The Sir Russell and Lady Grimwade Bequest comprises works of art and furniture primarily from the colonial period (c. 1788–1880). Art, industry and science are predominant themes of the collection, which has a distinctly Australian character in its depiction of exploration, settlement and the development of Australia as a nation, and Melbourne as a city.

A man with an inquiring mind, Russell Grimwade (1879–1955) believed that curiosity was the basis of all knowledge. He believed strongly in civilisation as a science and the importance of being informed by the past. Hoping to stimulate further scientific endeavour and cultural preservation, Russell and Mab Grimwade bequeathed their collection to the University of Melbourne in 1949. Following the death of Lady Grimwade, the collection, along with their home, Miegunyah (which was later sold), was accepted by the university in 1973.

The Grimwade collection is a comprehensive record of colonial history, cultural heritage and Australian identity. This exhibition represents the legacy of a collector's eye for craftsmanship over imagination. It provides a selection of works whose domestic scale and somewhat prosaic aesthetic lends them a quality of familiarity.

William Strutt's *Bushrangers* (1887) is a particular highlight of the collection and this exhibition. Based on a true event, it depicts a robbery by a gang of bushrangers that occurred between St Kilda and Brighton on 16 October 1852 and provides a moral tale of the equality of all men and women in the face of danger. Russell Grimwade's expertise in the area of Australian prints and Australiana is displayed in the set of six outstanding hand-coloured lithographs by John Skinner Prout that depict views of Melbourne and Geelong. Other highlights include Charles Nettleton's 1860s and 1870s photographs that document Melbourne's attractive parklands, and its burgeoning educational and cultural institutions. Russell Grimwade held a particular passion for the eucalypt and in 1920 he published *An anthography of the eucalypts*. Exhibited here is a self-fashioned *Timber eucalypt specimen cabinet* built to store his specimens. The exhibition also includes a selection of glass paperweights from France and Czechoslovakia, which were collected by the Grimwades during various world trips, and later decorated their home.