The Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne

Media Release

Visions past and present: celebrating 40 years
18 February to 26 August 2012

The Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, is celebrating its 40th anniversary with an exhibition of major works from the University’s collection.

Visions past and present: celebrating 40 years, features works from the remarkable and extensive collection of Australian art amassed over the life of the University.

Visions past and present is a celebration of forty years since the founding of the University Art Gallery and showcases significant, rare and unusual works of quality and character.

Artists represented in the exhibition include Ralph Balson, John Brack, Pat Brassington, Lina Bryans, Rupert Bunny, Destiny Deacon, William Dobell, Ian Fairweather, Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack, Norman Lindsay, Sydney Nolan, Margaret Preston, Thea Proctor, Hugh Ramsay, Vivienne Shark LeWitt, Margaret Stones, William Strutt and Fred Williams.

Hugh Ramsay’s Seated girl, c.1896–98, a beautiful tonal study, is one of the Potter’s most popular paintings. Unusually, the artist presents only the back of the sitter, with no face showing, so that viewer focuses on the startlingly naked back and delicate nape, framed by the dark tones of the hair, clothing and background.

Ralph Balson’s Untitled, 1954, with its rectangular forms of overlapping colour, is a key example by the earliest exponent of abstract painting in Australia.

The University Art Gallery began in 1972 in the John Medley Building and since then has staged over 440 exhibitions. Its formation recognised the need to manage and display the tremendous wealth and variety of works of art acquired since the very early days of the University.

From the 1970s the Gallery was under the direction of Betty Clarke, and then Maudie Palmer. In 1984 Frances Lindsay was appointed the first director of the University of Melbourne Museum of Art. The current building, designed by Nonda Katsalidis was opened in August 1998 as the Ian Potter Museum of Art and Chris McAuliffe has been Director since 2000.

“What grew out of a series of research collections, donations and purchases, the Ian Potter Museum of Art is now a very important cultural asset of the University of...
Melbourne and a fundamental part of Melbourne cultural life,” said Frances Lindsay, now Deputy Director of the National Gallery of Victoria.

Monthly lunchtime talks, focussing on key works of art, will be presented on the third Tuesday of every month, beginning 20 March, delivered by the curators Bala Starr and Joanna Bosse and other University art experts.

“This exhibition honours the work and foresight of artists, donors, collectors and staff who have made the Ian Potter Museum of Art Australia’s leading University art museum and one of Australia’s finest cultural institutions,” said Christopher Menz, Acting Director, The Ian Potter Museum of Art.

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Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am - 5pm: Saturday and Sunday 12 - 5pm (Free admission)