VISIONS PAST and PRESENT:
CELEBRATING 40 YEARS
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Published by the Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne, to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the University Art Gallery.

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Opposite

Attica Coin silver
2.4 cm diameter
The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Classics Collection.
John Hugh Sutton Memorial Bequest.

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University art museums and their collections are central to the cultural life of a university. The first-hand experience of works of art in the museum setting and on campus is one of the great life-enriching experiences for students, staff and the general public at the University of Melbourne. Art on campus, through the collections and teaching, has been important at Melbourne throughout the twentieth century. Great art collections have been presented to the University since the 1930s and art history has been taught here since 1946, when the position of Herald Professor of Fine Arts was first established. The development of the art collection and the teaching of art history are intertwined and their growth and development form some of the proudest achievements of the University of Melbourne. Nowadays, with multi-disciplinary approaches in a range of courses, the art collection is used for teaching purposes across several faculties.

The University of Melbourne is fortunate in its art collection, managed through the Ian Potter Museum of Art. The Potter is the jewel in the crown of the University’s thirty cultural collections. Developed almost entirely through the generosity of donors who have an association with the University, the University of Melbourne Art Collection distils and reflects human experience across time, from works unveiled in classical archaeology to the insights of contemporary artists. Its great strengths lie in Australian art from the nineteenth century to the present, a perfect alignment with the history of this University.

Parts of the collection are displayed across campus, enlivening our community in many precincts and faculties through engagement with art. Yet the collection’s greatest emblem and permanent home is the splendid Ian Potter Museum of Art on Swanston Street. In all its locations, the collection is used as much by the general visitor who enjoys and appreciates art, as by students, staff and scholars for research.

Visions past and present: celebrating 40 years bespeaks the generosity of those who have donated works of art to the University. It also celebrates the vision of those who established the University Art Gallery forty years ago. The book captures highlights from the University of Melbourne Art Collection as it has grown since the nineteenth century. On the Gallery’s fortieth anniversary, Visions past and present: celebrating 40 years is a fitting homage to the collectors and staff who have built an important visual arts tradition.

GLYN DAVIS AC
Vice-Chancellor
INTRODUCTION

The genesis of the Ian Potter Museum of Art, with its prominent building at the top end of Swanston Street, lies in activities of the 1960s and early 1970s that led to the formation of a University Art Gallery in 1972. The driving force behind this was Ray Marginson, then Vice-Principal, who, with a number of others, was keen to ensure that the University’s already substantial art collection received due care, would be properly displayed, and would continue to develop into the future. The collection had grown in an ad hoc manner since the first acquisition—a portrait of inaugural Chancellor Sir Redmond Barry—in 1881. Further donations during the first half of the twentieth century, including notable gifts from a range of donors—Dr Samuel Arthur Ewing (1938), Mrs E. Phillips Fox (1939), Samuel Courtault (1946), the Rupert Bunny Estate (1948), Dr Leonhard Adam (1960), Norman Lindsay (1969), Macgeorge Bequest (1970)—meant that the collection now had some substance and contained many works of art of considerable quality. It was, however, a dispersed collection, located in various departments across the campus, without any central structure. Special displays were staged at various times: notably the Ewing Collection when it was donated in 1938. Exhibitions such as A private view of works of art presented to the University of Melbourne (1951) showcased the collection more widely. These shows generated catalogues, providing us with valuable early records of the collection. A Society of Collectors was also formed in 1954 to develop the University’s collection.

During its first years the University Art Gallery, originally housed in the John Medley Building (designed by Roy Grounds), staged an impressive range of exhibitions. These included survey shows of the work of Robin Boyd, Rupert Bunny, Frank Hodgkinson, Donald Laycock and Fred Williams, and exhibitions of Groote Eylandt art, Cypriot antiquities, classical coins and medieval manuscripts. The balanced program, offering an impressive and diverse mixture of historical, modern art and contemporary exhibitions, has remained a feature of the Potter to the present day. With more than 450 exhibitions in forty years, the Potter has an enviable record in presenting works of art to the University community and the general public. Many artists have received their first showing in a public art museum at the University. The Potter has also consistently supported mid-career and emerging artists in its program.

The appointment of staff to manage the art collection began in 1968. With the arrival of Betty Clarke as Curator (a part-time position) in 1970 to look after and manage the collection and exhibitions, a more professional approach was adopted. After this appointment, things moved quickly; in 1971 the comprehensive Catalogue of works of art in the University and its affiliated colleges with a catalogue of the collection in the Department of Classical Studies was produced. In the same year an exhibition, Melbourne University Collection, was staged at the National Gallery of Victoria. However, the Inaugural exhibition, launching the Gallery, was not held until March 1972. This date marks the foundation of the University Art Gallery, now the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, which is being celebrated throughout 2012.

Opposite HOWARD ARKLEY

Floriated residence, c. 1994
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
204 x 153 cm
The Vizard Foundation Art Collection of the 1990s, acquired 1994.
On loan to the Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne. © The Estate of Howard Arkley, Licensed by Palli Roffe Contemporary Art
In 1975 the Gallery moved to the Old Physics building, which had been renovated by Daryl Jackson. Space was thus gained for the collection, its storage and display. It also continued an active schedule of exhibitions. Increased demands for space, necessitated by a growing collection, its conservation and a busy exhibition schedule, led to further building developments and the eventual formation of the University of Melbourne Museum of Art. The Ian Potter Gallery and Art Conservation Centre, the latter under the direction of Robyn Stoggett, was created in 1989. This was housed in the former Physics Annex, on Swanston Street, refurbished under direction of architect Greg Burgess. In 1998 all activities were united in the newly-built Ian Potter Museum of Art, designed by Nonda Katsalidis, which combined exhibition galleries and storage for the collection and its conservation. With the inevitable expansion of conservation services and the establishment in 2004 of the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC) as an academic centre elsewhere on campus, conservation services were separated from the Potter, but the CCMC retains its important role in conservation of the University Art Collection.

The University’s Art Collection, large and wide-ranging, is not limited to those works of art under the custodianship of the Potter. The Print Collection is held in the Baillieu Library (although the Potter also collects prints), and the Grainger Museum contains many works of art, as does the further holding of the Potter. In addition, University colleges have their own art collections, and the University owns numerous other cultural collections, some of which include works of art; but the Potter remains the principal custodian of the University’s vast and significant art collection and holds and displays the Classics and Archaeology collection. Apart from one medieval work of exceptional artistic quality, this volume is dedicated to the works held in the Potter.

Although 1972 marks the year the University established an art gallery, the collection is much older. The portrait of the University’s first Chancellor, Sir Redmond Barry, by G. F. Foliingsby, presented to the University the year after Barry’s death in 1880, set in train the development of the collection, largely through gifts, during the twentieth century, leading to the beginning of a long and continuing tradition of commissioning and acquiring portraits of notable University figures. The University also has a history of acquiring works of art to enhance buildings on the campus. Many of these, notably the great Leckie window (1935), commissioned from Napper Wailer, now so dramatically installed in the Potter’s atrium, form a significant part of the collection.

The Australian art collection spans the early nineteenth century to the present day. In all media. It is not a comprehensive collection of Australian art in the manner of the state and national galleries, but it does have great strengths through individual masterpieces and rich holdings of work by selected artists. The Potter is the essential collection to visit in order to study and appreciate more fully the work of major artists—Conrad Martens, Nicholas Chevalier, Samuel Prout, Frederick McCubbin—and one of Australia’s most famous bushranger paintings, William Strutt’s Bushrangers, Victoria, Australia 1852 (1887). Key early twentieth-century works include Rupert Bunny’s The first step (c. 1908–11), E. Phillips Fox’s Lamplight (c. 1911) and Bernard Hall’s extraordinary Despair (c. 1916). There are also holdings of paintings by Hans Heysen, Walter Withers and Hugh Ramsay.

The present shape of the collection was determined by a single major donation. In 1938 Dr Samuel Arthur Ewing donated a group of nearly sixty Australian oil paintings, watercolours, prints and drawings, ranging in date from the early 1860s to 1940. These include such artists as Rupert Bunny, Louis Ruvelot, Nicholas Chevalier, E. Phillips Fox, Bernard Hall, Hans Heysen, Frederick McCubbin, David Davies, Max Meldrum, John Ford Paterson, Arthur Streeton, Walter Withers and Blemings Young. Gifts attract more gifts, and the following year Mrs E. Phillips Fox donated two major paintings by her late husband.

The earliest Australian work in the collection is a rare set of prints published by Absalom West, showing views of Sydney and environs. Printed in Sydney in 1812, they are some of the first prints produced in Australia, and form the foundation of the fine group of nineteenth-century Australian prints, drawings, watercolours and oil paintings that include works depicting Western Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, as well as Victoria. The nineteenth-century collection includes fine paintings by major artists—Conrad Martens, Nicholas Chevalier, Samuel Prout, Frederick McCubbin—and one of Australia’s most famous bushranger paintings, William Strutt’s Bushrangers, Victoria, Australia 1852 (1887). Key early twentieth-century works include Rupert Bunny’s The first step (c. 1908–11), E. Phillips Fox’s Lamplight (c. 1911) and Bernard Hall’s extraordinary Despair (c. 1916). There are also holdings of paintings by Hans Heysen, Walter Withers and Hugh Ramsay.

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A year after the establishment in 1946 of the Herald Chair of Fine Arts, with Joseph Burke as its inaugural professor, the University received an extraordinary gift from Stephen Courtaud: a delicate late watercolour and a group of prints by J. M. W. Turner. Stephen Courtaud, who had previously visited Australia, was a brother of Samuel Courtaud, who had founded the Courtaud Institute of Art in London in 1932, at which Burke had studied. As would be expected, strong support for developing the collection and using it for teaching came from art historians: the connection between academic art history, art teaching and the art museum remains central to the combined study and enjoyment of the visual arts at the University.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the collection continued to develop with donations of both collections and individual works. In 1971 Mrs Olive Hirschfeld donated a large collection of works by her late husband Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack. With further donations from her, there are now several hundred works by Hirschfeld Mack in the collection. Another transformative gift to the University was the substantial bequest of Sir Russell and Lady Grimwade in 1973. This enriched the collections by expanding the holdings of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Australian art in a most dramatic manner. A feature of the Grimwades’ collection is visual representation of the development of Australia under European settlement. The bequest also includes European and Australian decorative arts.
While modest acquisition funds over the years have enabled purchases to add breadth to the collection, the tradition of donating works of art (or funds to purchase works of art) remains central to the ongoing development of the collection. Other significant donors to the collection in more recent decades include David and Marion Adams, Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE, Patricia Fullerton, Denise de Gruchy, Gerard Herbst and James Mollison AO. The latest example of this benefaction is the donation by Helen Brack of John Brack’s striking painting *The Queen* (1988).

Australian artists from the second half of the twentieth century are well represented, with significant works by leading artists such as Arthur Boyd, John Perceval, Ralph Balson, Sidney Nolan, John Brack and Fred Williams. As for the 1980s onwards, the collection includes works by Peter Booth, Robert Jacks, Inge King, Robert Klippel, Jenny Watson, Brent Harris, Vivienne Shark LeWitt and others. Australian art from the 1990s is mostly shown at the Potter though the Vizard Foundation Collection of Art of the 1990s. This collection of 124 works, which has been on long-term loan to the Potter since 1994, includes artists such as Brook Andrew, Howard Arkley, Gordon Bennett, Juan Davila, Destiny Deacon, Robert Hunter, Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Tracey Moffatt, Patricia Piccinini, Sally Smart and Ricky Swallow.

While the principal focus of the collection is Australian art since the early nineteenth century, non-Australian works include the large, early seventeenth-century *Peasant wedding dance* by Pieter Brueghel III, the luminous Turner watercolour and prints already mentioned, a fine drawing by Henry Moore, a large group of over two thousand twentieth-century posters from Europe, United States and Asia, and nearly two thousand antiquities.

Australian Indigenous art features with an important early group of Groote Eylandt bark paintings from the 1940s, which form part of the large ethnographic Leonhard Adam Collection of International Indigenous Culture. The most spectacular bark paintings in the University’s collection—some of the finest in Australia—commissioned and collected in Arnhem Land from 1935 to the early 1940s by Donald Thomson, currently reside in Museum Victoria, on long-term loan from the University since 1970. More recent works by Indigenous artists in the collection include paintings by Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Butcher Cherel and Rusty Peters, and photographs by Destiny Deacon.

The collection and exhibition program has been guided by many hands over the years. Frances Lindsay was appointed Director in 1984 and oversaw the growth and expansion of the University Art Gallery during the 1980s and 1990s, with support in the University from Vice-Chancellors David Caro and David Pennington, Dr Ray Margins, Professor John Peynter and Professor Margaret Maclean (as Herald Professor of Fine Arts). It was under Lindsay’s direction that the superb building we now occupy, the Ian Potter Museum of Art (whose construction was generously supported by funds from The Ian Potter Foundation and many other donors), was opened to the public in 1998.
Architect Nonda Katsilidis brilliantly solved the limitations imposed by the narrow site by creating a tall elegant structure with exhibition galleries on three levels, overseen by an administration floor on the top level. The scale and sequence of galleries—classic rectangular spaces, high ceilings, attractive floor materials of polished concrete and timber, abundant daylight—remain an ideal setting for exhibiting works of art from different periods and cultures, which the collection and exhibition program necessitate. The building is bisected vertically by a dramatic staircase that leads the visitor to the upper floors, winding around Napier Waller’s superbly installed stained-glass window. The Leckie window (1935) is one of two works—the other being Christine O’Loughlin’s Cultural rubble (1993) on the façade—that have been incorporated permanently into the fabric of the building. Following Lindsay’s departure to the National Gallery of Victoria, Dr Chris McAuliffe commenced as director of the Potter in 2000 and has enhanced the contemporary focus through publications, public programs and exhibitions, including implementation of the biennial Basil Sellers Art Prize. As Acting Director for twelve months in 2011–12, it is a pleasure and honour to continue the tradition of working with this great collection and in this fine institution.

Visions past and present: celebrating 40 years—a small but concentrated sample—showcases the University of Melbourne Art Collection. The collection can be savoured more fully by regular visits or via the Potter’s website. The University’s long-term commitment to the development, housing and maintenance of the Cultural Collections is a notable and visionary contribution to staff, students and the general public. The Ian Potter Museum of Art is proud of its role as custodian of the key works in this collection. It is an achievement—and a legacy—to be celebrated in our fortieth year.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Visions past and present: celebrating 40 years is dedicated to the many whose generosity to the University of Melbourne has built this great collection. This volume is very much a collaborative work, and I thank the many authors—selected for their association with the University of Melbourne—who have contributed with enthusiasm so generously to this volume. Their fascinating and lively contributions add to our understanding of the University Art Collection and build on previous books on the collection, Potter (1998) and Treasures: highlights of the cultural collections of the University of Melbourne (2003). The present volume would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the Gordon Darling Foundation and a grant from the University’s Cultural Relations Advisory Group (CCRAG), both of which recognised the need for a new volume on the Potter’s collection to celebrate our fortieth anniversary. I am also most grateful to all those who have provided assistance to produce this volume, especially Potter staff, past and present. I thank Wendy Sutherland for editing the text, Marianna Berek-Lewis for its beautiful design and Paul Murphy of Australian Book Connection for production and printing.

CHRISTOPHER MENZ
Acting Director
Carved ivory (elephant and hippopotamus) was considered a luxury product in the ancient Near East and was especially popular in the 9th to 7th centuries BCE in Mesopotamia. At Nimrud, in Fort Shalmaneser, archaeologist Max Mallowan and his wife Agatha Christie discovered store rooms filled with thousands of ivory pieces. Others were found discarded or dumped in wells. It is assumed that the large quantities of ivory found in Assyria were imported as booty or tribute.

This ivory (from Fort Shalmaneser, room SW37) depicts a cow in low relief, with its head bent down ready to lick its calf; the latter in this instance was carved separately and is not included or did not survive. The realistic rendering of the cow, evident in the musculature of the rib cage and legs, suggests an accomplished ivory carver. This experience is also conveyed in the life-like qualities expressed in the animal’s face. The cow and suckling calf motif relates to the Egyptian myth of Isis and her son Horus, who were equated in Phoenician religion with Astarte and her son Melqart.

This plaque was probably intended for the side or back of a chair, or other piece of wooden furniture. Stone Assyrian palace reliefs illustrate elaborate royal furniture—thrones, stools, beds and couches—inlaid with ivory. Ivory was also used for cosmetic boxes and other toiletry items. The intricate ivories were carved with great skill. Some were inlaid with coloured glass or stone, others were polished or covered with gold leaf. Ivory of the first millennium BCE is divided into Phoenician, Syrian and Assyrian styles. The Phoenician style often features Egyptian stylistic influences.

Agatha Christie photographed and preserved many of the Nimrud ivories and records in her autobiography that she cleaned them using a fine knitting needle and a pot of face cream. The University of Melbourne has three Nimrud ivories, believed to have been assigned to the then Department of Middle Eastern Studies in acknowledgement of the financial support given to the British excavations (1949–63). The date of acquisition is not known.

Andrew Jamieson
This small vessel is only 18 cm high, with lid in place. It is a miniature form of a larger and more elaborate vessel used in marriage ritual, which was often found in the tombs of women in Paestum, South Italy, where this was made. It is painted in the red-figure technique—the figures are ‘reserved’ from the black-painted background, so that they appear in the natural colour of the reddish clay.

The subject matter is appropriate for a marriage vessel. On the front is seated (on an invisible chair) a bare-breasted female, wearing a necklace and a cloak draped around her lower body and legs. Her hair is short, dark and curly; a small earring is visible. She has her arms rather elegantly extended to either side, with hands turned down as though to hold something, perhaps ribbons or a small pail for ritual washing. Hellenistic women did not appear bare-breasted, so this is probably the goddess Aphrodite herself, who presided over marriage.

On the other side is a bird with bars on its wings and tail, and a speckled chest. It is standing on a rock, symbolic of the outdoors. It can be identified as a wryneck, iynx torquilla, the love-magic bird of Aphrodite. It is a member of the woodpecker family and can be seen in Greece and Italy today. We hear from Aristotle that it could turn its head completely around. In mythology, Iynx was the daughter of Pan and Echo but was changed into a wryneck by Hera, jealous of her husband Zeus’s attraction to her. The word iynx also invokes the magic wheel, invented by Aphrodite, which attracted lovers. The circular object above the bird is a garland.

So the imagery, on both sides, is all to do with bridal ritual. This small vase was probably a funerary offering, celebrating the one important occasion in a woman’s life: marriage.

Heather Jackson
The head has been sheared off from just above the eyes to almost the top of the crown. This could well have been caused by a blow from the excavating instrument when the portrait was found. The nose is also badly broken. There are thousands of classical portraits in collections all over the world, and only a handful have original noses. It was the part of the face most prone to damage. The eyes, on close inspection, have been subjected to small blows which mean that one cannot tell whether originally the pupils and irises were drilled or not; probably they were, given the date of the head. It was an innovation of the Trajanic-Hadrianic period to make the eyes more realistic. The cheekbones are prominent. There are two lines on each side of the face, one from the inner edge of the eye, the other from the end of the nose, suggesting a mature man. A thick moustache covers the upper lip. The lips are slightly parted. The hair is combed forward from the crown of the head, meeting a short but untended beard. At the nape of the neck it is cut across low down. The hair and beard are not sharply drilled, but rather soft. The head is broken off its body at the top of the neck.

Roman portraiture is famous for its verism, but this can be viewed as an innovation only by those unacquainted with, for example, Egyptian and Etruscan portraiture. The face in question is that of a real person, not heroic in any sense. The main features, however, which would provide us with clues to date and identity are mostly lacking. The vital arrangement of the hair across the brow is missing; this would have been useful for comparative purposes. There is no trace of clothing, which might have shown a Roman toga or cuirass or a Greek himation. Scientific analysis of the marble would allow us to be more definite about the provenance. The only thing we have to rely on is the fact that the face is bearded. This, as is well known, is a feature of Roman portraiture from the time of Hadrian, who wished to be seen as a Greek philosopher; previously Romans were clean-shaven.

For unprovenanced and unidentified sculpture one can only produce suggestive parallels. Everything points to the Greek world. Our man is most likely a philosopher.

R.T. Ridley

This leaf is one of two, acquired by the Baillieu Library, from a large medieval choir book, called a gradual. The gradual contained the music and chants for the Mass or Eucharistic service throughout the Church year. Set on a large lectern, its contents could be read by members of the Choir standing before it. Music rendered in black square notation on four-line red staves appeared largely as a result of the theoretical writings of Guido d’Arezzo in the eleventh century. Especially in Italy, some of the most talented artists of the day were involved in the illumination of large richly decorated choir books throughout the late Medieval period and the Renaissance.

The high quality illumination of this leaf is characteristic of late fourteenth-century Umbrian art. It possibly comes from a book or set of books made in Perugia. Many of the splendid choir books made for the city’s churches have never left the area, and they offer a sound basis of comparison for the Melbourne leaves.

This leaf celebrates the joint feast of Saints Peter and Paul and its introit or introductory chant is signalled by a depiction of the apostolic pair. Distinctive features of the page, compatible with a Perugian origin, include the relationship of the finely written music and script to the decorative design of the initial and borders. The modelling of the figures of the two apostles, the colouring of their robes and the confident delineation of glance and gesture are characteristic of the monumental art of the region as, for example, in the trecento frescoes of nearby Assisi.

The rendering of Saints Peter and Paul reflects traditional iconography combined with an insightful, personal interpretation which often characterises the illustration of these books. This feast celebrates Peter and Paul as the founders and leaders of the early Church. The two are also known, however, for their differing emphases on the adoption of Judaic customs and the fact that their differences were only resolved after considerable discussion and certain supernatural intervention. Here, in addition to being shown with their customary attributes of keys and sword respectively, the pair grasp hands and gaze at each other intently in a direct and personal expression of their co-operation.

Work of this quality relates to the context of both the University Library and Art Collection, while the musicological and art historical aspects signalled by this leaf continue to be the object of sustained investigation and publication by Melbourne University scholars.

Margaret Manion

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, LEAF FROM AN ILLUMINATED GRADUAL

This leaf is one of two, acquired by the Baillieu Library, from a large medieval choir book, called a gradual. The gradual contained the music and chants for the Mass or Eucharistic service throughout the Church year. Set on a large lectern, its contents could be read by members of the Choir standing before it. Music rendered in black square notation on four-line red staves appeared largely as a result of the theoretical writings of Guido d’Arezzo in the eleventh century. Especially in Italy, some of the most talented artists of the day were involved in the illumination of large richly decorated choir books throughout the late Medieval period and the Renaissance.

The high quality illumination of this leaf is characteristic of late fourteenth-century Umbrian art. It possibly comes from a book or set of books made in Perugia. Many of the splendid choir books made for the city’s churches have never left the area, and they offer a sound basis of comparison for the Melbourne leaves.

This leaf celebrates the joint feast of Saints Peter and Paul and its introit or introductory chant is signalled by a depiction of the apostolic pair. Distinctive features of the page, compatible with a Perugian origin, include the relationship of the finely written music and script to the decorative design of the initial and borders. The modelling of the figures of the two apostles, the colouring of their robes and the confident delineation of glance and gesture are characteristic of the monumental art of the region as, for example, in the trecento frescoes of nearby Assisi.

The rendering of Saints Peter and Paul reflects traditional iconography combined with an insightful, personal interpretation which often characterises the illustration of these books. This feast celebrates Peter and Paul as the founders and leaders of the early Church. The two are also known, however, for their differing emphases on the adoption of Judaic customs and the fact that their differences were only resolved after considerable discussion and certain supernatural intervention. Here, in addition to being shown with their customary attributes of keys and sword respectively, the pair grasp hands and gaze at each other intently in a direct and personal expression of their co-operation.

Work of this quality relates to the context of both the University Library and Art Collection, while the musicological and art historical aspects signalled by this leaf continue to be the object of sustained investigation and publication by Melbourne University scholars.

Margaret Manion

Margaret Manion

Margaret Manion

Margaret Manion

Margaret Manion
The boisterous mood is set by the energetic dancing peasant couples at the foreground of the painting. To the left two couples engage in excited sexual foreplay, watched on the right by a man who displays himself as inebriated. By contrast, in the calm background of the painting the bride sits at a table before the cloth of honour. She is surrounded by witnesses to the marriage contract, among whom an elderly white-haired man may be identified as the groom, his hand attempting to make contact with the bride’s above a plate. Her expression is grumpy, bored, her body swollen as though pregnant: in short a disgruntled bride, who is set apart from the revellers. In the background there are many animated heads, couples engaged in cheeky kissing, sackbut playing, and figures exhibiting unrestrained drunkenness, urinating and guzzling. Dusk falls in the background as a pattern of interlaced black trunks of barren trees make silhouettes before the fertile new green growth of young leafy trees.

Pieter Brueghel was the last in a line of a great painter’s family dynasty and he appropriated compositions from his father Pieter Brueghel the Younger (1564–1637) and grandfather Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1530–69), to exhibit his lineage and artistic identity. They must have found a ready market. It is close in composition to Pieter the Elder’s Wedding dance (Detroit Institute of Arts), but even closer to an engraving after Brueghel by Pieter van der Heyden. How should such a scene be interpreted? None of the details suggests an actual marriage. Is the piece satirical or does it celebrate the festivities that it represents? Is the painting a celebration of the fertility of peasant life or a warning against vice?

In 1968 Professor Carl de Gruchy bought the work from the Pulitzer Gallery, London, which had bought it from a Dr J. Henschen of Basel, Switzerland. Brueghel’s painting is displayed in the Karagheusian Room at University House in a setting of nineteenth-century French furniture that appropriates designs by the French mannerist artist Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, appropriately as a copy among copies.

Jaynie Anderson
In 1812 an entrepreneurial emancipist, Absalom West, started a new venture: in addition to owning an inn, brewery and ship, he became Australia’s first publisher of images, printing, promoting and selling views of the young colony of Sydney. From the earliest days of British exploration of the continent, an eager audience in Europe sought images of the land, its inhabitants, and its unusual flora and fauna. As the colony grew, depictions of the settlements showed their development, the expansion of cleared land, and the triumph (so they thought) of civilisation over the wilderness.

West used several assigned convicts for his production, with John Eyre and Joseph Lycett drawing scenes that Philip Slager and Walter Preston etched into the copper plates. Following the success of a two-part print of Sydney, West embarked on a series, which he advertised in the *Sydney Gazette* as ‘a select Collection of beautiful Views in New South Wales, drawn and engraved by Artists of Superior abilities, resident in this Colony’ (7 November 1812), and urged ‘Ladies, Gentlemen and others ... to patronise this first Specimen of the Graphic Arts presented to the Inhabitants of the Colony’ (3 December 1812). The resulting twenty-four plates were published between January 1813 and September 1814.

One of several panoramas in the series, plates 3 and 4 show Sydney from ‘Bene Long’s Point’ (named for Wangal man Woolarawarre Bennelong, who had briefly lived there), the current site of the Sydney Opera House. The view spans the grounds of Government House, at the rear left, across the distant town with its military barracks, St Philip’s Church, windmills, and mercantile buildings on the wharf, to Dawes Point. Ships fill Sydney Cove and the placement of two Indigenous figures in the left foreground is balanced by an artist, seen sketching at the right. The composition and technique are in many ways similar to printed views created throughout provincial Britain, although the artists worked under much more difficult circumstances, hampered by the shortage of paper, absence of printers’ ink, and the need to build their own intaglio press.

The University of Melbourne holds fifteen prints from this important early set, together with an impressive collection of colonial art collected over many years by Sir Russell Grimwade, who was a dedicated preserver of Australia’s early history.

Alisa Bunbury
WALTER PRESTON, etcher
BORN ENGLAND 1777, ARRIVED AUSTRALIA 1812, DIED AFTER 1821

JOHN EYRE, draughtsman
BORN COVENTRY, ENGLAND 1771, WORKED AUSTRALIA 1801–12, DIED AFTER 1812

View of part of Sydney, the capital of New South Wales
1812
plates 3 and 4 from Views in New South Wales,
published by Absalom West, Sydney, 1812–14
etching, 28 x 42.5 cm, 28.7 x 40.1 cm (plates)
The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Joseph Mallord William Turner travelled on the continent widely and often, especially through the decade of the 1830s and early 1840s, quite possibly as a distraction from his gradually darkening emotions. This watercolour was probably painted on the River Rhine at the city of Oberwesel in the Rhineland-Palatinate, either en route to Venice—the artist’s third, final, and enormously important visit in 1840—or else on his way home to England.1 In any case, by that date Turner knew the region very well indeed, and while his last ‘Venetian’ works represent an astonishingly self-conscious convergence of his techniques in the separate media of oil and watercolour, by contrast ‘German’ views such as this one demonstrate the degree to which Turner was still absorbed with stretching, developing, and extending to its outermost limits the watercolour medium, as a project in and of itself.

Certainly this sheet is an effortless fusion of the palest and most delicate washes; intense passages of colour and dark tone concentrated over certain circumscribed topographical or architectural and foreground elements, the better to evoke the atmosphere of their surroundings; the use of the long and craggy thumb-nail that he cultivated for ease of scraping back. Here Turner holds in perfect balance the necessity of providing just enough drawn detail to identify the place, and a particular genius for void and energy, for air and water, sun and cloud. Andrew Wilton has observed of Turner that ‘everything that watercolour has ever been called upon to do, he did’, 2 and this marvellous late drawing amply demonstrates the point. It was presented to the University by the brother of Samuel Courtauld, who founded the Courtauld Institute of Art in London.

Angus Trumble

1. The location was identified in a letter to the then registrar Anneke Weikamp dated 14 September 1988, by Prof. Dr. Hans Belting of the Institut für Kunstgeschichte in Munich, having previously been published as Andernach in Andrew Wilton’s catalogue Turner Watercolours in the Clore Gallery, London 1987, no. 1319, pp. 458–9.
John Skinner Prout was one of the finest professional artists to come to Australia during the mid-colonial period and he achieved considerable fame for his expressive portrayal of the Australian landscape. Certainly, the freshness and spontaneity of his handling reflected his commitment to the new fashion of ‘working en plein air’. Thus, when the artist moved to Hobart from Sydney in 1844, the vivid immediacy of his watercolour landscapes caused a sensation. As one contemporary, Louisa Anne Meredith, observed, Prout’s ‘very clever water-colour drawings’ gave rise to ‘a landscape-sketching and water-colour fever’ that raged throughout the local community.

Certain landscape subjects clearly held a particular fascination for Prout, and chief among these were the exotic fern-filled gullies in the foothills of Mount Wellington. Prout produced several watercolours of this scenery: in one, his wife and children are shown camping under the green canopy; in another, he himself appears as a diminutive figure sketching the giant ferns; while in a third version, he evokes the primeval quality of the scene by including a group of Aborigines, resting on the forest floor.

These images emphasise the untouched beauty of this uniquely antipodean setting, but the version in the University’s collection shows Prout depicting the Fern Tree Valley, at ‘Moss Fall’, on Mt Wellington, as it actually appeared—a popular sightseeing spot filled with holiday-makers. Louisa Anne Meredith, indeed, lamented this transformation, after she visited ‘some pretty fern-tree thickets’ in the 1840s:

Prout’s watercolour still retains some sense of the valley’s original magic, but ‘civilisation’ has definitely arrived.

Alison Inglis

2. L. A. Meredith, My Home in Tasmania, during a residence of nine years, London 1852, vol. 2, pp. 204-5.
4. The identification of this scene is based on the similarity of its composition to another work: Moss Fall, Fern Tree Valley, Van Diemen’s Land (1844-48), reproduced in T. Brown and H. Kolenberg, Skinner Prout in Australia 1840-48, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 1986, cat no. 84, pp. 33-4, 71.
This tranquil watercolour depicts the elegant Italianate mansion Toorak, which later gave the suburb its name. It was built c. 1848–51 for James Jackson, a successful merchant who died before he could occupy his impressive new house. Following the departure of Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe and the closure of his house Jolimont in 1854, Toorak became Victoria’s Government House, housing Governors Hotham, Barkly, Darling, the little-remembered Manners-Sutton (later Viscount Canterbury) and Bowen. Toorak reverted to private occupation in 1874 with the construction of the current Government House, and since 1956 has been the Swedish Church.

Unusually this Melbourne building was painted by the accomplished Sydney-based artist Conrad Martens. Martens was widely travelled, having visited South America, Tahiti and New Zealand (including a period on the Beagle, with Charles Darwin) prior to his arrival in Sydney in 1835. He subsequently explored many areas of eastern Australia, seeking scenes to paint, but he never came to Victoria, writing in 1870 that ‘[the colony of] Port Phillip is not sufficiently picturesque to draw me in that direction’. Nevertheless Martens is known to have painted two Melbourne scenes. He recorded in his Account Book on 20 February 1860 ‘“Toorac [sic] House” Melbourne’, and shortly after on 4 March ‘“Jolimont” Melbourne’, each entry annotated ‘Genl. Macarthur Pd £21.00’.

Edward (later Sir Edward) Macarthur (1789–1872) was the eldest son of John and Elizabeth Macarthur, early settler-farmers in Parramatta and Camden, New South Wales, who famously introduced merino sheep to the colony, and who were dedicated patrons of Martens. He served as a soldier in Europe and Australia and in 1854 was posted to Melbourne. With the deaths of Commander-in-Chief of Australia’s military forces Sir Robert Nible in May 1855 and of Governor Hotham in December of that year, Macarthur became Commander, and then Administrator, of Victoria. During this period he resided at Jolimont, moving to Toorak for the year of his acting-governorship, before returning to his military command, and Jolimont, upon Sir Henry Barkly’s arrival on Christmas Eve 1856.

Amid preparations for his retirement to England in 1860, Macarthur employed Martens to prepare a number of paintings for his departure. Toorak and Jolimont were commissioned as mementoes of his time in Melbourne, and painted from sketches, or early photographs, provided to the artist. This was a practice not unknown for Martens, although no other Australian scenes were created thus. Two watercolours (almost certainly Toorak and Jolimont) were sold by Major General James Macarthur-Ondslow at Lawsons, Sydney, on 13 February 1945, in which year Sir Russell Grimwade purchased Toorak. The location of Jolimont is currently unknown.

Alisa Bunbury
It is easy to pinpoint the location of the scene depicted in Nicholas Chevalier’s *Buffalo Ranges from the west*, 1862. It is a vista near the town of Nug Nug, approximately 250 kilometres north-east of Melbourne. Nestled between the Buffalo River and the sloping range, it is a beautiful spot, and one can easily imagine the scene, on a still, quiet morning, as the sun slowly rises behind the peaks, bathing the horizon in a luminous haze. It is somewhat harder to ascertain when the artist might have visited Nug Nug in order to experience such an impressive view.

Nicholas Chevalier arrived in Australia in 1854, after studying painting in Lausanne, Munich, London and Rome. In Melbourne he fell quickly into the company of artists such as Eugene von Guérard, Edward LaTrobe Bateman and S.T. Gill. Alongside von Guérard, Chevalier joined the 1858 expedition to the Dandenong Ranges and Baw Baw Plateau led by Alfred Howitt. In the 1860s Chevalier joined Georg von Neumayer on two explorations in Western Victoria. Unfortunately, neither Howitt nor von Neumayer’s expeditions went anywhere near the Buffalo Ranges, so the source of Chevalier’s inspiration remains unclear. It is even possible that it came from a sketch by another artist, such as von Guérard.

But perhaps this is to miss the point of Chevalier’s *Buffalo Ranges from the west*. Among critics then, as now, Chevalier’s work has tended to suffer in comparison to von Guérard’s, being seen as decorative, and lacking in visual tension. But Chevalier’s intentions are markedly different from those of his close companion. Von Guérard sought to capture the picturesque whole of the landscape by close attention to its minute details. In contrast, Chevalier’s paintings are not interested in either natural detail or the picturesque. In *Buffalo Ranges* the view is deliberately distorted; the vista is greatly foreshortened and is coupled with the delicate play of dawn light in order to present a much more imposing than accurate portrayal. In 1821 William Hazlitt described the picturesque as a yearning for ‘ideal deformity, not ideal beauty’. In *Buffalo Ranges from the west*, Chevalier is not trying to present something particular, but something universally beautiful. Rather than looking for tension or naturalism, we should just enjoy the warm, reflected glow of Chevalier’s vision, and allow it to transport us, not to Nug Nug, but to the arcadia of the cosmopolitan artist’s imagination.

Henry Skerritt
Louis Buvelot was born in Switzerland in 1814 and died in Victoria in 1888. In 1865, after having studied in Switzerland and Paris, he left Europe to settle in Australia. When he came to Australia he applied his thorough knowledge of European landscape painting to the new bush context. His technique and his ideas about landscape painting were informed by the French Barbizon School, which was influential in his native Switzerland, and his later work incorporates ideas of the picturesque. Buvelot’s immense influence on subsequent Australian painting, particularly the artists of the Heidelberg School, led Roberts and Streeton to refer to him in the 1890s as the ‘father of Australian painting’.

Buvelot enjoyed depicting rural scenes of areas around the city of Melbourne and he frequently travelled to sites such as the one depicted in the painting Yarra River at Mount Monda, 1879. This painting evokes a tranquil pastoral landscape in which the natural bushland has been tamed and cleared for farming. The people and their cattle inhabit the landscape but the human dwellings in the middle ground are barely noticed behind the distant trees. This compositional technique draws on ideas of the picturesque. The Yarra River, which dominates the foreground of the composition, is framed by the native trees which remain in the cleared landscape. The river leads our eye through the picture to the mountain range beyond. The sky, with its orange-tinged clouds, is illuminated by diffused light. Sunlight highlights the cleared paddock and the centre of the river, contrasting the deep shadows in the foreground of the painting.

Buvelot’s vision of the environment inhabited by European farms incorporates both an idealised notion of a tamed, and hence safe and welcoming, rural space and a realistic view of the natural landscape bathed in diffused Australian sunlight.

Amanda Burritt
After an arduous flight from London, the ailing Sir Russell Grimwade was carried off the plane at Melbourne. Despite his deteriorating health, he had undertaken the voyage in order to acquire William Strutt’s *Bushrangers*, Victoria, Australia 1852, 1887. Grimwade was a systematic and discerning collector of Australiana, and the painting would be the jewel in his collection. Within three months Grimwade had died, marking it as the definitive culmination of his collecting passions.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1887, *Bushrangers* was based upon accounts of a brazen robbery that occurred near St Kilda Road in Elwood while Strutt was resident in Victoria. The story had been thoroughly covered in the press, stoked with sensationalist vigour by the *Argus*. Three decades later, when Strutt came to immortalise the scene, the exploits of the Kelly gang lent it a contemporary currency. At the First Colonial Convention in London in 1887, questions of colonial law and order predominated, and Strutt’s painting spoke directly to the Imperial neuroses that young colonies were being torn between bourgeois respectability and the lure of vice. In Strutt’s tableau the stricken female figure—an easy stand-in for Queen Victoria—seeks comfort in the arms of her ineffectual consort, while remaining at the tantalising mercy of a handsome rogue. As the rule of God and law are strewn aside, the moral of the story is simple: vigilance was necessary to keep the young colonies on the righteous path.

When Grimwade acquired Strutt’s painting, the figure of the bushranger was making a final, heroic resurgence in the Australian national narrative, via the paintings of Sidney Nolan and Albert Tucker. As Grimwade’s final great acquisition, Strutt’s *Bushrangers* could not have been further from the radical nationalist ideal of swagmen, larrikins and bushrangers that these artists embodied. His was a genteel brand of nationalism that celebrated the pioneering efforts of explorers, pastoralists and industrialists, men like his father Frederick Sheppard Grimwade. These were the kinds of men pictured on the right of Strutt’s composition, and as sexy as the vagabond figure of the bushranger might be, it was on this side that Sir Russell Grimwade saw himself, and the tide of Australian history.

Henry F. Skerritt

WILLIAM STRUTT

Born Teignmouth, Devonshire, England 1825.
Worked Australia 1856–62, Died Wadhurst, England 1915

*Bushrangers*, Victoria, Australia 1887–88
Oil on canvas
75.7 x 156.6 cm

Scottish-born John Ford Paterson played an influential role in Melbourne’s progressive art circles of the later nineteenth century. His paintings were much admired for their lyrical interpretation of the Australian bush, and he became a founding member of various artists’ organisations, including the Victorian Artists Society in 1888. Lionel Lindsay declared he was ‘a quaint essentially artistic character, but he filled a big enough place in the art of his day’.1

Spending much of his early career in Scotland, Paterson was deeply influenced by the plein-air movement, especially as practised by the French-trained painters of the Glasgow School. He was fortunate to experience ‘Scottish Impressionism’ during its most innovative and vibrant period and, like many of his generation, began to enliven the usual subjects of rustic naturalism—pastoral life, coastal and river scenery—with a new attention to colour harmony and expressive handling.2

Returning permanently to Melbourne in 1884, Paterson re-established friendships with artists who shared his passion for painting outdoors. Indeed, Paterson’s large painting, Harverst time, near Berwick, 1892, is characterized by the bold, loose brushwork that one usually associates with the smaller plein-air studies produced in the artists’ camps around Melbourne at this time. Paterson’s distinctive palette, however, is apparent in the sunlit middle ground of warm pinkish-gold hues set against the darker bands of ‘purply’ grey in the distance, suggesting that his interest lay as much in ‘the exquisite arrangement of colour’ as the simple depiction of light and weather.3 The artist’s aims were later described in the following [Scottish-accented] words:

… Realism is no airt. … I think airt is a kind of suggestiveness, a hint, a kind o’ promise, something evanescent. ‘Tis a kind of spirituality o’ things I’m after … that’s real, an yet ye canna put your han’ to it.4

Alison Inglis

Bertram Mackennal’s Salome, c. 1895, was one of his most popular statuettes. Casts have been acquired by several public collections in Australia and the United Kingdom. Salome was always conceived as an intimate work in its own right, not as a reduction of a larger pre-existing work. The small scale explicitly reflects the radical 1890s British trend which sought to overcome the traditional, expected image of the monumental public sculpture as a neo-classical figure or celebration of a worthy in a public place by repositioning sculpture for private contemplation and collecting analogous to the print, or the ‘master drawing’ favoured by the connoisseur versed in the rules of taste. Mackennal’s inclusion in the iconic exhibition Sculpture for the home, curated by the Fine Arts Society, London, in 1902 indicates his sympathy with this avant-garde movement and Salome was one of his exhibits. The popularity of Mackennal’s statuette had been established in the public eye since 1896 when star British actress, later Dame, Marie Tempest displayed a cast of Salome in her drawing room, along with a small cast of Circe, 1893, and a portrait of herself also by Mackennal.

Mackennal executed works in a number of styles concurrently. The elegant smoothness and polish of Salome references a group of restrained figure studies including the Dancer, 1904, Diana wounded, 1905, and Morning, c. 1902, that lack the elaborate ‘new sculptural’ and ‘art nouveau’ decorative encrustations of many of his most high profiled pieces and his memorial sculptures. However, in their restraint this plainer subset of works displays a more formalist approach to purely sculptural values: sensitivity to surface patination, a fluidity of line and simplicity of contour. Salome was a highly popular figure in fin-de-siècle creative arts and haunted late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imagination because she stood at the nexus of a number of mutually supportive anxieties. As in the Biblical legend, she had commanded the decapitation of the Christ avatar John the Baptist, in a psychological interpretation she was a symbol of the forces depowering or castrating modern man, earnest, Christian, well meaning, but undercut by hysterical female/feminist power in a rapidly changing society. She was also a symbol of modernity insofar as she was read as a symbol of the supposed neurotically restless and cosmopolitan life of wealthy cultured Jewish families in middle European cities.

Mackennal’s Salome displays a cool understated elegance, which speaks of the self-possession that Wilde ascribed to the Biblical character in his iconic play. Visually it is a satisfying design with a faint art nouveau influence in the two lazy arcs of the body of the princess placed against her curved oriental sword. The figure poised upon her toes conveys an arrested sense of the dance that earned her the head of the prophet.

Juliette Peers
Ramsay was in his late teens when he painted this study at the National Gallery School. His teacher, Bernard Hall, promoted the tonal realism of Velázquez and his nineteenth-century followers, notably Whistler. Studying these examples, Ramsay gained a sound understanding of composition and of subtle tonalities, particularly in rendering flesh, as seen in this work.

Against the typical olive background, his student studies of young women half-nude often depicted them frontally or in profile with hair swept back to disclose the subtle conjunction of chin, ear and nape of neck. In Seated girl he captures the model back-view, long, flowing hair dramatically parted like curtains to reveal a sensuous glimpse of the neck.

Gifted with a natural drawing ability and facility with the brush, Ramsay won many prizes, prompting Hall to describe him as his most brilliant student during his forty-one years as Director and Head of the Painting School.

In order to be eligible for the 1899 Travelling Scholarship, he suspended studies at the Gallery School in 1897, establishing a studio where he gave lessons to young ladies, including fifteen-year-old Lischen Muller, to whom he later became unofficially engaged. Despite expectations, he failed to win the scholarship.

In 1901 he made his own way to Paris where he shared lodgings with James MacDonald in Montparnasse and studied at the Académie Colarossi with George Lambert. Working from dawn till late at night and studying Old Masters in the Louvre, his work matured and he became regarded as a mentor by his peers, notably Lambert and Ambrose Patterson.

In April 1902 The New Salon accepted four of his paintings and hung them ‘on the line’—an unprecedented honour for one so young, and particularly for an Australian exhibiting for the first time. He was twenty-four.

Salon success led to commissions. Nellie Melba invited him to paint her portrait in London, where he identified with the fashionable Edwardian portraitist, John Singer Sargent, whose boldness of style derived from Velázquez. At this crucial point in his career, Ramsay was diagnosed with tuberculosis—a result of overwork and neglect of diet—and immediately returned to Melbourne leaving Melba’s portrait unfinished.

The infectious nature of his disease forced him to separate from Lischen. Defying doctor’s orders, he continued to paint, producing some of his largest and best works from his sickbed. He died two years later, aged twenty-eight.

Seated girl was presented to Melbourne High School by Mrs J.O. Wicking, niece of the artist, in 1947. In 1965 the painting was given to Melbourne Teachers’ College.

Patricia Fullerton
Arthur Streeton’s works and their critical evaluation have always been held captive to myths that flourish around Australian art and nationalism. Over the years the artist has been churlishly and superficially indicted for becoming too commercial, too pompous, too cantankerous or for changing his art and atrophying. One key idea is that once having left Australia, Streeton lost his ‘vision’, his feeling for colour and capturing atmosphere. His Cairo and Venice works, however, are evidence that he kept his acuity and perception and ability to translate it onto canvas. In letters to colleagues he detailed his sense of confidence in working in Venice and his satisfaction with the work he was producing. The first of two journeys to Venice in 1908 was a honeymoon for Streeton and his Canadian wife Nora. In front of St Mark’s, Streeton was conscious of being at the zenith of his potential, capturing the attention of passers-by when painting en plein air. Whilst Streeton drew a crowd of onlookers, Nora read Great Expectations at Café Florian. Each had photographed each other against the backdrop of the cathedral. The fashionable, mostly female bystanders in the foreground remind us of the milieu that Nora, a professional musician, opened out for Streeton and even places this painting within the still vexed and enigmatic question of the feminine and the Heidelberg artists, and thus back to the burden of mythmaking and fantasy—particularly of a masculine and overtly proletarianised nature that later generations insist upon attaching to late nineteenth-century Australian art. The appearance of Venetian imagery, such as the Rialto and the city’s coat of arms, along with the reiteration of an 1890s nude in the bush figure, on the two silk fans by Streeton also from the Ewing Collection confirms the complex interaction between gender, identity, desire and imagery that stood behind the Venetian works for Streeton and subsequent generations.

The Venetian scenes were exhibited at Northern Hemisphere venues, and a solo exhibition in Melbourne (1909) was devoted to them, although The domes of St Mark’s was sold to Dr Ewing from a later exhibition (1914) in Melbourne. It has an impeccable chain of supporting documentation, from the receipt for Ewing’s purchase to a series of letters from Streeton about restoring the painting prior to Ewing’s gift to the University, culminating in Streeton’s offer to buy back or swap it for several lesser works. Luckily, Dr Ewing did not agree to Streeton’s request.

Juliette Peers

ARTHUR STREETON
BORN MOUNT DUNEED, VICTORIA, 1867
DIED OLINDA, VICTORIA 1943

The domes of St Mark’s 1908
oil on canvas
62.4 x 75 cm
The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Dr Samuel Arthur Ewing 1938.
1938.0023

ARTHUR STREETON
By the turn of the twentieth century Rupert Bunny was the most highly regarded nineteenth-century expatriate Australian artist. An urbane, cosmopolitan man, adept at languages, he was readily admitted to sophisticated European art and social circles. At this time a fashion for the decorative and the exotic was sweeping Paris, fanned in 1910 by the arrival of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes. Dance was one of Bunny’s enduring interests and it was the subject of many of his works throughout his career, including Omar Kyam, c. mid-1890s (the University of Melbourne Art Collection), Summer dance, 1894 (private collection), and in this case The new step.

The new step was included in the hundred-odd works Bunny brought with him on his inaugural visit to Australia in 1911 (after a twenty-seven year absence). It was exhibited in his Melbourne show at the Athenaeum Hall and had featured earlier that year in Days and Nights in August, a London exhibition. As the title implies, the works are either nocturnal, such as The song in the distance (Queensland Art Gallery) or set in daylight, as in this work. Bunny’s delight in the gentle activities of women is apparent as he paints them at their leisure and often in an enclosed space: listening to music, reading, or, as here, learning a new dance step. Jeanne Morel, Bunny’s beautiful wife and frequent model, stands to the right of the image, lifting her voluminous tea gown to display the dance step to her captivated friend. Bunny was fascinated with evocative, often Orientalist or Islamic details such as the fan and the balcony elements and his focus on design is evident as light diffuses through the geometrically patterned wall hanging, the vertically striped blind and the horizontally banded floor.

The works of this period are notable for Bunny’s lush application of paint and his masterly use of a flickering light which here evokes the texture of the tea gown’s spotted voile or lacy ruffle. This suggestive, intimate world of dance would develop into the voluptuous imagery and more abstracted style of the post-World War I years epitomised by his painting of the dance of Salome, c. 1919 (Art Gallery of New South Wales).

Barbara Brabazon Kane

RUPERT BUNNY

RUPERT BUNNY

BORN MELBOURNE 1864
DIED MELBOURNE 1947

The new step c. 1908–11
oil on canvas
68.6 x 62.9 cm

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Dr Samuel Arthur Ewing 1938.
1938.0002
Until lately the literature of Australian art has had great trouble in finding an adequate place for the later paintings of Fred McCubbin. His credentials as an Australian Impressionist seemed to cast the older artist as a superannuated Victorian, apparently persisting in a project of landscape that was gradually less congruent with the aspirations and work of younger generations. Yet McCubbin is a more complicated figure than that. This painting, with its distinctly suburban framework—an essentially semi-rural subject upon which the city encroaches from the distance, and in which palls of smoke herald the start of a working weekday—may be read as a quintessentially Edwardian document of Australian life, as indeed it has lately been argued that McCubbin's large-scale landscape paintings of the previous decade, together with comparable works by Heysen, Streeton and others, reflect an entirely new sense of national identity brought about by Federation. However, this painting also reflects the strong impact upon McCubbin of his only journey to London in 1907, where he was evidently impressed by his first real exposure to the art of J. M. W. Turner, specifically the plentiful Turner Bequest at the Tate Gallery. The critical reputation of Turner encountered him in the flesh, because by a process of retrospective reassessment Turner was increasingly (and somewhat distortedly) seen as a fundamentally misunderstood prophet of Impressionism. It is hardly surprising, then, that McCubbin's technique of rich impasto, the palette knife, scumbling, and at times knobbly surface texture, should have been stretched even further in response to Turner through those hugely stimulating months McCubbin spent in the imperial capital. Even the comparatively conventional, picturesque framework of this view, with its framing bush on the left and the stand of trees on the right, disguises a relatively complex set of transitions from the foreground hill, down past the partly obscured cottage, to the river flats in the middle distance, and onward downstream into the Melbourne of clanging industry, at this date still reclining contentedly upon the laurels of national capital.

Angus Trumble
E. PHILLIPS FOX

Emanuel Phillips Fox was born in Fitzroy in 1865 and studied at the National Gallery School, Melbourne, from 1881 to 1886. He then went to Paris, studying at the Académie Julian and the École des Beaux-Arts in 1887. In 1890 he returned to Melbourne, before going to London in 1902, where in 1905 he married and then moved to Paris. He visited Melbourne in 1908 and 1913 and subsequently died there in 1915. Fox’s immersion in the Parisian art scene profoundly influenced the development of his style and subject matter.

Fox is well known for his outdoor scenes, particularly his many depictions of elegant women in garden settings. Such works allowed him to explore the effect of light and shadow on a variety of surfaces. In the quintessentially Edwardian painting, Lamplight, c. 1911, Fox continues his fascination with depicting women of leisure and the atmospheric effects of light, but now in an interior scene. Lamplight depicts a view of quiet domestic elegance and contentment. Fox evokes a sense of leisure and refinement in the poses of the three women whose lives are glimpsed in the painting. The atmospheric use of colour and light enhance the mood. Soft and diffused light plays on the various textures in the painting. The pattern on the dress of the seated woman to the right of the scene is highlighted, contrasting the shadow on the rest of her figure. The pastel blue of her shawl is echoed in the blue tinge of the gracefully draped curtains. Fox’s attention to detail encapsulates aspects of the domestic interior: the soft and delicate fabric of the fashionable gowns, the lace curtains and the fine china tea set with its gold decorative elements. The touches of gold are echoed in the frames of the paintings on the wall. The cat looking up hopefully adds a symbol of domesticity to the scene. Through the twilight outside the window we see through the leaves to a glimpse of distant hills.

Lamplight was exhibited in Paris in 1912. In 1939 the painting was given to the University of Melbourne by Fox’s widow, the artist Ethel Carrick Fox.

Amanda Burritt
She draws you in, the woman in green. Poised expectantly at one end of a sofa, a purposeful hand grasping its gilded arm, she leans towards the viewer, alert, alive, and large as life. Her all-over emerald ensemble exposes only her hands and face and the high neck of her white blouse, set off by a strand of soft pink pearls. A long thick fur stole drapes across her shoulders, like an extension of her chestnut hair, brushing her soft flushed cheek and trailing down beside her. A crest of enormous green plumes sprouts from her broad black hat. She is a picture of elegant refinement, yet there is something untamed about her. Beside her on the murky-coloured seat lies a grubby glove, and next to it an open book, face down, its pages crumpled, has been hastily cast aside. Has she just arrived, is she just about to leave, or has she just been interrupted? What has caught her eye?

In 1915 George Bell exhibited at the Royal Academy a painting entitled The Visit. Sixty-three years later, in 1978, Bell’s daughter Antoinette Niven donated a painting to the Melbourne University Art Gallery. In 1992 it was discovered that the Niven painting, known up until that point as Edwardian Lady in Green Costume, matched the description of the painting displayed at the Royal Academy in 1915. The identity of the sitter and date of the painting remain a mystery, but the woman’s costume provides some clues to the latter. Her spectacular hat is the most telling; hat brims reached their widest in 1911, remaining fashionable until 1913, suggesting a date around this time.

The Visit is a fine example of Bell’s early style, from his period in England and Paris between 1904 and 1920. It is smooth, tonal and illusionistic, in the tradition of the Royal Academy, and recalls the quintessential reclining Edwardian women of John Singer Sargent. Despite his exposure to Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in Paris and Australia, George Bell remained a conservative though accomplished portrait painter until the 1930s, when he took a sharp turn towards modernism, founding the Contemporary Art Society in 1938, and becoming an influential teacher. Bell painted over much of his early work, but his extant pre-modernist paintings provide valuable insights into his artistic development.

Stella Gray
Bernard Hall’s painting of suicide, *Despair*, c. 1918, is one of the most compelling yet elusive historic artworks in the University of Melbourne Cultural Collections and one of the finest works gifted by Samuel Ewing in 1938. The artist is no less enigmatic in Australian public memory than his artwork. He is the forgotten man of Australian art history, yet his achievements, whilst still substantially unacknowledged following negative judgements by early historians such as Bernard Smith, are remarkable. It was his vision that led the National Gallery of Victoria to assemble a cosmopolitan collection of outstanding works of art from many centuries and cultures rather than concentrating on British narrative painting as did the public galleries in sister colonies; and he advocated the collection and teaching of design alongside fine art. He published a large oeuvre of now forgotten art theory, resonating strongly with fin-de-siècle aestheticism and the arts and crafts movement, both in newspaper articles and in stand-alone pamphlets. The National Gallery School in Melbourne became the finest art school in the Southern Hemisphere under his directorship.

*Despair* is elusive because while the viewer may think that he or she knows what they are seeing—the patriarchy in action objectifying women or at least the perpetual fear/fascination of (not quite) contemplating the face of the Medusa—Hall was one of the least sexist of the ‘founding fathers’ of professional art in Australia. Many outstanding and ambitious women artists emerged from his classes including Margaret Preston, Dora Meeson, Alice Bala, Violet Teague and Jessie Traill and his advocacy of women artists irked some male contemporaries including his students.

Hall’s contemporaries read the work more as an abstract design issue suggesting that the tragic narrative was overtaken by ‘the truly marvellous handling of the yellow satin … so vivid is the glistening sheen, so real the sense of texture’ in the words of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (1 October 1919, p. 12) which proclaimed Hall ‘probably the most eminent painter of the nude in Australia’. The work has equally gained a new postmodernist currency in the wake of intellectual fascination with such hyperdramas as the films of Douglas Sirk or the paintings of Stewart MacFarlane. The link was first highlighted as early as 1989 by a major exhibition of the University Gallery *Artists under Saturn: Melancholy and the Macabre* in Melbourne Art.

*Despair* c. 1918
oil on canvas
100 x 75.5 cm
The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of Dr Samuel Arthur Ewing 1938.
1938.0007

Juliette Peers
Long regarded as Australia’s first studio potter, and acclaimed through his representation in Australian major public collections and exhibitions of his work, Merric Boyd retains an important place in the history of ceramic art in Australia. He exhibited his ceramics in Melbourne from 1912 and lived and worked at his property Open Country, Murrumbeena, now suburban Melbourne. Boyd was an accomplished draftsman—in 1910 he enrolled in drawing at the National Gallery School—and created numerous small drawings in coloured pencils throughout his life: several thousand are in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia. While only a small number of these charming images relate directly to his pots, their inventiveness, exuberance and interest in the dynamic and decorative qualities of Australian flora and fauna are strong elements in the form and decoration of his ceramics. The sure emphasis on line and asymmetry and interest in flora, that characterise his drawings and ceramics, are features of art nouveau, the prevailing artistic style influencing Boyd in his early years.

Like many of Boyd’s finest ceramics, Vase is sculptural in form and intent. This large work features a eucalypt, complete with trunk, branches and leaves that are modelled as part of the vessel, rather than being applied as surface decoration. It is as if the pot, free of the potter’s hand, is metamorphosing—Daphne-like—into the tree, and vice versa. Its vitality comes from Boyd’s facility at modelling the clay in perfect harmony with the green/blue glazing, underpinned by his great understanding of the movement of trees and leaves in the wind.

Boyd began to make pots as early as 1910 and Vase was made in 1921 a couple of years after his return from England after war service. While in England he had additional training in ceramics in 1918 at the Stoke Technical School and the following year at Wedgwood’s. With these skills his work flourished and Boyd soon established himself as the major potter in Melbourne, producing ceramics well into the 1940s.

Christopher Menz
For fifteen years Thea Proctor flirted with fans. Beginning in about 1906, under the influence of Charles Conder in London, Proctor continued to enjoy the challenges of colour and form that the fan posed, long after her return to Australia in 1921.

Her fans embody the paradox at the heart of Thea Proctor. Born in the late nineteenth century, she never abandoned traditional aesthetic values, yet actively championed modernism throughout her long life. She inhabited a ‘silken universe’ (Ethel Anderson, ‘The Art of Miss Thea Proctor’, Art in Australia, April 1932, pp. 7–9); a space somewhere between the world of the modern woman, and an old-fashioned aristocratic fantasy.

The bathers demonstrates Proctor’s skilful draughtsmanship and design sensibility. Though composed of strong verticals—the standing woman on the left, balanced by the tall urn and elliptical trees on the right—the arrangement of the figures subtly acknowledges the form of the fan. The curve of the standing woman’s back traces the arch, and an invisible thread connects her outstretched arm to the cherubic child on the other side of the arch, who proffers a piece of fruit to the seated woman. The reference to the Garden of Eden is hard to ignore, if ambiguous, yet Proctor’s pictures were concerned with earthly paradise: idyllic scenes of sensual bliss between women and children.

Based loosely on a watercolour of the same title from c. 1918, which is closely related to her 1925 watercolour The picnic, Proctor’s The bathers invites comparison with a 1907 oil painting of the same name (also known as The holiday group), by George W. Lambert. It is one of several paintings in which Lambert depicts his wife Amy and the couple’s children, together with his muse Thea Proctor. In Proctor’s The bathers there is a similar dynamic between the two women and the child.

Proctor never explicitly portrayed herself in her works, but in The bathers, as in so many of her images, we sense that she is present. In fact, the model for the woman on the left was probably Eunice Graham, a close friend of Proctor’s, who lived with her in London throughout the war and frequently modelled for her.

The bathers, one of three works by Proctor in the Potter’s collection, was donated in 1983 by Ethel Margaret Ewing Cutten, great-niece of Samuel Ewing, who donated his art collection to the University in 1938.

Stella Gray
From the early 1800s picnic race meetings became popular throughout New South Wales. They soon became a feature of the annual social calendar and were often situated on the country properties of the wealthy. Festive and informal in nature, picnic races were an opportunity for locals and their guests to mingle, flaunt their finery, and perhaps have a wager on a favourite. In 1855 a picnic race meeting was established at one such property, ‘Tirranna’, near Goulburn in New South Wales and owned by pastoralist Mr Campbell Gibson.

Since his arrival in New South Wales in 1887, the artist George Lambert had been a frequent visitor to the Goulburn region and it was a countryside he had grown to love. As a teenager he holidayed there with relatives, eventually spending several years working as a jackaroo on an uncle’s property. In early 1922, while staying nearby, Lambert was invited to attend the Tirranna picnic races with his hosts.

The Tirranna picnic race meeting provided George Lambert with the opportunity to incorporate his favourite themes—horses, the Australian countryside, and society—in an atmospheric display. The golden brown landscape of the Australian summer is loosely swathed with the colourful elements of the racetrack—the red judge’s box, the crowd bedecked in the latest fashion and jockeys resplendent in bright silks and polished top boots. Lambert displays his portraiture skills with local dignitaries, including Tirranna owner Gibson, identified among the race goers. The horses, in various poses, allow Lambert to express his knowledge of equine musculature and movement.

Meanwhile, a military band plays; its earthy colours merging with the surrounding terrain. Close inspection of the musicians’ attire reveals the hats of a mounted regiment. George Lambert had developed a high regard for the Australian Light Horse Brigade while commissioned as a war artist during World War I. The plumage adorning the musicians’ headwear looks very like the emu feather of the Light Horse. The band, however, is to some extent a suggestion. For this corner of the painting was never completed. Preparatory sketching for further figures is evident, together with the word ‘unfinished’, remaining forever alongside Lambert’s signature.

Elizabeth McRae
The Leckie window by Napier Waller, so strikingly installed in the stair hall of the Potter, depicts, in stained glass, the creation of the world and the artistic and cultural development of humankind through Greek mythological figures. The design for small windows at the top shows miniature scenes from Creation in the Bible. The lower, six large windows illustrate pairs of Greek gods and goddesses and they are labelled: Moon (for Artemis), Sun (for Apollo), Ceres, Prometheus, Sappho and Phidias. The combination of Christian and Greek myth in the same window emphasises the importance of the legacy of both traditions in Western culture and learning.

Although Waller commenced stained-glass making in Australia 1928, it was on a visit to England in 1929, where he trained with his wife Christian under Veronica Whall, a leading stained-glass maker, that he developed a fuller understanding of the craft. Upon their return to Australia the Wallers produced numerous stained-glass windows, becoming the pre-eminent stained-glass artists in Australia between the wars.

In the Leckie window Waller shows his dazzling skills as a colourist. Apart from the superlative use of colour in the glass—the fiery reds, pink and greens—he also makes great dramatic use of the black leadings that hold the glass sections together so that they too form an integral part of the overall design. Additional richness of colour and effect also comes from use of layered glass. With its carefully realised figures—some in frontal view and some in profile—against complex patterned backgrounds, The Leckie window is one of the finest examples of Art Deco stained-glass in Australia. The Gothic-revival framework was dictated by its original location in Wilson Hall. The Potter also owns preliminary designs for the window.

The window was presented to the University in honour of Sir John MacFarland (a former Vice-Chancellor and Chancellor of the University) by John E. Leckie and was originally installed in Wilson Hall where it was unveiled on 2 September 1935. Wilson Hall was destroyed by fire in 1952, but fortunately the window was saved and was dramatically installed, as a permanent fixture, hovering above the staircase of the Ian Potter Museum of Art when the building opened in 1998.
Djan’kawu Sister’s Story has been attributed to Mawunpuy Mununggurr, a son of Wonggu, the legendary leader of the Djapu clan from Arnhem Land. In 1942 with his father and brothers Maama and Natjiyalma, Mawunpuy painted an iconic work depicting the story of Djambuwal, the Thunderman, and while documentation for the bark painting here has not been located, it was most likely painted that same year. Mawunpuy was serving as a member of the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit (NTSRU), a guerrilla force established by anthropologist Donald Thomson to protect Australia’s northern coastline during World War II. During the time the NTSRU was based at Garrthalala in Arnhem Land in 1942, twelve or so extraordinary works were painted for Donald Thomson by the men of Blue Mud Bay.

This is a rare bark painting of one of the Djan’kawu Sisters, wangarr or creation ancestors, who travelled across Arnhem Land. The Sister is shown here in a half human form, her body covered with likan minytji or sacred ancestral designs. By the positioning of her feet and arms, it appears she is in full stride. The djalkiri or footprints at the top reaffirm that she is travelling on foot and the different coloured shapes below indicate that she sustained herself on the journey by eating nuts and berries. As she walked along and plunged the wapitja or digging stick (long elongated shape with pointed ends on left) into the ground, water spilled out over the ground and a sacred waterhole formed. The circles within each of the squares making up the grid represent the sacred waterholes, and the repetition of the grid-like patterning around the Sister is a reflection of the likan minytji off her body and onto the ground as she walked along in the bright sun. The painting is particularly distinctive given the use of a reddish-pink pigment known as ratjpa in the background to give an iridescent or sparkling effect.

Lindy Allen
The spare and iconic painting tradition of the Anindilyakwa people of the Groote Archipelago is one of the earliest visual records of cross-cultural relations in northern Australia. Rock art sites and, since at least the 1920s, modestly scaled bark paintings like this one by Quartpot Wurramarrba, depict the coming together of cultures on Groote Eylandt that began centuries ago with the visitation of Macassan trepang fishermen. Such interactions were vastly increased from 1921, when an Anglican Church mission was established in the island’s south-east. In this work, the artist combines traditional Groote Eylandt dugout canoes with a large missionary sailing boat, the Holly, and the smaller sailing craft, the Oituli, which would have been captained by white trepang fisherman and settler Fred Gray. Gray was an important figure for east-coast Groote Eylandters. He was the self-appointed, if not fully state-sanctioned, caretaker of the north-east coast native settlement of Umbakumba from 1938 to 1958, and was well accepted by the Anindilyakwa clans of the area. The animals in the composition represent the goats that Gray brought with him to the settlement. Umbakumba was established in 1938 as a means of mediating relations between Groote Eylanders and the staff and visitors passing through the Qantas Flying Boat base located close by. The production of bark paintings for sale to visitors was cultivated by Gray as a means of producing a self-sustaining community income. A number of men living at, or close to, the settlement produced small-scale paintings depicting largely secular subject matter that were traded with Gray for highly sought-after tobacco.

Made using black manganese unique to Groote Eylandt, the barks from this period are also unique for their sparse and minimal aesthetic. Characterised by their representational and illustrative qualities, the bark paintings depict ancestral creation beings, totemic animals, constellations, wind totems and contemporary and historical events and interactions, including detailed depictions of Macassan sailing prahus.

Acquired by Dr Leonhard Adam in 1946 and 1949 directly from Fred Gray, the collection holds thirty-six bark paintings made between 1941 and 1949 by eleven artists. As a group, the works represent the largest cohesive record of Groote Eylandt art production from this key period.

Joanna Bosse

QUARTPOT NANGENKIBIYANGA WURRAMARRBA
BORN GROOTE EYLANDT c. 1900, DIED GROOTE EYLANDT 1972
MISSIONARY BOAT ‘HOLLY’ WITH DINGHY, CANOES WITH PADDLING FIGURES, FRED GRAY’S BOAT ‘OITULI’ AND GOATS c. 1941–45
OCHRES AND ORCHID EXTRACT ON EUCALYPTUS BARK
45 x 28 cm
THE LEONHARD ADAM COLLECTION OF INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS CULTURE, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE ART COLLECTION.
Hindmarsh Tannery, one of three works by Jeffrey Smart, is the sole example of his painting held in the University of Melbourne Art Collection. The two other works in the collection are aquatints from the well-known ‘Directors’ series.

This depiction of the Hindmarsh Tannery, South Australia, was painted when Smart was first embarking on his professional life as an artist. Stylistically, it bears some of the elements of the sparse urban landscapes that would be refined by the artist throughout his career.

Strongly representative of many of the works that Smart first exhibited as a professional artist, this very early work reflects his fascination for the atmospheric and architectural features of the decaying urban back streets and industrial cityscapes he often sought out as a young man. Such localities, in contrast to the comfortable and suburban environment of his childhood, offered much inspiration.

Compositonally the subject matter appears to be almost a formal exercise dealing with perspective and volume. A cylindrical chimney and the geometric elements of rectangles and triangles created by the building complex and rooftops are enlivened by the single organic element of an isolated tree in the foreground.

Viewing Smart’s career in retrospect, there can also be seen hints of other long-term painterly interests and devices. Overall is the characteristic almost brooding stillness apparent in later works. Other elements are present: the corrugated iron of the rectangular gate at lower right, the shutter-like effect of the windows or iron grilles securing the window spaces, the ochre-coloured rough wall surfaces of the building, and the dark stormy sky with raking light as it shifts over the composition all heighten the atmospheric effect. We recognise all of these hallmarks in this early painting which in the works of later years and in a more sophisticated form are so characteristic of Jeffrey Smart’s oeuvre.

Jay Miller
The role of drawing in the sculptural practice of Henry Moore was never more important than in the 1940s. Largely through the influence of Sir Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery in London, Moore was appointed an official war artist in 1940, and began his famous series of drawings of ordinary Londoners seeking refuge each night in the London Underground during the Blitz. That body of work naturally directed his vision toward the suffering of families, much encouraged in that direction by anxieties for the safety of his beloved wife Irina, whom he had married in 1929; his London studio was bombed in the same year. This lively drawing, with its tender concentration upon the theme of parents and children, actually anticipated by two years the birth of the Moores’ only daughter Mary, an event that did much further to concentrate the artist’s mind on the theme of mother and child—but that theme was obviously blocked in through the war years. Through the same period, again largely as a result of his subterranean work for the Ministry of Information, Moore gradually explored processes of biomorphic reduction, and through his draughtsmanship and instinct for contour chiselled away at the essence of the human form, discarding detail, boiling down his human subject to its principal and increasingly abstract sculptural elements. Though his works of the 1950s were much inspired by found objects such as bones, shells, stones and flints, at this date and in this drawing narratives of family, of human intimacy in wartime, were obviously at the forefront of his mind, and his art. The drawing was presented to the university by Professor Joseph Burke, two years after he was appointed foundation Herald Professor of Fine Arts, a chair that was endowed by Sir Keith Murdoch specifically in commemoration of the allied victory in the Pacific.

Angus Trumble
This eloquent but unsettling landscape by a young John Perceval was painted at a time of immense personal flourishing. The war had ended, he had married Mary Boyd, was father to the first of four children and, with Arthur Boyd and Peter Herbst, had established the Arthur Merric Boyd Pottery at Murrumbeena.

Can a landscape contain joy and fear at the same time? Certainly Perceval’s brushwork has a perilous exuberance, as if chaos was only just being held at bay. The unruly lines of an early pencil drawing of the scene are transformed into an epic drama of scenographic construction; foreground rocks, frothing waves in the middle ground and, in the distance, rickety boathouses against a backdrop of tea tree and dark scudding clouds. An eerie light glows behind the trees, as disturbing as a Rick Amor beachscape and, beneath the unexpected presence of a prominent church spire, the boathouses seem like cemetery tombstones. Yet underlying this imaginative vision are specific observations from Perceval and Boyd’s sketching expeditions around Port Phillip Bay; in particular the scene may depict Point Lonsdale beach, with St James church in the distance.1

While Perceval’s traumatic early life could explain the landscape’s disturbing atmosphere, it also reflects the surrealist and expressionist concerns of the radical Angry Penguins group of writers and artists that included Boyd, Sidney Nolan, Albert Tucker and Joy Hester. These are fused with a poetic reverence for nature that invokes his devotion to van Gogh, manifested in several early copies (1938–39) of the famous Sunflowers, 1888, and in his spiritual references, both subliminal and overt, in works from the later 1940s such as Christmas Eve, 1948, set in a similar bay landscape.

Approaching storm is carefully constructed around dramatic motifs and contrasts of dark and light, but Perceval weaves them all together in a pulsating continuum. Fields of energy intersect with orchestral force; the magnetic pull of the tide yanks at the grass tussocks and crashes back onto the rocks and sand. Three primitive poles, remnants of human control, stand precariously before the scumbled paint of blue, purple and aqua waves. Skeins of white froth are dripped across the surface, evoking eddying pools in the shallows. For Perceval the storm was not just approaching but already here. He invented a microcosm in constant rhythmic flux. Rather than fixed symbols he used brushwork, colour and light, disclosing an inner spirit that flickered between doom and joyous elation.

Vivien Gaston

1. See Rodney James, John Perceval: painting down the bay, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery 2004, pp. 5–6, p. 18, n. 3.
In this deliberately soft-edged, stencil screen print, the mistress of Australian modernism, Margaret Preston, captures beautifully the layered imagery of Aboriginal rock art in delicate tones of brown, pink and grey. The work is one of several clearly inspired by Preston’s encounter with the bark painting and rock art in West Arnhem Land—a place she first visited in 1940. Unlike her earlier efforts at the same subject, Fish, 1949, succeeds in conveying that amazing, dual sense of flatness and depth which is achieved in the truly great rock art galleries of Ubirr and Injalak in the ‘Stone Country’ of the Gagudju and Kunwinjku peoples respectively.

Look closely at this work and see the recognisable shapes of Barramundi (Narmarnkol), long-necked turtle (Komrdawh), and magpie goose (Manimunak) as they interweave and mesh with one another. They are among the many important personal, family and clan totems for Kunwinjku people. The codified innards of these creatures, often laid out in fine lines of red ochre over white clay, link people to place, time and each other in a way few outsiders know or understand. In evoking the look and feel of stained glass, through her use of black card, Preston makes reference to the latent spirituality by evoking church windows. She’s from Adelaide after all.

Preston’s attraction to Aboriginal art began in the late 1920s when she was initially captivated by its aesthetic dimensions. With prolonged exposure, greater knowledge and experience of the art in its original context, Preston’s thinking about and use of Aboriginal art appears to have changed. Gone are the cushion cover and curtain designs adapted from dancing boards and shields in museum collections. By the 1940s, Preston wrote that Australian Aboriginal people were true and sensitive artists ‘whose work should be studied and treated with the respect that is due to true art’ (Margaret Preston, Art in Australia, June 1941, p. 46). As stereotypical as that statement may be, in this particular work Preston pays homage to Aboriginal art as Fine Art.

Susan Lowish
Even by today’s standards, no artist has eclipsed the power of Ian Fairweather’s legend to capture the imagination of Australians. One of our most important and singular artists, his works of art continue to intrigue each generation that discovers them.

Famously, Ian Fairweather lived an unconventional and largely itinerant life. From around 1910 he travelled in at least fifteen European and Asian countries as well as Aboriginal Australia. In 1949 he established a makeshift residence in the scrubby bushland of Bribie Island (just off the coast north of Brisbane) where for over two decades he lived a hermit-like existence that fascinated locals and art lovers alike.

Hell has been described as ‘the most extreme and difficult image in all of Fairweather’s art’. It depicts a frieze of figures, linked in a familial sense through the use of continuous line and palette, in the midst of which a small figure is held between outstretched arms and claw-like hands. Considered difficult not only due to its subject and the intense psychological claustrophobia of the image, but because it was produced in a new uncharacteristic style which, with its increased use of line to fill the composition, it lacked the open delicacy of previous works. Hell displays the beginnings of the lucid simplicity of Fairweather’s part ideogram and part abstract compositions of the 1950s.

Professor Joseph Burke, the university’s inaugural Herald Professor of Fine Arts, acquired this work for the art collection from Fairweather’s exhibition at Melbourne’s Stanley Coe Gallery in 1951. It was Fairweather’s first major solo exhibition in Melbourne, having held his first ever in Australia in 1949 at Macquarie Galleries, Sydney. (By this time, however, Fairweather’s work had been acquired by the Tate Gallery, London, in 1934, and he had held at least five solo exhibitions at London’s Redfern Gallery.) A prolific artist, Fairweather’s work is nonetheless scarce; he worked with poor materials and much of his work was lost, damaged and destroyed during his lifetime. Burke’s early interest in Fairweather’s work (early for the Australian context), was opportune. He secured this key transitional work only a few years after the National Gallery of Victoria and Art Gallery of New South Wales made modest acquisitions in 1949 and a decade before Fairweather’s work was purchased for the national collection and the Queensland Art Gallery.

Joanna Bosse
Nolan’s choice of subject in *The sculptress*—a partially clad female nude sculpting a clay torso, her androgynous model in the background—lies clearly outside his more usual focus on such doomed heroic figures as Ned Kelly and Burke and Wills. By 1951, when the work was painted, figurative clay modelling was decidedly outmoded. Between the two world wars, modern sculptors such as Brancusi and Henry Moore had favoured direct carving over modelling and by 1951 the most advanced sculpture tended to be constructed from wire, steel and found objects. Yet *The sculptress* is not an isolated oddity, but rather the result of Nolan’s profound encounter with classical antiquity and the pre-Renaissance Italian ‘primitives’ on his first visit to England and Europe, made in 1950 to 1951. It is closely connected to a series of ink and enamel works on glass that Nolan painted in these years, depicting dismembered Grecian figures and draped medieval saints floating surreally above or before classical architectural settings.

Nolan’s chief conclusion from these first European encounters was that the art that most moved him stemmed from the artists’ personal religious faith. Writing to Albert Tucker, on 14 May 1951, Nolan pondered how best to incorporate this lesson in his own work:

I have had an idea for some time that one of the ways back to … faith and piety … might be through humour. Humour … is a missing link in our own period … I have noticed a certain kind of smile in early Greek heads which sets me thinking.

Like many other modernists searching for a valid humanist art in the wake of World War II, Nolan turned to the apparent simplicity and sincerity of faith evinced in early Greek and Italian art. As a result, upon returning to Australia in August 1951, Nolan set about producing a small series in which moments of religious ecstasy and devotion were translated to an Australian setting.

The sculptress sits alongside this series, depicting the sculptor as a timeless mother-creator figure, an enigmatic smile playing across her face. The opaque blue sky conveys a blazing light common to both the Mediterranean and Australia, while the scumbled ochres and burnt madders used in the figures of the sculptor, model and clay torso suggest a shared humanity, evocative of a multitude of creation stories—not least the Book of Genesis—in which humans were first created from clay.

Jane Eckett

SIDNEY NOLAN
BORN MELBOURNE 1917,
DIED LONDON 1992

*The sculptress* 1951
enamel on composition board
76.2 x 63.5 cm
The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
1986.0001
Some paintings are as apparently modest as they are distinctive. One such is *Another day* by the twentieth-century artist, Weaver Hawkins. Originally English, Hawkins made his way to Australia in 1935, but his early manhood had been darkened at the battle of the Somme, where he lost the use of his right arm, having to acquire the use of his left.

After the war, painting was a key to his therapy. He came to share a modernist concern for the way forms are related to one another in their architectural context, and he interacted with the Vorticist generation.

Paintings can be centripetal, as most portraits have been, or centrifugal, driving their forms out to the margins of the picture plane. To take modern extremes, both Mondrian and Pollock are centrifugal, as is Hawkins’s 1954 painting, *Another day*. It is a city picture, and belongs to his Australian years, filled up with human forms stylised through their hats, newspapers and glimpsed hands.

Bernard Smith was to complain that Hawkins had been neglected because ‘his paintings contain ideas’ and his forms were firm and linear. ‘This painting, too, reduces colour in order to focus on an overall rhythmical play, a swimming of forms.’

But *Another day* also refers us back to a Hawkins painting from the other side of the world, and from thirty-two years earlier. Untitled but known provisionally as *Morning underground*, this hyperactive vision of city life is also a memorable work: with its larger colour range, it is popular with visitors to the Art Gallery of New South Wales. What the two have in common is their crowding of life with hats and newspapers. The English picture includes cloth caps, of course.

In this later painting, all is swept into one formal assemblage, one dynamism that fills the pictorial space. As well as feeling its rhythm, we can read in it the kinetic effects of early modernism, and a democratic sense of subject matter.

Chris Wallace-Crabbe
Ralph Balson was a significant figure in the development of abstract painting in Australia and is credited with staging the country’s first solo exhibition of non-objective painting in 1941. Balson’s mature works—grouped within series such as Constructive Paintings, Non-Objective Paintings and Matter Paintings—reflect his engagement with the ideas of international artists such as Mondrian, Moholy-Nagy and Pollock, as well as with scientific theories, such as those of Einstein. The intellectual foundations of his abstract style lay in a ‘scientific idealism’ that was variously expressed in terms of Newtonian order (stable, interconnected geometries) or Einsteinian flux (dynamic fields of energised paint). ¹

Despite Balson’s declared interest in European abstraction, it would be difficult to identify him as a strict adherent of any one school. His Constructive Paintings—with which Untitled should be grouped—echo the rhythmic geometry of Mondrian, the translucent layering of Moholy-Nagy and the seductive colour of Kandinsky and the architectural qualities of the French Abstraction-Création group. Above all, in paintings such as Untitled, Balson pursued formal integrity. The goals of many of his peers—subjective expression, outback mythology, spirit of place—were set aside in favour of effects inherent to the painting itself.

In Untitled, a strong structure of vertical and horizontal axes forms a scaffolding upon which smaller shapes are arrayed. Shallow depth is hinted at in overlapping shapes and translucent layers, as well as in the optical effect of advancing and receding colours. But this depth is never so pronounced that a sense of volume disturbs the painting’s planar repose. By extension, this essay in what Mondrian called ‘dynamic equilibrium’ could suggest the harmonies identified in scientific laws.

It is fitting that this exercise in the articulation of modern consciousness was gifted to the University by Sir Roy and Lady Grounds. Described as ‘one of Melbourne’s leading public characters’, Grounds was a key figure in the introduction of modernist architecture to the city.² Alice Grounds was a businesswoman of long standing and an advocate of women’s participation in the commercial life of Melbourne.³

Chris McAuliffe

RALPH BALSON

RALPH BALSON
BORN DORSET, ENGLAND 1890,
ARRIVED AUSTRALIA 1913, DIED SYDNEY 1964

Untitled 1954
oil on board
76.2 x 101 cm
The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Gift of Sir Roy and Lady Grounds 1955. 1955.0001

Fred Williams exhibited this dark and brooding landscape at the Australian Galleries, Melbourne, in 1959. Diana (‘Ding’) Dyason, an admired and respected lecturer in the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Melbourne, bought it. It was a brave and auspicious purchase, for private collectors were slow to respond to Williams’s early landscapes. 1959 was the year of the Antipodean Group exhibition—Charles Blackman, Arthur Boyd, David Boyd, John Brack, Robert Dickerson, John Perceval and Clifton Pugh. They rallied around the call of the art critic and historian, Bernard Smith, for an art of the figurative image. Although stung by his exclusion from the group, all of whom were either friends or acquaintances, Williams was proposing in Sherbrooke Forest a new direction for Australian landscape painting. Instinctively, Williams embraced Georges Braque’s view that the purpose of painting was ‘not to try and establish an anecdotal fact but to constitute a pictorial fact’. To Williams, Antipodean-type painting was hopelessly enmeshed in the former, whereas he was deeply drawn to the latter. Sherbrooke Forest is a painting of classical poise and severity. The two massive tree trunks to left and right act like the repoussoirs of a Claudian landscape, framing the slender forms of the saplings. They give the painting its monumental sense of order. By making the picture space so shallow and virtually extruding all air and atmosphere from it, Williams gives to the bush an impenetrable and mysterious quality. The unpredictable highlights that fall across trunks and branches add to its strange, even alien, quality.

Ding Dyason bequeathed the painting to the (then) University Women’s College, and from there it passed into the University’s collection. For its inherent power and presence and because it turned Australian landscape painting to a new course, Sherbrooke Forest is one of the most important twentieth-century Australian paintings in the collection.

Patrick McCaughey
German-born artist and educator Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack is an important but little-known figure in Australia’s cultural history. A student and teacher at the revolutionary German art and design school, the Bauhaus in Weimar, from 1920 to 1925, Hirschfeld Mack introduced Bauhaus principles and methods of teaching to art education in Victoria that changed Australia’s pedagogical practices. Although his influence is not widely recognised, through his teaching and art practice Hirschfeld Mack had a profound impact on the development of modern art in Australia.

While Mack’s deportation from London in 1940 on board the notorious HMT Dunera was devastating for him and his family, his presence in Australia provided a direct link to the European avant-garde. At the Bauhaus, Mack had worked alongside Europe’s foremost avant-garde artists, including Johannes Itten, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Lyonel Feininger, Oskar Schlemmer, László Moholy-Nagy and Josef Albers. Mack’s work was held in high regard; in particular his investigations into colour theory and the use of light to create projected colour effects were considered innovative and full of commercial potential (the Bauhaus spinning top, devised as a teaching tool to illustrate colour blending, was designed by Hirschfeld Mack and is still in production today). World War II cut short Mack’s promising future in Europe. During his time in Australia, however, he continued to correspond regularly with Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, declining several offers from Gropius to teach at prestigious universities in the United States, and choosing instead to remain in the position of Art Master at Geelong Grammar School until he retired in 1957.

This luminous work is undated but was made by Mack in Australia during the 1950s and shows his characteristically inventive use of materials. Here Mack uses watercolour, kalsomine (a builder’s product popular in the 1950s that he used to add texture and depth) and tempera on cardboard. Using this technique—incising into the kalsomine surface to reveal the layer of blue tempera beneath, and then applying delicate layers of watercolour—Mack worked the image in a similar way to those he made using the Durchdrückzeichnung printmaking technique he and Paul Klee devised at the Bauhaus. Resembling a modernist architectural structure rising from the ground toward the sky, the composition’s verticality and central glowing sphere gives it a distinctly spiritual sensibility. At the centre of both Hirschfeld Mack’s art and teaching practice was his belief that spirituality is paramount to the peaceful existence of humankind.

Joanna Bosse
Lina Bryans was one of Melbourne’s leading modernist artists. Between the second half of the 1930s and the 1960s, Bryans’s singular style developed from Cézanne-inspired landscapes and still life towards a lyrical abstraction. Among her finest landscapes, Bridge at Warrandyte belongs with her expressive late bushland scenes.

The countryside around Warrandyte had attracted artists since the Heidelberg era, and its old timber bridge was a favourite subject of Clara Southern, Walter Withers and Penleigh Boyd. Bryans would have been familiar with the old bridge when she first made weekend expeditions to Warrandyte with artists William Frater and Alan Sumner in the 1930s, to visit their friend Adrian Lawlor.

Bryans returned to the site of Lawlor’s studio in 1959 to paint the new concrete and iron bridge, built in 1955. Here is the work of a powerful colourist. With distinctive, gestural brushstrokes, Bryans leads the viewer down a steep purple and orange track through the brilliant lemon yellows of the Warrandyte wattle blossom. The Yarra River, pale in the spring light, forms a diagonal through the centre of the painting while the geometry of the modern bridge anchors the composition.

A generous friend to many in the world of arts and letters, Bryans is perhaps best known for her portraits. Many of her subjects were associated with the University of Melbourne: Nina Christesen, who established the Department of Russian Language and Literature; Keith Macartney, Associate Professor of Drama; and contributors to Meanjin magazine, published by Melbourne University Press, including the art critic Alan McCulloch, and writer and critic Nettie Palmer.

Bryans’s first solo exhibition was held at Georges Gallery in Collins Street in 1948. Bryans gave Bridge at Warrandyte to another exhibition at Georges Gallery in aid of the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra in 1966, when it was won as a prize by Sir Frank Richardson, Chairman of Georges. Dr Joseph Brown later acquired the painting, and in 1982 gifted it to the University of Melbourne Art Collection. The artist chose the work for her 1982 retrospective at the National Gallery of Victoria’s Banyule extension gallery.

Gillian Forwood
The circumstances in which a painting is encountered affect both its meaning and perceived merit. Exhibited as part of The Field exhibition at the new premises of the National Gallery of Victoria in 1968, Kind-hearted kitchen-garden IV was seen by some as evidence of local artists’ provincial imitation of American abstraction. The impact of American art on Australia had been debated since the early 1950s and here, it must have seemed, was another opportunity to gauge our mutation into ‘Austerica’.

Conscious of the disputed reception of abstract painting in Australia, Rooney primed Kind-hearted kitchen-garden IV as an intervention into the aesthetic debate. In this, and other series such as Variations slippery seal and Cereal bird beaks, Rooney based his geometric forms on banal, everyday sources such as breakfast cereal boxes and cake tins. Using templates found in the supermarket, Rooney allowed the playful landscape of Pop art to corrupt the recondite realm of colour field abstraction. If Australian art was about borrowing, he suggested, then let the borrowing be mischievous and knowing.

To this iconoclastic humour Rooney added its sibling, chance. The title of Kind-hearted kitchen-garden is said to be derived from two terms heading the page of a dictionary opened at random. Coincidentally, the paired words evoke a Hans Christian Andersen parable that parallels controversies about cultural influence. ‘The Gardener and the Manor’ (1872) tells of a kind-hearted gardener whose masters refuse to believe that his produce is the best in the world. Instead, they insist on his importing and grafting foreign plants into their local garden. Kind-hearted kitchen-garden IV is simultaneously an amusing aesthetic intervention and a gentle admonishment to Australian audiences.

Display of the painting at the University of Melbourne changed its meaning again. In 1988 a petition requesting the removal of Kind-hearted kitchen-garden IV was signed by staff of the campus building in which it was displayed. One signatory condemned the painting as ‘visual muzak’, an epithet that Rooney, determined to poke fun at the po-faced conventions of abstraction, would no doubt enjoy.

Chris McAuliffe
**Theater der Welt ’81** (Theatre of the World ’81) is one in a series of eighteen posters of the same title that offer equally dynamic imagery. The multicoloured suite of posters was designed off the cuff by Heinz Edelmann in 1981 to promote the inaugural year of the Theater der Welt festival. According to Edelmann’s notes held in the Milton Glaser Design Study Center and Archives at the Visual Arts Library, New York, the design project was ‘very low budget’ and ‘done in two days’.

Czechoslovakian-born Edelmann was a highly successful commercial illustrator, designer and teacher who studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Düsseldorf and later taught design at the Stuttgart Academy of Fine Arts. Acclaimed in Germany during the 1980s and 1990s for his work in poster design, Edelmann was most famous in his thirties during the counter culture of the 1960s, when he contributed to the signature look of psychedelic animation with his work as art director and creator of the highly influential 1968 Beatles animation Yellow Submarine, for which he is internationally renowned.

Theater der Welt is considered the most important festival for new theatre in Germany. As a triennial, each festival is held in a different German city with a fresh artistic director and presents a unique program at the forefront of world theatre cultures. The 1981 Theater der Welt hosted by the city of Cologne showcased over 100 performances and presented Laurie Anderson’s stage work titled United States, from which she developed material for the LP Big Science. In the same year Rainer Werner Fassbinder created the documentary Theater in Trance, a film whose fourteen parts were edited from the raw footage filmed over the two-week festival period.

The Theater der Welt ’81 series is held in the Gerard Herbst Poster Collection, which contains close to 2700 posters, representing a selection of international poster design from six decades and providing an overview of twentieth-century poster design. The collection was formed by Gerard Herbst, a former lecturer and head of Industrial Design at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology over a fifty-year period from the 1950s to the 1990s. It was donated to the University of Melbourne by Herbst in 1996.

Steve Martin
Looking at the whole picture rectangle of The Queen, the back plane is the grey papered wall on which hangs an oval, golden-framed mirror facing us, matching our own frontal gaze, in front of which is the famous portrait of the Elizabethan Queen, sliced into postcards.

The wall’s vertical stripes flow upwards, but they are also forced inwards by the tapering of the wall edges, this whole scene existing in front of a warm middle-tone space belonging only to the picture-rectangle. The vertical stripes also draw us down to the horizontal oval of the table, the same oval as the mirror, but dead grey. The dark line around the back edge of the table pins it to the wall, and the two large scissors define the table centre, emphasised by the dark table stem underneath. Focus on this stem and the front curve of the table protrudes outside the picture space between the picture and the viewer, making the large scissors belong to the picture front-plane. The small scissors behind make a family, each member balancing a tower of four cards, the parents indicating an A shape into the mirror, which becomes an upwards-pointing arrow.

Within the grey marble—its markings form shadows across the table—the front shadows outside the picture space merge with the horizontal scissors, as if they had sliced the portrait.

Inside the golden frame, the darkness of the mirror itself recedes behind the picture back-plane into a nether world. If we stare into the dark of the mirror we find a primitive face, but if we shift our gaze to the middle tone of the mirror oval, the fragmented cards of the Queen appear in front of the mirror, between us and the dark recess. The scene is in a contemporary room of refinement—elegant grey wallpaper and table—but the grey is of sterility and lifelessness, and this famous portrait has been sliced into postcards whose value is the written messages. Yet the gold frame, face-shaped, prevails. The rectangular space behind the scene relates both to the colour of this frame and the colour of flesh, suggesting, from this époque, our human wonderfulness.

This picture seems to be an essay on our ability for the most noble achievements and the most barbaric—and of our own sterilised present where art has lost its value.

Helen Brack
**EMILY KAME KNGWARREYE**

*Untitled* was purchased from one of Emily Kame Kngwarreye’s first solo exhibitions in 1990. Kngwarreye painted it shortly after she ceased producing batik silks with the Utopia Women’s Batik Group but before she had developed the distinct gestural style that was conducive to the energetic and prolific art production of her brief eight-year career. *Untitled* depicts a scattering of kame, or yam seeds, with layered dots of pure white, orange and red paint in varied sizes. Kngwarreye painted this veil of dots over the top of a thick and winding yam root design in black and white, a technique creating depth in the pictorial space. *Untitled* celebrates the women’s business of gathering food, the beginning of the desert growth cycle and Kngwarreye’s birthplace, Ahalkere.

The conceptualisation of Kngwarreye as an artist whose paintings feed into the tenets of Western modernism, a movement of which Kngwarreye had no knowledge, has met with scepticism. Some see the application of a set of purportedly universal criteria to her art as a denial of the more immediate, culturally specific frameworks. This opposition, however, is giving way to an appreciation that both formal and ‘culturally sensitive’ readings of Kngwarreye’s work are not incommensurable.

Kngwarreye’s artistic achievement is not limited to producing work which ranks alongside that of America’s greatest abstract expressionists. The ‘genius’ of her work is instead its capacity to transcend boundaries separating Aboriginal and Western art traditions, abstraction and literal representation, tradition and innovation. *Untitled* describes the intimacy of Kngwarreye’s relationship with her traditional country and at the same time establishes an original visual language with which to describe it.

Suzette Wearne

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*Untitled* 1989–90
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
121 x 91 cm

The University of Melbourne Art Collection.
Gift of James Mollison AO 2012 in memory of Sir Joseph Burke KBE.
© Emily Kame Kngwarreye/Licensed by Viscopy, 2012.
In 1989 the Ian Potter Gallery and Art Conservation Centre opened in the Physics Anexe building on Swanston Street, as an adjunct to the University Gallery located in the Old Physics building at the centre of the University. Together the two spaces formed the University of Melbourne Museum of Art.

The refurbishment of one level of the Physics Anexe, a heritage building with a twentieth-century addition at the front, was made possible by a grant from The Ian Potter Foundation and was carried out by Melbourne architect Greg Burgess. This architectural conversion necessitated the closure of four windows facing onto the street and Christine O’Loughlin, an Australian artist from Paris who was artist-in-residence (Macgeorge Fellow) at the university from 1987 to 1988, was commissioned to create a work to camouflage the window cavities and indicate that the building housed cultural activities. With funds provided by The Ian Potter Foundation, O’Loughlin created *Cultural rubble*—a sculptural work in four parts, which was produced in Paris and shipped to Melbourne for installation on the building in 1993.

Later, when Melbourne architect Nonda Katsalidis (Nation Fender Katsalidis) was given the brief to design the Ian Potter Museum of Art, which involved preserving the historic building and expanding onto an adjacent vacant block, he was asked to incorporate Napier Waller’s *Leckie window* and Christine O’Loughlin’s *Cultural rubble* into the fabric of the building. This he did with masterful effect, the former being positioned within the central staircase, and the latter on the façade as an integral element of the new construction.

*Cultural rubble* comprises four reinforced polyester resin panels incorporating shattered fragments of classical statuary, architecture and pottery, cast from plaster moulds of originals in the Musée du Louvre, Paris. Each panel refers to a different category of the classical tradition with fragments of the *Venus de Milo* and the *Winged victory of Samothrace*, representing the ‘perfect woman’; the *Discus thrower* and the *Delphic charioteer*, the ‘perfect man’; Greek urns and vases, the ‘perfect pot’; and a monumental Doric column, the ‘perfect architectural support’.

In creating *Cultural rubble*, O’Loughlin was conscious of the importance of the classical past to world art, but she also appreciated the irony in ‘European cultural rubble which both blocks and bursts from the windows of an Australian contemporary art gallery, [being] a statement of confidence in the dynamism of contemporary Australian art’.

Frances Lindsay
Destiny Deacon was born in 1957 of the Ku Ku and Erub/Mer peoples in Maryborough, Queensland. She completed a Bachelor of Arts (Politics) at the University of Melbourne in 1979 and a Diploma of Education at La Trobe University in 1981, after which she commenced working as a history teacher. Deacon began taking photographs in 1990 and first exhibited her art in the same year. She was raised in Melbourne, and lives in Brunswick, where she works from her living room studio.

Me and Virginia’s doll (Me and Carol) was exhibited in the major survey Walk or don’t look blak, which was initiated by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, and reconfigured for the Potter in 2006.

Deacon’s staged photographs are complex and ambiguous. Despite their blurry-painterly character, they can be caustic. She uses people and things close to her—friends and family across generations, household objects—to confront and invert social stereotypes, and comment on contemporary Australian life.

Professor Marcia Langton has written of Deacon that ‘her work serves as a barometer of postcolonial anxiety, as a window of understanding for new generations of Australians turning away from the psychosis of the colonial relationship, but seeking to establish a considered and meaningful grammar of images in an environment full of colonial memories’.

Me and Virginia’s doll, with a secondary title of Me and Carol, is an image of Deacon restaging the famous Mexican artist Frida Kahlo’s painting from 1937 titled Me and my doll. Both the Kahlo and Deacon’s restaged photograph display the same setting: the artist sits side by side with a large naked doll on a simple bed in an otherwise bare room. Each stares outward toward the viewer. In Deacon’s restaging we glimpse a rather modern standard futon bed or bench base rather than the rustic straw bed of the Kahlo painting.

Each picture presents a complex psychological interchange. In Kahlo’s paintings a doll was often associated with a lost child; her painting presents an evolving persona. In Deacon’s image, the white doll might stand in for long-time collaborator Virginia Fraser, the Virginia of the title, and in this sense the photograph is not just a self-portrait but also an image of their relationship.

Bala Starr
In 2006 the Potter presented the first major survey of the work of Brent Harris. Titled Just a feeling, the exhibition spanned two decades of Harris’s work to date and featured large-scale super flat paintings and new paper pulp prints. Harris has a keen pictorial intelligence and has over time come to use the Surrealist method of automatic drawing to probe themes and imagery sourced in dreams, childhood memories and familial relationships.

Included in the survey Just a feeling were four large paintings from his Grotesquerie series 2001–06, arguably Harris’s finest series. This work, Grotesquerie no. 5, was completed in 2006 around the time of his Potter survey after initially being put aside in 2001. Each of the paintings and woodcuts in the complete series displays permutations and configurations that stem first from extensive preparatory drawings. These drawings chart the evolution and refinement of key motifs from nascent stages through to the ‘adult’ forms realised in the paintings. As well as Grotesquerie no. 5, the University of Melbourne Art Collection includes three Grotesquerie prints from 2001 to 2002.

The predominant use of black and white, fluid anthropomorphic forms and visual distortions along with the active examination they necessitate (of following the push and pull of flat fields of paint) give a mortal physicality to Harris’s work. Grotesquerie no. 5 is characteristic. The painting depicts a number of figures: the largest a horned menacing Minotaur or masked man exhaling a ballooning naked torso. In the foreground a female figure in a yellow wig kisses a baby while being caressed by the trunk of a small elephant. Indeed close examination reveals upward of seven figurative presences among the vocabulary of shapes and sinuous lines that articulate this image of demonic drama.

Major influences on Harris’s oeuvre include the work of artists Peter Booth, Barnett Newman, Colin McCahon, John Wesley and Odilon Redon.

Bala Starr

BRENT HARRIS

BORN 1956 PALMIRTON NORTH, AOTEAROA, NEW ZEALAND, ARRIVED AUSTRALIA 1991

Grotesquerie no. 5 2001–06
oil on canvas
241.5 x 104.5 cm

The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased by the Ian Potter Museum of Art 2006. 2006.0110
In 2008 the Potter staged the first major survey of the art of Vivienne Shark LeWitt. ‘If the shoe doesn’t fit, must we change the foot?’ was painted by Shark LeWitt especially for the exhibition.

Vivienne Shark LeWitt gained the attention of critics and curators early in her career, exhibiting in important Australian and international survey exhibitions of the 1980s. Her work represents some of the key interests of artists of her generation, including the return to figuration, the development of personal symbols, analysis of the impact of mass media, and the dissolution of boundaries between high and low culture. She produces intimately scaled paintings and drawings in a deceptively winsome style. The size and delicacy of the work belie its psychological and poetic impact.

‘If the shoe doesn’t fit, must we change the foot?’ depicts a characteristically impassive Shark LeWitt female figure shopping for vegetables. Shark LeWitt captures a moment of deliberation where the purchaser’s intentions are not revealed. This medium-scale painting is undertaken on raw self-primed linen canvas. Each layer of paint, sometimes no more than a wash, stops before the edges of the next, leaving a thin outline of white primer. It is the particulars of the work’s prevailing civility—its drawing, its material surface, the colour and shape of the clothing, the tilt of the woman’s head—that convey a complex interplay between nuances of feeling.

The title, ‘If the shoe doesn’t fit, must we change the foot?’, is taken from a 1977 quote by American feminist and activist Gloria Steinem, although in the context of Shark LeWitt’s painting its meaning is ambiguous. This is not a self-portrait, but it nonetheless pursues a figurative intensity inspired in part by self-reflection or looking closely around oneself. It is as if Shark LeWitt has pursued a thought, responded to a provocation or recalled a circumstance that she has then sought to take account of in this painting.

Bala Starr
Lindy Allen (p. 70) is a senior curator at Museum Victoria and in 2009 curated *Ancient Power and the aesthetic* at the Ian Potter Museum of Art. Her research and publishing spans Aboriginal material culture and art as well as museum collections and collecting.

Jaynie Anderson (p. 26) is the Herald Chair of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne and International President of the History of Art for the World.

Joanna Rosse (pp. 72, 82, 92) is Curator at the Ian Potter Museum of Art.

Helen Brack (p. 100) is a Melbourne artist, exhibiting (as Helen Maudsley) since 1957. She is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts and her work is included in major Australian public collections. She contributes to seminar sessions for the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation and takes courses for the Centre for Adult Education.

Alisa Bunbury (pp. 28, 36) has been Curator of Prints & Drawings at the National Gallery of Victoria since 2002. Prior to that she was Associate Curator of Prints, Drawings & Photographs at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Her recent research has focused on Australia’s colonial art.

Amanda Burritt (pp. 40, 56) is Curator of Academic Programs at the Ian Potter Museum of Art and teaches in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

Jane Eckert (p. 84) (MLitt, Trinity College Dublin) is an art historian and doctoral candidate at Melbourne University whose research focuses on Australian emigre and expatriate artists.

Gillian Forwood (p. 94) holds a Masters degree in Fine Arts from the University of Melbourne. She curated the exhibition *The Babe is Wise: Lina Bryans* at the Grainger Museum, the University of Melbourne, and writes for *Art Monthly Australia*.

Alison Inglis (pp. 34, 44) is an Associate Professor in the Art History program at the University of Melbourne. She teaches, researches and publishes on nineteenth-century art and art curatorship. She has co-ordinated the Master of Art Curatorship since 1995.

Dr Heather Jackson (p. 26) is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. She is the co-author of *A catalogue of Greek vases in the collection of the University of Melbourne at the Ian Potter Museum of Art* (2006), and Co-Director of excavations at Hellenistic Jebel Khaid in Syria.

Dr Andrew Jamieson (p. 18) is a Classics and Archaeology lecturer in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies and Curator of the University of Melbourne’s antiquities collection at the Ian Potter Museum of Art.

Barbara Brabazon Kane’s (p. 52) MA from the University of Melbourne was on Rupert Bunny and she curated the exhibition *Sanctity and mystery: the symbolist art of Rupert Bunny at the Ian Potter Museum of Art* (2001). She has contributed entries on Bunny’s work to other exhibition catalogues.

Frances Lindsay (p. 104) is Deputy Director at the National Gallery of Victoria. She was the inaugural director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art and was the key figure in the design and conception of the building, overseeing its construction and completion in 1998.

Dr Susan Lowish (p. 80) writes, teaches and researches in the field of Australian art history and contemporary Indigenous art. She was born in Tasmania, lives in Melbourne, and travels widely.

Dr Chris McAuliffe (pp. 88, 96) is Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art.

Patrick McCaughey (p. 90) graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1966 with an honors degree in Fine Arts and English. He was University Fellow in Fine Arts at the University 1972-73 and returned to the fold to direct the first two Festivals of Ideas in 2009 and 2010.

Elizabeth McRae (p. 86) is the Information Desk Officer at the Ian Potter Museum of Art. She has a Master of Art Curatorship from the University of Melbourne.

Margaret Manson AO (p. 24) is Professor Emeritus and an honorary Professorial Fellow in Art History at the University of Melbourne. She specialises in Medieval and Renaissance Art History. As Professor of Fine Arts, Margaret was also very much involved in the development of the University’s Art Museum and its collections, especially the early development of the Potter.

Steve Martin (p. 98) is Collections and Exhibitions Officer at the Ian Potter Museum of Art.

Christopher Mena (Introduction and pp. 62, 68) is Acting Director at the Ian Potter Museum of Art (2011–12) and a former Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia.

Jay Miller (p. 74) is the Assistant Collections Manager at the Ian Potter Museum of Art.

Dr Juliette Peebles (pp. 46, 50, 60) is a lecturer at the Frances Burke Textile Resource Centre at RMIT University.

Ronald T. Ridley (p. 22) taught ancient history at the University of Melbourne 1967–2005, retiring from a personal chair, now Emeritus. His main interests are the history of the ancient world in Egypt to Rome, of Egypt, the Roman archaeology, of historical writing, of autobiography, and of the University.

Henry Skerritt (pp. 38, 42) is a PhD student in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh. In 2010–11 he was the Grimwade Intern at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, where he curated the exhibition *Experimental Gentlemen*.
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