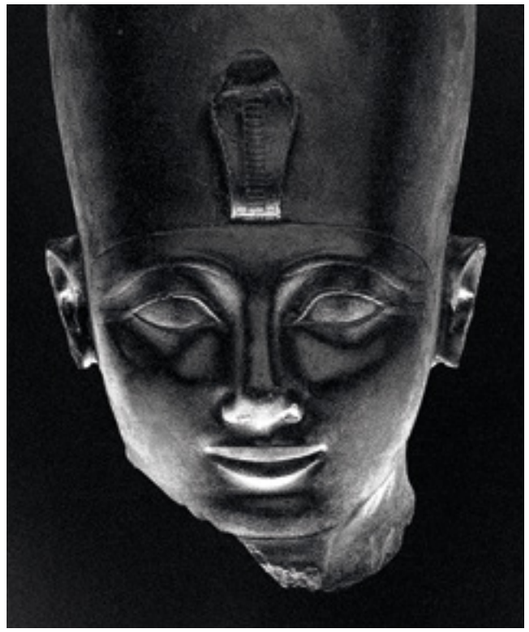
The Land is Us turns our sight, minds and hearts to the land beneath our feet. Each artwork offers a place from which artists convey, re-interpret, or affirm the lived experiences of people and their stories of connection with the landscape.

Weaving together complex and varied artistic approaches by significant Australian and First Nations artists, including Sidney Nolan, Brook Andrew, John Brack, Destiny Deacon and Patricia Piccinini, alongside international artists, the exhibition presents a range of perspectives surrounding our fascination and connection to the land and its role in shaping our national and personal identities.

See *The Land is Us: Stories, Place & Connection – Artworks from the NGV Collection* at the Shepparton Art Museum until 1 September. This exhibition is supported by AWM. For more information about this free exhibition, visit www.sheppartonartmuseum.com.au/whats-on

In the next issue

NGV Magazine July–August



Head of a statue of Thutmose III wearing the white crown (detail) 18th Dynasty, reign of Thutmose III, about 1479–1457 BCE, Karnak, Thebes, Egypt , © The Trustees of the British Museum

In the July– August issue, we dive deep into *Pharaoh* to discover the stories at the centre of the Melbourne Winter Masterpieces® 2024 exhibition. Through more than 500 works, including monumental sculpture, architecture, temple statuary, exquisite jewellery, papyri, coffins and a rich array of funerary objects, *Pharaoh* unpacks the phenomenon of the pharaoh, those all-powerful kings claiming a divine origin. Join us as we go behind the scenes with curators from the British Museum and NGV, and share a guide to some of the key works on display.

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People

Highlights from the NGV Bowery Ball, the MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission for 2024, the opening of The Country Road + NGV First Nations Commissions: *My Country* and the final few weeks of NGV Triennial.



NGV Triennial Supporter Helen Nicolay with Yee I-Lann's work *Tikar/Meja*, 2019–20, on display as part of NGV Triennial. Photo: Carmen Zammit



Designer Christien Meindertsma and MECCA Founder and NGV Foundation Board Member Jo Horgan AM at the MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission – Celebrating Women in Design event, 8 March 2024. Photo: Liz Sunshine



Members of Melbourne's African community gather for an information night for *Africa Fashion* at NGV International. Pictured from left to right: Joel M, Ursula Acquah, Francis Acquah AM, Selba Gondoza Luka, Dorcas Maphakela, Shillar Sibanda AOM, Stephen Sibanda, Zarah Garbrah, Niva and Fabian Quartamont. Front row from left to right: Effie Nkrumah, Charmaine Hunzwi and Emma Quartamont. Photo: NGV



My Country exhibiting artist Sophie Honess (centre) and family at the exhibition opening of *My Country* at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia. Photo: Liz Sunshine



NGV Senior Curator, Australian and First Nations Art Myles Russell-Cook, Elle Roseby Managing Director Country Road & Trenery, and NGV Director Tony Ellwood AM attend the *My Country* exhibition opening. Photo: Liz Sunshine



My Country exhibiting artist Jan Griffiths (right) and Alana Hunt at the exhibition opening. Photo: Liz Sunshine



My Country exhibiting artist Johnathon World Peace Bush with Cassie Puruntatameri at the exhibition opening of *My Country.* Photo: Liz Sunshine



Representatives of the Tapestry Foundation of Australia, NGV Triennial Lead Supporters, along with family and friends, with Diedrick Brackens's work *marrow becomes breath* 2022, on display as part of NGV Triennial. Photo: Carmen Zammit



NGV Triennial Supporters Kate Hay, Ben Hay and Barbara Hay with Betty Muffler's work *Ngangkari Ngura* (*Healing Country*), 2022, on display as part of NGV Triennial. Photo: Carmen Zammit



NGV Triennial Major Supporters Anne Robertson and Mark Robertson OAM with Diana Al-Hadid's work, *What remains of the floating man hypothesis*, 2023, on display as part of NGV Triennial. Photo: Carmen Zammit



NGV Triennial artist Prudence Flint leads an exclusive NGV Members drawing class at NGV International. Photo: Tobias Titz



Scotty So attends the NGV Bowery Ball at NGV International. Photo by Graham Denholm/Getty Images for NGV



NGV Trustee and Foundation Board Member Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM attends the NGV Bowery Ball. Photo by Graham Denholm/Getty Images for NGV



Abbie Chatfield attends the NGV Bowery Ball with Rowdie Walden at NGV International. Photo by Graham Denholm/Getty Images for NGV.



Inge Fransen, CEO Vranken-Pommery Australia and Leeanne Rankin – Business Development Manager, Vranken-Pommery attend the NGV Bowery Ball. Photo by Graham Denholm/Getty Images for NGV



Zelda Moon and Lazy Susan attend the NGV Bowery Ball. Photo by Graham Denholm/Getty Images for NGV

What's on



Kevin Chin *Out Back* 2024, image courtesy of the artist, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne. Photo courtesy of Kevin Chin



Lloyd Rees *The Distant Derwent* 1970

CUTTING THROUGH TIME—CRESSIDA CAMPBELL, MARGARET PRESTON AND THE JAPANESE PRINT

18 May – 28 July
VENUE Geelong Gallery

This exceptionally beautiful exhibition will examine the influence of Japanese woodblock prints (*ukiyo-e*) on the famed contemporary Australian painter and printmaker Cressida Campbell (born 1960) and the groundbreaking modernist painter and printmaker Margaret Preston (1875–1963).

This will be the first significant exhibition in Victoria for more than a decade focused on Preston, one of Australia's most significant and beloved modernist printmakers. Equally it will celebrate the remarkable work of contemporary artist, Campbell. Seeing their work together alongside the serene aesthetics and sophistication of historical Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodcut prints will offer new opportunities to celebrate their work.

geelonggallery.org.au

HAIR PIECES

Until 6 October
VENUE Heide Museum of Modern Art

Hair Pieces explores the evocative and complex significance of hair in contemporary culture through a selection of Australian and international works of art. For millennia hair has been a resonant and compelling site of meaning, transmitting ideas about gender, mythology, status and power, the body, psychology, feminism and notions of beauty. At once radiant and repellent, and often richly symbolic, hair has always assumed a particular importance in relation to the self, history and society. This exhibition examines the myriad ways in which artists utilise hair to investigate and conjure generative and even magical possibilities encompassing growth, empowerment and transformation.

heide.com.au

EMBRACE

Until 28 July
VENUE Counihan Gallery

Affection is shown differently across cultures. In *Embrace*, Cyrus Tang explores the act of hugging within the Chinese cultural context. With its legacy of Confucianism, the physical embrace is seen as awkward or discomforting in China, though this is changing with younger generations.

In *Embrace*, Tang turns the common Australian greeting into a powerful ritual between herself and her family. The exhibition is a complex exploration of intimacy and affection that characterises many migrant experiences.

merri-bek.vic.gov.au/exploring-merri-bek/arts-merri-bek/counihan-gallery

THE LONG WAY: KEVIN CHIN

8 May – 28 July
VENUE Town Hall Gallery

The Long Way: Kevin Chin is a major exhibition at Town Hall Gallery taking viewers on a journey into borderless new territories. A new series of ethereal paintings is contextualised by a curated selection of highlights from Chin's fifteen-year artistic practice.

Piecing together cues from across continents, the artist challenges traditional conventions of composition to create dreamscapes that are simultaneously familiar and foreign.

Offering moments of warmth, solace and retreat, the exhibition encourages us to imagine more boundless ways of wandering the world.

boroondara.vic.gov.au/arts

NICHOLAS MANAGAN: A WORLD UNDONE

Until 30 June
VENUE Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

Working across sculpture and film, Melbourne artist Nicholas Mangan considers our complex relationship with the natural world. This survey brings together eight of the artist's expanded sculptural works, culminating with his latest project, inspired by the perilous fragility of the Great Barrier Reef.

mca.com.au

LANDS OF LIGHT: LLOYD REES AND TASMANIA

Until 27 October
VENUE Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Hobart

This exhibition celebrates the work of Lloyd Rees (1895–1988), particularly those painted in Tasmania between 1967 and 1988. Rees was one of the pre-eminent Australian landscape artists of the twentieth century.

tmag.tas.gov.au

18TH ADELAIDE BIENNIAL OF AUSTRALIAN ART: INNER SANCTUM

Until 2 June
VENUE Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

The *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Inner Sanctum*, curated by José Da Silva, offers a snapshot of contemporary Australia that is reflective and hopeful.

agsa.sa.gov.au

NAOMI IN FASHION

Opens 22 June
VENUE Victoria & Albert Museum, South Kensington, London

The first exhibition of its kind exploring the career of fashion model Naomi Campbell. Through the work of leading global designers and photographers, the V&A celebrates her creative collaborations, activism and cultural impact.

vam.ac.uk

PARIS 1874: INVENTING IMPRESSIONISM

UNTIL JULY 14
VENUE Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Hungry for independence, Monet, Renoir, Degas, Morisot, Pissarro, Sisley and Cézanne finally decided to free themselves from the rules by holding their own exhibition outside official channels. And so, Impressionism was born.

musee-orsay.fr

Select exhibition listings provided by Public Galleries Association of Victoria. Visit pgav.org.au for more.

List of reproduced works and endnotes

(cover)
Thebe Magugu
Chloe Andrea Welgemoed (styling and set)
Sio (model)
17, from the *Alchemy* collection, autumn–winter 2021, Johannesburg, South Africa
Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London
© Thebe Magugu and Tatenda Chidora

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Stephen Tayo
Models holding bands, Lagos, Nigeria 2019
Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London and Lagos Fashion Week
© Stephen Tayo

p. 6
Yayoi Kusama 2022
© YAYOI KUSAMA

p. 7
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo
The Immaculate Conception c. 1665
oil on canvas
235.0 × 208.0 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1948

p. 12
David Shrigley
Really good 2016
bronze
680.0 × 380.0 × 160.0 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 2024

© David Shrigley. Courtesy: Stephen Friedman Gallery, London; Anton Kern, New York; BQ, Berlinp. 13
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Bacino di S. Marco: From the Piazzetta c. 1750
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131.4 × 163.2 cm
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Kofi Ansah
Linda (model)
Narh (model)
Indigo couture 1997, Ghana
Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London
© 1997 Eric Don-Arthur

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Imane Ayissi
Mbeuk Idourrou collection, autumn – winter 2019, Paris, France
Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Photo © Fabrice Malard, courtesy of Imane Ayissi

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IAMISIGO, Kenya
Gods of the Wilderness collection, spring – summer 2019
Courtesy IAMISIGO
Photo: Ines Valle

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Imane Ayissi, France (fashion house)
Imane Ayissi (designer)
Look 22, dress Mguilguidigueu-Mteun, from the *couture* collection, autumn–winter 2023–24
silk and linen, Cameroonian raffia
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

p. 24
Orange Culture, Nigeria (fashion house)
Adebayo Oke-Lawal (designer)
Top and pants with cummerbund, from the *It Comes in Waves* collection, spring–summer 2024
silk (chiffon, Mikado)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

p. 27
Lagos Space Programme, Lagos (fashion house)
Adeju Thompson (designer)
Coat, waistcoat and wrapper and shoes, from *Project 8, Cloth as a Queer Archive*, spring–summer 2024
© Lagos Space Programme

p. 34
Head of a statue of Thutmose III wearing the white crown
18th Dynasty, reign of Thutmose III, about 1479–1457 BCE
Karnak, Thebes, Egypt
green siltstone
46.0 × 19.0 × 32.0 cm
© The Trustees of the British Museum

p. 37
Yayoi Kusama 2022
© YAYOI KUSAMA

p. 38–9
Yayoi Kusuma
Narcissus Garden 1966-2022 (installation view)
stainless steel
© Yayoi Kusama
Photo: Masatomo Moriyama

p. 40
Les Gray
Resting, number two, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972
gelatin silver photograph
50.9 × 33.4 cm (image)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973
© Les Gray

p. 42
Les Gray
Carozza, number two, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972
gelatin silver photograph
40.8 × 50.6 cm (image)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973
© Les Gray

p. 43
Les Gray
Pilgrims, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972
gelatin silver photograph
50.6 × 35.6 cm (image)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973
© Les Gray

p. 44–5
Les Gray
Map Gallery, Museo Vaticano, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972
gelatin silver photograph
30.9 × 50.6 cm irreg. (image)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973
© The artist

p. 46
Les Gray
The luncheon party, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972
gelatin silver photograph
50.7 × 40.6 cm (image)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973
© The artist

p. 47
Les Gray
Cupola, St. Peters, Rome, from the *Assignment, Rome* series 1972
gelatin silver photograph
51.2 × 40.2 cm (image)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board and the KODAK (Australasia) Pty Ltd Fund, 1973
© The artist

p. 49
The Power of Utopia: Living with Le Corbusier in Chandigarh, part of *Melbourne Design Week Film Festival* 2024

p. 50
Material Matters 02, from *Melbourne Design Week* 2024
Photo: Piew Carthew

p. 56
Robert Walker
Grace Crowley 1970
black and white negative
2.4 × 3.6 cm
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Robert Walker archive, donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Louise Walker 2008
National Art Archive, Art Gallery of New South Wales
© Robert Walker/Copyright Agency, 2024

p. 57
Ralph Balson (left) in his and Grace Crowley's studio, George Street, Sydney, early 1960s, by Peter Balson
copy print 18 × 24.7 cm
National Art Archive
Art Gallery of New South Wales Image
© Ralph Balson Estate

p. 59
Grace Crowley
Girl with goats 1928
oil on canvas
54.4 × 73.4 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented by the National Gallery Society of Victoria, 1967
© National Gallery of Victoria

p. 60
Grace Crowley
Portrait 1939
oil on canvas on cardboard
71.6 × 56.2 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Bequest of the artist, 1981
© Grace Crowley Estate

p. 61
(top)
Grace Crowley
Abstract painting 1947
oil on cardboard
60.7 × 83.3 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased, 1959
© Grace Crowley Estate

(bottom)
Ralph Balson
Constructive elements 1944
oil on cardboard
49.7 × 60.0 cm
Penrith Regional Art Gallery, Penrith Home of the Lewers Bequest Collection, 1979
© Ralph Balson Estate

p. 62
Grace Crowley
Painting 1950
oil on composition board
63.7 × 75.2 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1967
© National Gallery of Victoria

p. 63
Ralph Balson
Painting no. 14 1941
oil on cardboard
47.3 × 78.8 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Loti & Victor Smorgon Fund, 2012
© Ralph Balson Estate

p. 66
Alfred Stevens
Fédora (Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt) 1882
oil on canvas
115.6 × 86.0 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2024

p. 67
Louise Abbéma
Renée Delmas de Pont-Jest 1875
oil on canvas
83.2 × 102.2 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2022

p. 68
Sarah Bernhardt
Embracing hands of Sarah Bernhardt and Louise Abbéma c. 1908
bronze, marble base
8.8 × 31.6 × 10.5 cm (overall)
Purchased with funds donated by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family, and the M.G. Chapman Bequest, 2024

p. 70
Man Ray
'Photographs by Man Ray Paris 1920-1934' *Untitled (Portrait of Lee Miller)* p. 52
published by Cahiers d'Art, Paris, 1934
artist's book: photogravure, not bound, cardboard cover
Purchased, 1985
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

p. 71
Lee Miller
Portrait of Man Ray 1931
gelatin silver photograph
22.8 × 17.1 cm
Purchased with funds donated by Joy Anderson, 2024
© Lee Miller Archives, England 2023

p. 72
(left)
Hayley Millar Baker
Entr'acte 2023
single channel black and white video, no sound
Purchased with funds donated by Craig Semple, 2024.
© Hayler Millar Baker

(right)
Lola Greeno
Ceremonial length shell necklace (Lutruwita) 2022 (detail)
maireeners (*Phaisanotrochus* sp.), cotton thread
90.2 × 20.3 × 2.1 cm (variable)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased with funds donated by Jahn Buhrman, 2023
© Courtesy of Lola Greeno

p. 74
Maya Donaldson
Hugo, Hugo 2.0 2023
Synthetic polymer paint, synthetic polymer clay, synthetic fabric, Various dimensions
Wurun Senior Campus, North Fitzroy, Wurundjeri Country
© Maya Donaldson

p. 78
(Clockwise)
Maison Lesage, Paris (embroidery house)
Madeline Vionnet, Paris (couture house)
Art deco Geometric motif c. 1920s
glass beads and cotton thread on silk.
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection.

Maison Lesage, Paris (embroidery house)
Madeline Vionnet, Paris (couture house)
Pink beaded flowers on pale green c. 1920s
Glass beads and silk thread on silk.
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection.

Maison Lesage, Paris (embroidery house)
Madeline Vionnet, Paris (couture house)
Pink and silver beads on rose silk c. 1920s
glass beads and cotton thread on silk.
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion ResearchCollection.

Maison Lesage, Paris (embroidery house)
Madeline Vionnet, Paris (couture house)
Circular silver motif on blush silk c. 1920s
glass beads and silk thread on silk.
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion ResearchCollection.

Maison Lesage, Paris (embroidery house)
Madeline Vionnet, Paris (couture house)
Ombre beaded motif c. 1920s
painted glass beads on wool
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection.

p. 79
(Clockwise)
Maison Lesage, Paris (embroidery house)
Madeline Vionnet, Paris (couture house)
Silver bead embellishment on blue velvet 1922
wool, silk thread, metal beads, silk and metallic thread
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection

Maison Lesage, Paris (embroidery house)
Madeline Vionnet, Paris (couture house)
Ribbon motif on dusty pink rayon 1925
cotton and metallic thread embroidery on rayon
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection

Maison Lesage, Paris (embroidery house)
Madeline Vionnet, Paris (couture house)
Ombre beaded motif c. 1920s
painted glass beads on wool
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection

Maison Lesage, Paris (embroidery house)
Madeline Vionnet, Paris (couture house)
Green beaded embellishment c. 1920s
faceted glass beads and silk thread on silk
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection

Maison Lesage, Paris (embroidery house)
Madeline Vionnet, Paris (couture house)
Orange beaded motif on rayon 1924
glass beads, cotton and metallic threat embroidery on rayon
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty Fashion Research Collection

p. 82–3
Salvador Dalí
Mae West Lips Sofa designed 1938, manufactured 1938
wool, horsehair, wood and metal
77.0 × 205.7 × 96cm
Purchased with funds donated by Paula Fox AO and Fox Family Foundation, Mavourneen Cowen, Tim Fairfax AC & Gina Fairfax AC, The Betsy and Ollie Polasek Endowment, King Family Foundation, John and Jenny Fast, and Ralph Ward-Ambler AM and Barbara Ward-Ambler, donors to the 2023 NGV Foundation Annual Dinner and 2023 NGV Annual Appeal in memory of Robert J. Wylde, 2023
© Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí. VEGAP/ Copyright Agency, 2024

p. 85
André Breton
Manifesto of Surrealism (*Manifeste du Surrealism*) 1924
First edition
Published by Paris: Editions du Sagittaire
NGV Research Collection. Purchased, NGV Foundation, 2024.

p. 91
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo
The Immaculate Conception c. 1665
oil on canvas
235.0 × 208.0 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1948

p. 99
(top row right)
Giambattista Tiepolo
The Banquet of Cleopatra 1743–44 (detail)
oil on canvas
250.3 × 357.0 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1933

(bottom row left)
JAPANESE
Tales of Genji c. late 17th century (detail)
six panel folding screen: ink, gold paint and pigments on gold leaf on paper, lacquer on wood, paper, silk, metallic thread, brass
151.0 × 364.0 cm (image and sheet)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Jason Yeap through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2011

(bottom row middle)
Grace Crowley
Abstract painting 1952 (detail)
oil on composition board
61.2 × 90.8 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Bequest of the artist, 1981
© National Gallery of Victoria

p. 100
John Brack
The car 1955 (detail)
oil on canvas
41.0 × 102.2 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased, 1956
© National Gallery of Victoria

Head of Thutmose III wearing a white crown
18th Dynasty, reign of Thutmose III, about 1479–1457 BC
Egypt, Thebes, Karnak
green siltstone
H 46cm, W 19cm, D 32cm
© The Trustees of the British Museum

p. 106
Kevin Chin
Out Back 2024
oil on Italian linen
138 × 199 cm
Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne
Photo: courtesy of Kevin Chin

p. 107
Lloyd Rees
The Distant Derwent 1970
oil on canvas
75 × 107 cm
Collection: Private

ENDNOTES

pp. 66–8
The Divine Sarah and the artist Louise

1. Maurice Hamel, 'Les Souvenirs de théâtre d'une peintresse célèbre', *Comoedia*, 12 Jan. 1924, p. 2.
2. Th. Véron, *Dictionnaire Véron ou Mémorial de l'art et des artistes de mon temps. Le Salon de 1877. 3e Annuaire*, Chez l'auteur, Poitiers, 1877, p. 5.
3. Maurice Hamel, 'Peintresse et tragédienne', *Floréal*, 31 Dec. 1921, p. 1320.
4. See Gerda Taranow, *The Bernhardt Hamlet. Culture and Context*, Peter Lang, New York, 1996, pp. 93–96; Sharon Marcus, 'Sarah Bernhardt's "Friend"', *Romanic Review*, no. 110, 2019, pp. 223–46; Stéphanie Cantarutti, 'Une artiste parmi les artistes', *Sarah Bernhardt. Et la femme créa la star*, Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, 2023, pp. 145–51.
5. Carol Ockman & Kenneth E. Silver, *Sarah Bernhardt. The Art of High Drama*, The Jewish Museum, New York and Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2005, p. 47.
6. Louis Albin, *Le Salon de Saint-Quentin. Exposition de la société des amis des arts. Études et critiques*, Imprimerie de La Société anonyme du Glaneur, Saint-Quentin, 1880, p. 24.
7. Sacha Guitry, *If Memory Serves*, trans. Lewis Galantière, Doubleday, Doran & Co., New York, 1936, pp. 6–7.
8. Henri Gidel, *Les Deux Guitry*, Flammarion, Paris, 1995, p. 39.
9. Guitry, p. 7.
10. Gidel, p. 44
11. 'Foedora racontée par Sarah Bernhardt', *Le Gaulois, Supplément littéraire*, no. 8, 11 Dec. 1882, p. 1.
12. Hamel, p. 1320.

pp. 70–71
The Marvellous Ms Miller

1. Lee Miller quoted in Mark Haworth-Booth, *The Art of Lee Miller*, V&A Publications, London, 2007, p. 24.

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