

MARTIN GRANT

EXHIBITION FACT SHEET

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NGV AUSTRALIA
28 MARCH 2025 –
26 JANUARY 2026

MARTIN GRANT

EXHIBITION FACT SHEET



This fact sheet provides information specific to *Martin Grant* to support the following Learning Outcomes of VCE Art Making and Exhibiting – Exhibiting Artworks:

Unit 2: Understand, develop and resolve, Area of Study 1, Outcome 1

Unit 3: Collect, extend and connect, Area of Study 3, Outcome 3

Unit 4: Consolidate, present and conserve, Area of Study 3, Outcome 3

For a more detailed overview of exhibition preparation, presentation and conservation at the NGV refer to [Exhibiting Artworks at the NGV: VCE Art Making and Exhibiting | NGV](#).

Martin Grant

Installation view of *Martin Grant* 2025

Photographer: Sean Fennessy

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Celebrating the work of the Australian-born Paris-based fashion designer, this major new exhibition is the largest of Martin Grant's career. Drawn from the NGV collection, including many works donated by the designer from his own personal archive as well as loans from his family and friends, *Martin Grant* encompasses more than four decades of the designer's career. Beginning in the mid-1980s in Melbourne, the exhibition continues through the early 1990s when Grant re-established his eponymous label in Paris and extends to his most recent collections.

NUMBER AND TYPE OF WORKS

Conceived in close collaboration with the designer, the exhibition reflects Grant's design sensibility and aesthetic through more than 200 works, including garments, photography, sketches, press clippings, and runway footage. Grant's designs are characterised by clean lines, sculptural silhouettes, and a refined, minimalist approach. This is evident throughout the exhibition offering a comprehensive exploration of his creative evolution and enduring influence in the fashion industry.

ABOUT MARTIN GRANT

Martin Grant began his career as a young fashion designer in Melbourne in the mid-1980s. He was part of a thriving independent fashion scene and an active participant in the Fashion Design Council parades, which were known for their innovative approach to the presentation of contemporary Australian fashion. After six years of successfully running his own fashion label in Melbourne, Grant formally undertook studies in sculpture at the Victorian College of the Arts. Travelling to the United Kingdom in 1990, Grant then worked for two London-based fashion houses before making the decision to move to Paris. In 1992, Grant re-established his fashion label and four years later opened his own boutique in the Marais district. In 2003 Grant was invited to join Barney's New York's as Artistic Director of the Barney's Private Label, a tenure he held for 10-years and in 2013 he designed uniforms for Qantas. Grant's recent collections reflect a growing awareness of industry excess, prompting him to delve into his archives to reimagine and repurpose past designs and fabrics. This approach not only underscores a commitment to sustainability but also highlights his ongoing evolution as a designer.



KEY TEAM MEMBERS

Curatorial:

Katie Somerville – Senior Curator, Fashion and Textiles
Charlotte Botica – Curatorial Project Officer, Fashion and Textiles

Exhibition Design:

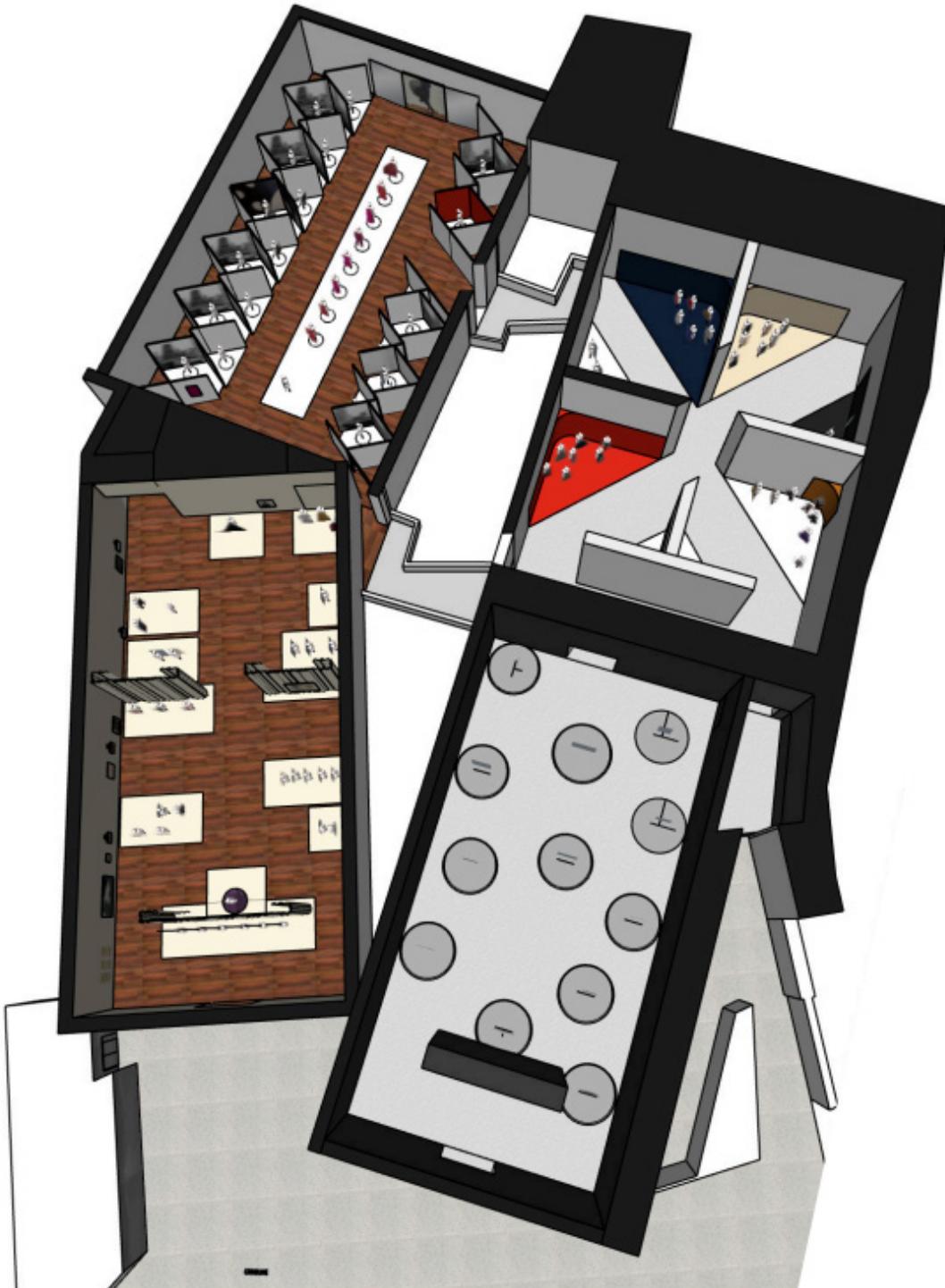
Thom McCarthy – Senior Designer
Allie Mactier – Exhibition Designer

Conservation:

Skye Firth – Senior Conservator of Textiles
Bella Lipson-Smith – Conservator of Textiles
Julia Spizzica – Senior Textiles Display Specialist

Martin Grant

Installation view of DNA series *Martin Grant* 2025
Photographer: Sean Fennessy



CURATORIAL RATIONALE

Martin Grant's designs have been an integral part of the NGV Collection since the late 1990s, reflecting the Gallery's commitment to collecting and celebrating leading figures in Australian and international fashion. In 2023, the Collection was significantly enriched through an extraordinary gift of over two hundred garments from the designer, spanning more than three decades of his career. This generous contribution provides a rare and comprehensive insight into Grant's practice, from his early work in Melbourne to his acclaimed career in Paris. The exhibition draws on this rich archive to explore Grant's mastery of form, fabrication, and timeless design, offering audiences an intimate encounter with one of Australia's most accomplished fashion designers.

EXHIBITION DESIGN

The exhibition design concept was led and developed by Martin Grant, who was closely involved from the very beginning. The gallery spaces are designed to evoke the atmosphere of behind the scenes, the atelier fashion runways, and theatrical displays. Grant worked in regular collaboration with the NGV Exhibition Design team, creating models and mapping out the layout of the exhibition. These initial concepts were then translated by the Exhibition Design team into detailed 3D visualisations, bringing Grant's vision to life.

Floorplan of *Martin Grant* prepared by NGV Exhibition Design

CONSERVATION

Martin Grant predominantly consists of textile works but also features a range of other mediums, including painting, digital media, paper, and photography. The exhibition required the involvement of three teams within the Conservation department: Textiles; Paper and Photography; and Exhibitions. Conservators play a crucial role in preserving all works and ensuring that loaned items are returned in the same condition in which they arrived. Approximately 30 works are from the NGV Collection, with around 200 pieces recently gifted to the NGV from Martin Grant's archives. In addition, there are a number of works on loan from Martin Grant and other private lenders. Conservators are responsible for monitoring the condition of all works and communicating any relevant loan conditions to the curatorial and exhibition design teams.

Throughout the exhibition's 10-month display period, the conservation team will regularly monitor, clean, and maintain the works. After the exhibition, the works will rest for at least 10 years to recover from prolonged light exposure before being considered for re-display. Environmental conditions are carefully controlled, with standard gallery humidity settings of 50% and a lux level of 50, allowing for slight variations depending on specific materials. Visual inspections are conducted fortnightly, and security and gallery staff report any concerns directly to the conservation team. A detailed cleaning schedule has been established, including brush vacuuming, the use of microfibre cloths for mannequin maintenance, and careful dusting of garments using a soft brush alongside an adjustable suction vacuum.



Photograph supplied by NGV Conservation
(overleaf above) Installation view of *Martin Grant*, 2025

Photographer: Sean Fennessy

(overleaf below) Installation view of *Crinoline*, 2005 (cotton, polyvinyl chloride)



SELECTED WORKS

MARTIN GRANT *CRINOLINE, 2005*

ABOUT

The crinoline is a structured petticoat used to add volume to a skirt. The unusually large cream calico crinoline that atmospherically sits in the middle of the first exhibition space, establishing an important sculptural design motif for the audience. Grant enjoys playing with the scale of the form which had fascinated him so much as a small child; this motif can be seen in his kindergarten paintings in the same exhibition space.

EXHIBITION DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Martin Grant's concept for the first gallery space was to recreate the feeling and environment of his studio. He has deliberately disrupted the chronology of his work, inviting visitors to explore the space as if stepping inside his creative world. At the centre of the gallery stands the large calico crinoline, softly lit from within, serving as a striking focal point. The exhibition design draws further inspiration from Grant's studio through the use of calico curtains and a warm beige colour on the walls (Dulux Crewelwork Half). An audio soundtrack curated by the Multimedia department in collaboration with Grant features 1980s punk, pop and rock music, setting the scene for his early work and reflecting his longstanding practice of working to music in the studio.

CONSERVATION CONSIDERATIONS

The large crinoline belongs to Martin Grant and it was deliberately placed in the centre of the space with no touch distance to remove the barriers between the audience and the work. Mount-makers created a custom ring form that attached to the top of the crinoline, enabling it to hang with a gentle hollow in its setting. Art handlers installed the piece so that it rested lightly on the floor, enhancing its sculptural presence. The Crinoline is illuminated using 15W LED bulbs, chosen for their adjustable colour temperature, low heat output, and UV-free light. Five dimmable bulbs, mounted on custom brackets, are remotely controlled and set to a warm tone at 50% brightness, maintaining light levels at approximately 50 lux to protect the artwork. The installation functions like a lampshade and creates a soft, ambient glow.

STUDIO MOOD BOARD, 2010-

VARIOUS, COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

ABOUT

The large mood board, covered with notes, post cards, photographs, and various other ephemera is usually proudly displayed in Grant's Paris studio. The mood board serves as both a source of inspiration and a repository of personal memories.

EXHIBITION DESIGN AND CONSERVATION CONSIDERATIONS

The mood board consisting of four separate sheets of foamboard with photos and ephemeral items pinned to them, was transported directly from Martin's Parisian office. There are two other pinboards filled with material that were arranged and installed in an organic, intuitive manner.. For consistency in materials within the exhibition space, each item was transferred to Echopanel board (an acoustic paneling solution made from recycled PET (plastic), which was screw-fixed to the wall, and Grant repositioned and repinned all the items himself. Perspex sheeting was then placed in front for protection, held out from the wall on corner posts to accommodate the depth of the pins. To further protect the pinboard materials and prevent public interaction, conservation installed a large sheet of acrylic over the surface. The pinboard was divided into four sections and placed into separate crates for transportation, with conservation staff carefully condition-checking each item—including postcards, papers, and photographs—using gloves to handle the delicate materials. Mylar (an inert thin, flexible, and reflective polyester film) was used to create tabs between layers, acting as a protective barrier without disturbing the original layout. The pinboard is considered light-sensitive (as are all the garments) and is displayed at 50 lux. The gloves, a late addition to the show, were requested by Martin and borrowed from his good friend Melbourne-based artist Rosslynd Piggott, who hand-delivered them.



Installation view of Studio Mood Board, 2010-
Photographer: Aaron Francis



JENNY WATSON *THIS YEAR'S FASHION, 1984*

ABOUT

Jenny Watson is known for work that is as personal as it is conceptual. Heavily influenced by the punk and feminist movements of the 1970s, she developed a deliberately naïve painting style, which she has carefully honed from the 1980s to the present day. Watson regularly incorporates collage into her practice, often using unconventional materials such as horsehair. In the early 1980s, she and designer Martin Grant had studios opposite each other in St Albans Chambers, where she would swap paintings with him for clothes.

EXHIBITION DESIGN AND CONSERVATION CONSIDERATIONS

Watson's painting *This Year's Fashion*, remains a talisman for Grant and still holds pride of place in his studio. The inclusion of this work in the space adds to the authenticity of the studio atmosphere that both Grant and the exhibition designer wanted to recreate.

The painting is composed of semi-sheer Japanese paper layered over a fabric backing, with both components stitched together along the top edge. The fabric backing is looped at the top to create a hanging sleeve, allowing a rod to be inserted for wall mounting. For transportation, the painting was rolled around a tube and packed in a crate, while the horsehair ponytail was wrapped separately in acid-free tissue and placed in its own box. Upon arrival at NGV Australia, the rolled component was laid flat on Tyvek (a lightweight, durable, and water-resistant material) to relax the curves, and the horsehair was inspected for pests—none were found. To prevent public interaction, the painting has been positioned behind the desk case, ensuring it remains out of reach. The painting is considered light-sensitive and is displayed at 50 lux.

Installation view of *Martin Grant 2025* featuring *This Year's Fashion*, Jenny Watson, 1984
Photographer: Jessie Obialor

MARTIN GRANT LOOK 2, JUMPSUIT, 2006

ABOUT

Look 2 (right) is a jumpsuit from Martin Grant's autumn-winter 2006–07 collection, crafted from wool tweed and silk, and structured with plastic boning.

EXHIBITION DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The second exhibition space is defined by a strong architectural language, evoking the atmosphere of a fashion runway that runs through the centre of the room, flanked by more intimate spaces around the perimeter. These side galleries represent two distinct environments: a triangular room and a series of diorama-style rooms. The diorama spaces offer viewers a sense of discovery—as if granted secret glimpses into Martin Grant's Paris studio. Hidden from view until visitors progress past the main runway, these rooms are adorned with custom wallpaper featuring imagery from Grant's studio, archival photoshoots, and textiles drawn from materials used in his garments. Together, they create an immersive, layered experience that reflects both the public spectacle and private world of Grant's practice.

Look 2 is displayed alongside *Look 6*, featuring a sweater and skirt ensemble from 2006. The skirt, crafted in a black and cream wool houndstooth, complements the champagne tone of the *Look 2* jumpsuit. This diorama room is wallpapered with an enlarged photograph of the houndstooth fabric, enveloping the audience in the rich textures showcased.

CONSERVATION CONSIDERATIONS

Look 2, jumpsuit 2006 is notably small, and the mannequin pose—with arms raised above the head—results in a relatively broad back. If the display required the work to be viewed from all angles, a smaller mannequin would have been necessary to maintain a proper fit. However, since the garment is only visible from the front, the conservation team were able to employ a discrete solution: cotton tape was threaded through the hook and eye closures at the back, mimicking a corset-style lacing. This approach maintained the silhouette without placing stress on the fabric or making any permanent alterations. This is just one of several conservation display techniques used in the gallery to ensure each piece is presented beautifully, while remaining fully protected.

Installation view of Martin Grant 2025 featuring *Look 6 sweater and skirt*, 2006 (opposite left)

Installation view of Martin Grant 2025 featuring *Look 2 jumpsuit*, 2006 (opposite right)

Photographer: Sean Fennessy





MARTIN GRANT
LOOK 9, DRESS, 2008
AUTUMN-WINTER 2008-2009

ABOUT

Look 9, dress, autumn-winter 2008–09 collection features a dress made of wool crepe with an acetate lining and metal fastenings.

EXHIBITION DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The exhibition design draws inspiration from theatrical staging, immersing visitors in a dramatic, performance-like atmosphere. The space features black-painted walls and thick black carpeting, creating a darkened environment that enhances the visual impact of the displays. Twelve garments are presented on flat, round grey plinths, each illuminated by focused shafts of light. The grey plinths provide a subtle contrast against the dark carpet, accentuating the garments and defining the spotlighted areas. To ensure the safety of the exhibits and comfort of the visitors, a touch distance of 900 mm is maintained around each plinth, allowing for close viewing while preventing direct contact. The layout is thoughtfully arranged to facilitate easy movement throughout the space, with the majority of the garments suspended from existing ceiling beams, contributing to the theatrical ambience and emphasising the garments' forms. This design approach not only showcases the garments effectively but also creates an engaging and memorable experience for the audience. Complementing the visual elements, classical music softly plays throughout the space, adding an auditory dimension that enhances the immersive atmosphere and evokes a sense of timeless elegance.

Martin Grant
Installation view of *Martin Grant 2025* featuring *Look 9* Autumn-Winter 2008-2009
Photographer: Sean Fennessy

CONSERVATION CONSIDERATIONS

For the exhibition, the conservation team crafted 12 bespoke hanging forms, including a custom mannequin for the *Look 9* dress—a substantial wool garment weighing approximately 5kg. Given its halter-neck design and the exhibition's extended duration of nearly 10 months, it was imperative to ensure the dress's weight did not cause stretching or damage over time. To address this, the team employed Fosshape, a heat-activated, non-woven polyester fabric known for its versatility in conservation work. The Fosshape was pinned onto the mannequin to form a 'skin'; a steamer was then used to heat the material ensuring that no damage is done to the mannequin. When exposed to steam or dry heat, Fosshape can be moulded into rigid, lightweight structures that conform precisely to the garment's shape, providing robust support without adding significant weight. This material's ability to retain its form once cooled makes it ideal for creating custom mounts that minimise stress on textiles. The conservation team also used additional reinforcements such as a flexible wire mesh lining to ensure that *Look 9* dress is securely supported and maintains its integrity throughout the exhibition. To fill out the silhouette, the garment also has a hoop skirt underneath and a large piece of gathered tulle to keep the shape of the skirt in place.

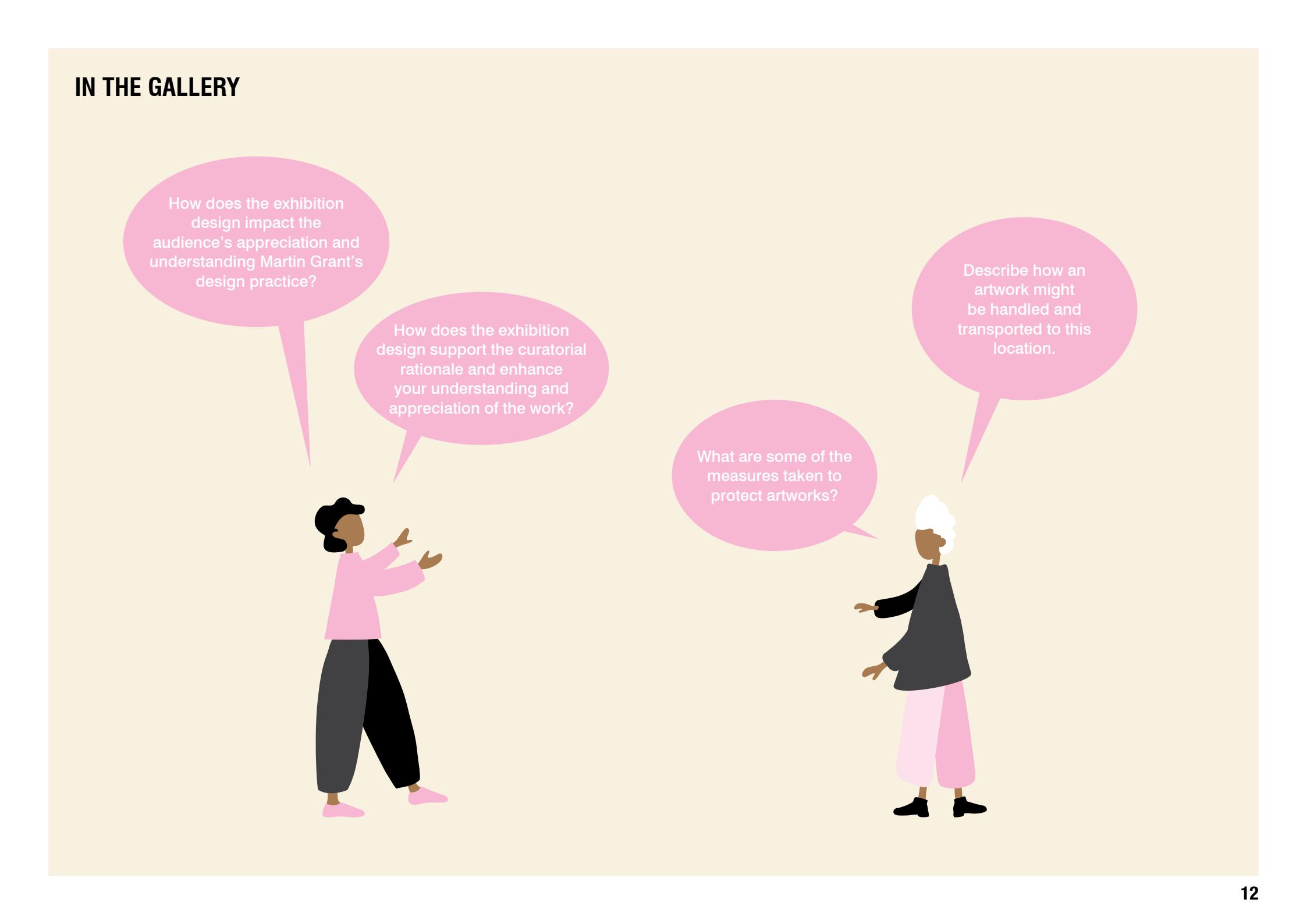
All of the forms were created in the conservation lab before being transported to the exhibition space ahead of the exhibition. Due to the weight of *Look 9*, it was transported in a cardboard textile box, allowing it to lie horizontally to ensure the shape was not compromised in transit. The textile box was placed in a crate for transportation. Loans from private and public collections began arriving at the Gallery about a month before the exhibition, during the installation process. Condition reports were completed for each garment before it was mounted on its form and positioned in the exhibition space.



Martin Grant

Photograph of *Look 9* dress Image supplied by NGV Conservation

IN THE GALLERY



How does the exhibition design impact the audience's appreciation and understanding Martin Grant's design practice?

How does the exhibition design support the curatorial rationale and enhance your understanding and appreciation of the work?

Describe how an artwork might be handled and transported to this location.

What are some of the measures taken to protect artworks?

NGV SCHOOLS
PROGRAM PARTNERS



The NGV warmly thanks Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family for their support of the NGV School Support Program.