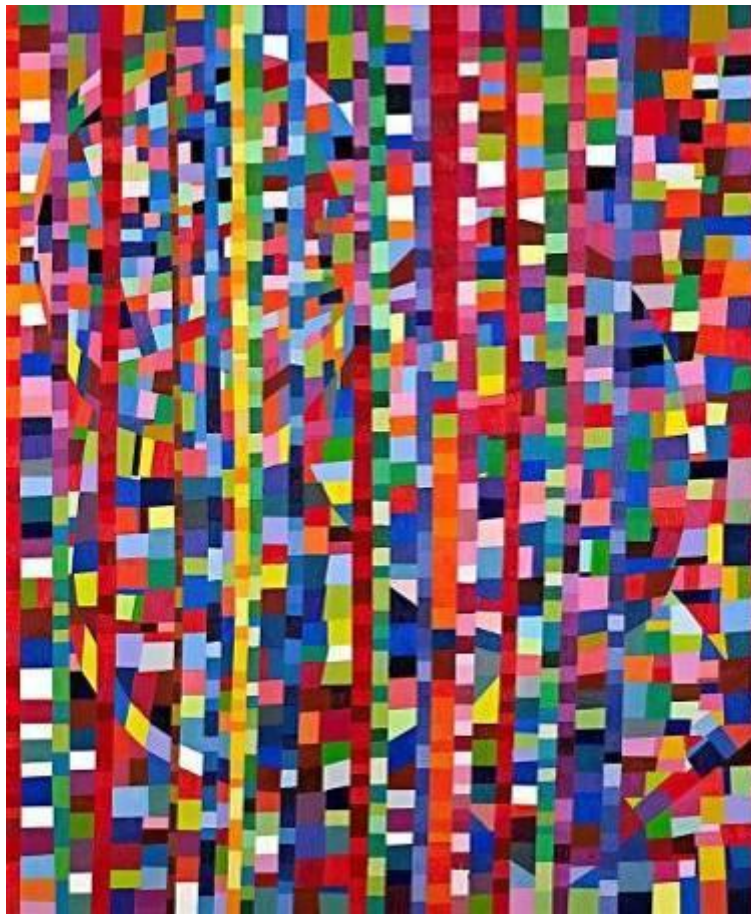


CUBISM & AUSTRALIAN ART

24 November 2009 – 8 April 2010



Melinda Harper
Untitled 2000

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through the National Gallery of Victoria Foundation by Robert Gould,
Benefactor, 2004

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Educational tours are tailored to meet individual student group capabilities and needs across all year levels from K-12. This can be taken as a stand-alone excursion or combined with a Creating and Making workshop

The exhibition divides loosely into three chronological sections, exploring the earliest incorporation of cubist principles by Australian artists in the 1920s and 1930s, the post-war decades of the 1950s and 1960s (in Heide II), and the continuing influence of post-cubist ideas in contemporary art from the 1970s until today. This resource provides an insight into key works and artists selected for the exhibition.



Dorrit Black
The bridge 1930
oil on canvas on board
60 x 81 cm
Art Gallery of South Australia,
Adelaide
Bequest of Dorrit Black, 1951

Introduction

Cubism & Australian Art considers the impact of the revolutionary and transformative movement of Cubism on Australian art from the early twentieth century to the present day. Cubism was a movement that changed fundamentally the course of twentieth-century art, and its innovations—the shattering of the traditional mimetic relationship between art and reality and investigations into the representation of time, space and motion—have continuing relevance for artists today. Works by over eighty artists, including key examples of international Cubism drawn from Australian collections, are displayed in the exhibition.

The exhibition examines not only the period contemporaneous with Cubism's influence within Europe, but also the decades from then until the present day, when its reverberations continue to be felt. In the first part of the century, Cubism appeared through a series of encounters and dialogues between individuals and groups resulting in a range of fascinating adaptations, translations and versions alongside other more programmatic or prescriptive adoptions of cubist ideas. The exhibition traces the first manifestations of Cubism in Australian art in the 1920s, when artists studying overseas under leading cubist artists began to transform their art in accordance with such approaches. It examines the transmission of cubist thinking and its influence on artists associated with the George Bell School in Melbourne and the Crowley–Fizelle School in Sydney. By the 1940s, artists working within the canon of modernism elaborated on Cubism as part of their evolutionary process, and following World War II Cubism's reverberations were being felt as its ideas were revisited by artists working with abstraction.

In the postwar years and through to the 1960s, the influence of Cubism became more diffuse, but remained significant. In painting, cubist ideas provided an underlying point of reference in the development of abstract pictorial structures, though they merged with other ideas current at the time, relating in the 1950s, for example, to colour, form, musicality and the metaphysical. For many artists during this decade, Cubism provided the geometric basis from which to seek an inner meaning beneath surface appearances, to explore the spiritual dimension of painting and to understand modernism.

The shift from a Cubist derived abstraction in Australia in the 1950s to a mild reaction against Cubism in the Colour field and hard-edged painting of the mid to latter 1960s reflected a new recognition of New York as the centre of the avant-garde. Cubism's shallow pictorial space, use of *trompe l'oeil* and fragmentation of parts continued to inform the work of certain individuals who adapted them in ways relevant to the new abstraction. Cubist ideas and precepts also found some resonance in an emphasis on the flatness of the canvas, particularly as articulated in the formalist criticism of Clement Greenberg.

The influence of Cubism on Australian art from 1980s to 2000s is subtle, varied and diffuse as contemporary artists variously quote, adapt, develop and critique aspects of cubist practice. Cubism's decentred, shifting, multi-perspectival view of reality takes on new form, in moving-image works and installations, as well as being further developed in painting and sculpture. Post-cubist collage is used both as a method of constructing artworks—paintings, sculptures, assemblages—and as an intellectual strategy, that of the postmodern *bricoleur*. Several artists imagine alternative cubist histories and lineages, revisiting cubist art from an Indigenous or non-European perspective and drawing out the implications of its primitivism. Others pay homage to local versions of Cubism, or look through its lens at art from elsewhere.

Artists

International

Alexander Archipenko
Joseph Csáky
Stuart Davis
Albert Gleizes
Fernand Léger
Jacques Lipchitz
André Lhote
Ben Nicholson
Amedée Ozenfant
Maria Helena Vieira da Silva

Australian artists

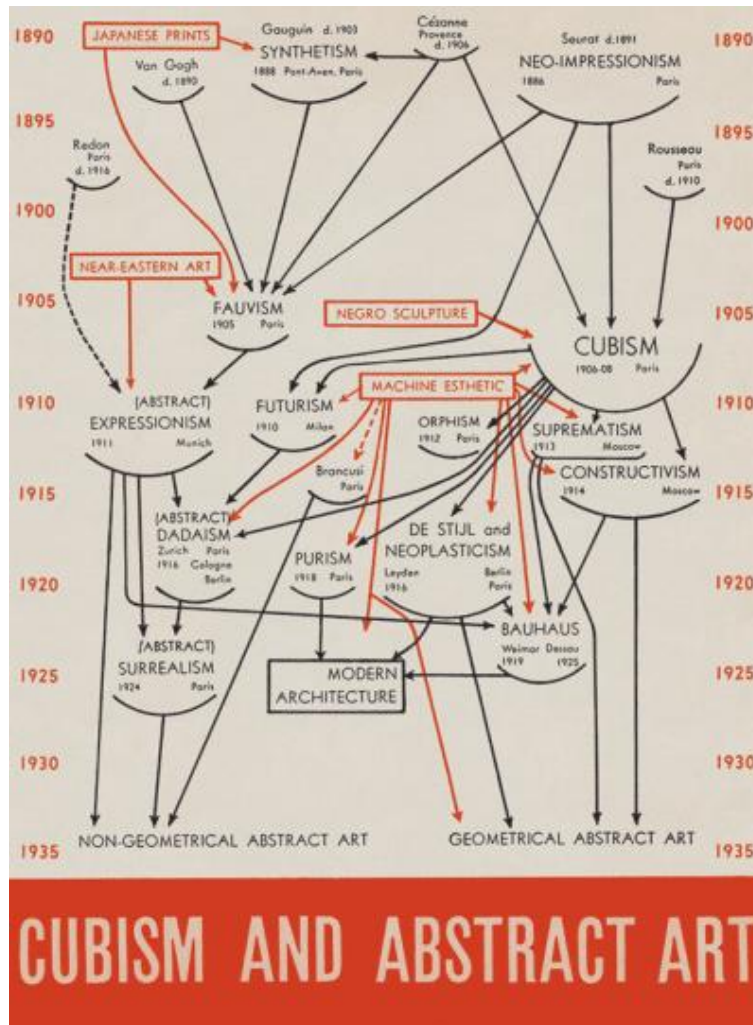
Mary Cecil Allen
Jean Appleton
Sam Atyeo
Ralph Balson
Dorrit Black
James Cant
Grace Crowley
Anne Dangar
Russell Drysdale
Moya Dyring
Rah Fizelle
Paul Haefliger
Weaver Hawkins
Frank Hinder
Ludwig Hirschfeld Mack
Adrian Lawlor
Roy de Maistre
Sidney Nolan
John Power
Eveline Syme
Albert Tucker
Tony Tuckson
Danila Vassilieff
Eric Wilson

Post war and 1960s generations:

James Angus
Mike Brown
Len Crawford
Wladyslaw Dutkiewicz
Ian Fairweather
Leonard French
Dale Hickey
Robert Jacks
George Johnson
Roger Kemp
Grahame King
Inge King
Margo Lewers
James Meldrum
Godfrey Miller
Lenton Parr
Carl Plate
Anthony Pryor
William Rose
Rollin Schlicht
Joseph Szabo
Dick Watkins
Fred Williams

1970s – Contemporary

Justin Andrews
Gordon Bennett
Stephen Bram
Ian Burn
Eugene Carchesio
Daniel Crooks
Juan Davila
ADS Donaldson
John Dunkley-Smith
Rosalie Gascoigne
Diena Georgetti
Melinda Harper
Maria Kozić
Alun Leach-Jones
Jacky Redgate
Robert Rooney
Ron Robertson-Swann
Gemma Smith
Madonna Staunton
Masato Takasaka
Constanze Zikos



Alfred Barr's Cubism diagram— original cover of *Cubism and Abstract Art*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, exhibition catalogue, 1936



Mike Brown
Folding Pictorial 1964
enamel and synthetic polymer paint on composition board
122 x 183cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
Purchased from John and Sunday Reed, 1980

Curators essay

The exhibition *Cubism and Australian Art* and its accompanying book of the same title explore the impact of Cubism on Australian artists from the 1920s to the present day. Looking at Australian art through the lens of Cubism's stylistic and conceptual precepts has been an absorbing curatorial adventure, one which has brought to light a hitherto little-known history encompassing the earliest manifestations of Cubism in the work of Australian artists, then tracing the adaptation and evolution of cubist ideas and influences over successive decades. In viewing Cubism as a set of stylistic and conceptual discoveries, rather than as a style defined by a particular historical period, we have sought to uncover its ongoing influence on Australian art. While we make no claim for anything approaching a cubist movement in Australia, we have found a story worth telling, one that shows a much broader embrace of Cubism by Australian artists than has been acknowledged to date, if a disparate and varied one.

Pablo Picasso, co-originator of Cubism with fellow French artist George Braque, has said: 'I am always in movement. I look around. I am assigned a place, but I have already changed, I am already somewhere else. I never stand still. Down with style!' The same might be said of Cubism itself for by its very nature it was characterized by variation and transformation; it never stood still. Indeed flux and instability are the very essence of the shifting forms and fractured floating grids in Picasso and Braque's early cubist paintings from 1908-12, sometimes described as analytical or 'original' Cubism'. But this period of 'original' Cubism, though decisive, was short-lived and Cubism quickly evolved into myriad individual styles and inflections, within France (notably in the work of the so-called Salon Cubists, those who hung their paintings at regular salon exhibitions in Paris) as well as in several countries throughout the world, Australia included. By the late 1920s salon cubist André Lhote, mentor to several Australian artists who studied at his Academy in Paris, could rightfully claim: 'There are a thousand definitions of Cubism, because there are a thousand painters practising it'.

Described in 1912 by French poet and commentator Guillaume Apollinaire as 'not an art of imitation but one of conception', Cubism irreversibly altered art's relationship to visual reality. 'I paint things as I think them, not as I see them' Picasso said. While early Cubism broke down the pictorial subject resulting in fragmentary images with multiple viewpoints and overlapping planes, the later inclusion of collage elements such as newsprint and wallpaper into paintings (a development sometimes referred to as Synthetic Cubism) was the beginning of the idea that real objects could be incorporated into artworks, an idea which became central for modern art and opened up new possibilities for the treatment of reality in art. Possibly Cubism's most enduring legacy for modern and contemporary art, collage is used by artists in the exhibition both as a method of making artworks—paintings, sculptures, assemblages—and as an intellectual strategy, that of the postmodern *bricoleur*.

Exploring Australian artists' contribution to the development and dissemination of cubist ideas inevitably raises questions about Australia's place in the world. For many artists the issue of their nationality became irrelevant; as Anne Dangar said in 1929, 'There is no such thing as Australian art or English art. Art is universal'. In the early decades, an interest in Cubism signalled a desire to *be* modern, which largely meant to be international, a vanguard position taken against the parochial predominance of landscape painting in Australia at that time. In recent decades when the globalised context of art is more accepted, some artists look back to earlier localised versions of Cubism, re-discovering Australia's own modernist traditions and reflecting on its place in the world. Other artists have been critical of Cubism, bringing Indigenous and non-European

perspectives to bear on its modernist history, particularly its appropriation of so-called 'primitive art'.

To their credit, Australian artists of the 1920s and 1930s did not simply adopt Cubism as the latest international fad or mode but sought to meaningfully incorporate it into their work. For several artists this meant embarking on periods studying or exhibiting abroad. Anne Dangar, Grace Crowley and Dorrit Black attended Andre Lhote's popular Academy at Montparnasse in Paris in the late 1920s alongside local and international artists. Here they imbibed Lhote's classical form of Cubism based on a study of the old masters, the theory of dynamic symmetry, and an emphasis on the technique of *passage*. Crowley's *Sailors and models* (1928) and *Girl with goats* (1928) were completed whilst studying with Lhote, the latter painting gaining the distinction of being hung at the Salon des Indépendents in Paris alongside other cubists such as Jacques Lipchitz and Fernand Léger. Crowley and Dangar later took classes with Albert Gleizes and Dangar became a central and longer term member of his art colony at Sablons in the Rhône Valley, her ceramic work from these years reflecting Gleizes's fusion of Cubism with artisanal traditions.

Eric Wilson and Jean Appleton attended London's Westminster Art School, part of a second wave of Australian artists to seek tutelage in cubist ideas abroad. Wilson later studied at the London based Academy of Amédée Ozenfant, a co-founder with Edouard Jenneret (better known as Le Corbusier) of Purism, an offshoot of Cubism. His *Theme for a mural* (c.1941) features the decorative patterns and layered geometric shapes in a manner related to Synthetic Cubism, the work's unusual corrugated iron frame gesturing towards sculptural assemblage, and to an Australian vernacular.

In the decades to follow, Cubism's influence becomes more nuanced and diffuse, allied to individual styles. Included in the exhibition are cubist-derived works by the so-called Angry Penguins artists, notably Albert Tucker and Sidney Nolan. Tucker's *Self portrait* (1941) evidences his great admiration of Picasso whose cubist distortions he uses to powerful expressionist effect. In Sidney Nolan's *Rimbaud Royalty* (1942) Cubism's shunning of conventional perspective informs the artist's re-visualisation of the Australian landscape. A generation later, Cubism helped shape Fred Williams' unique vision of the Australian landscape, his painting *The charcoal burner* (1957) being, as Patrick McCaughey writes 'one of his most accomplished essays in seeing Australian landscape through cubist eyes...'.

In the post-war climate of the late 1940s and 1950s, Cubism's fracturing of the pictorial surface was utilised by artists as a means to uncover the inner meaning of form, to delve beneath surface appearance, or as Sydney artist Godfrey Miller, said 'to pierce beneath mere aspect of the world'. Miller's debt to Cubism is clearly evident in his painstaking division of the painting's surface into myriad parts, for example in *Landscape with orange cliffs* (1949-1953) a vivid, jewel-like example of geometricised nature.

Although Cubism was a kind of realism, albeit a conceptual rather than visual realism, it laid the ground for future abstract developments in art. Roger Kemp, George Johnson, James Meldrum and Leonard Crawford were among those who developed cubist-based forms of geometric abstraction in Melbourne in the 1950s and early 1960s. A highlight is Crawford's *Trio no.2 (interplay)* (1963) a work of three interchangeable parts, its abstract forms inspired by the rhythms and cadences of music. Also working in Melbourne at this time, Leonard French created a seven panel mural *The legend of Sinbad the sailor* (1957) for the Legend Espresso and Milk Bar

in 1957, a cosmopolitan café in Burke street Melbourne, French's interest in public art being inspired by the French cubist artist Fernand Léger.

The 1960s saw a new generation of abstract artists looking to New York rather than Europe for inspiration and with the new emphasis on Colour-Field and hard-edge painting, Cubism fell out of favour. Nevertheless artists like Alun Leach-Jones, Dale Hickey and Dick Watkins continued to pursue cubist concerns in a manner consistent with new ideas about abstraction. For instance Watkins' *Minerva 2* (1968), displays the hard edges and flat colours typical of the times, its cubist idiom also bearing the influence of Pop art.

Sculpture in the late 1950s and 1960s, in Australia as elsewhere, saw the emergence of open-form constructions originating in cubist sculpture that challenged the traditional solid-form techniques of modelling and carving, for example in the works of Robert Klippel, Ron Robertson-Swann and Lenton Parr. In later decades, the incorporation of found objects and recycled materials by Madonna Staunton and Rosalie Gascoigne further extend ideas originating in cubist sculpture and collage, while Masato Takasaka's chaotic mix of Japanese product packaging with modernist geometries and pop-cultural references brings a cosmopolitan inflection to this tradition. In Stephen Bram's explosive fracturing of pictorial space, Melinda Harper's faceted surfaces and Justin Andrew's splintered and rotating shapes we see Cubism's legacy in contemporary geometric painting.

Cubism's fractured spatiality has taken on new form in moving-image works. John Dunkley-Smith's photographic slide projection *Interior no 6* (1982), takes the spiral staircase at PSI in New York as its subject, the work's successive and overlapping images created by layering photographic exposures recalling Marcel Duchamp's famous cubist painting *Nude Descending A Staircase* (no.2) (1912). Daniel Crook's video projection *Static no 9 (a small section of something larger)* (2005), uses a form of digital collage to create swirling waves of fragmented forms derived from images of people walking in the street. These works show reality as layered, multifaceted, in-motion. James Angus explores similar themes in sculptural form; his *Bicycle* (2007) is a gleaming racing bike that vibrates between the plural and the singular, as if three bikes have merged into one, or one bike has split into three.

Cubist works by European and American artists drawn from Australian collections - works by Lhote, Gleizes, Léger, Jacques Lipchitz, Alexander Archipenko, Stuart Davis, Ben Nicholson and Maria Helena Vieira da Silva - provide a historical and international context within this exhibition, one of the most ambitious and extensive Heide has ever undertaken.

Sue Cramer and Lesley Harding



Grace Crowley
Sailors and models c. 1928
oil on canvas
54.6 x 81.6 cm
National Gallery of Australia
Gift of Grace Buckley in
memory of Grace Crowley,
1980

Grace Crowley's *Sailors and models* was a classroom exercise in composition at Lhote's Academy. Completed over a fortnight, students made a series of studies directly from the model then were taught to 'construct' their images, arranging the figures according to the harmonious proportions of the golden mean. Crowley reveals a debt to Lhote's depictions of the port of Bordeaux in the background of her painting.



Grace Crowley
Study for Sailors and models
c. 1928
pencil on paper
56.8 x 88.6 cm
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Gift of Grace Crowley in
memory of Grace Crowley,
1980



Albert Tucker
Self portrait 1941
oil on paperboard
45 x 32.6 cm
National Gallery of Australia
Purchased 1982



Fred Williams
The charcoal burner 1959
oil on composition board
85.2 x 90.2 cm
National Gallery of Victoria
Purchased 1959

Cubism played a fundamental role in Fred Williams's pictorial rethinking of the Australian landscape and through him, Cubism has affected the way Australians view their natural surroundings.

Patrick McCaughey writes in the catalogue for this exhibition:

The charcoal burner, with its reserved palette and briskly delineated planes, is one of his most accomplished essays in seeing the Australian landscape through cubist eyes. Already looking for the 'bones' of the landscape, Williams was drawn to the early phase of Cubism, as it gave structure to the unspectacular landscape—the bush in the Dandenongs; the coastal plain around the You Yangs.

Just as Braque in his cubist landscapes of 1908–09 eschewed 'view' painting and disdained the picturesque, so Williams in turn generalised the landscape, constructing it and rendering it taut, modern and vivid. In his landscapes Braque made the important pictorial discovery of *passage*, fusing solid forms with the surrounding space. Williams exploits this innovation in *The charcoal burner*, where surface and space are perfectly commingled.



Geoffrey Miller
Landscape with orange cliffs
1949–53
oil on canvas
66.6 x 100.3 cm
State Art Collection, Art Gallery
of Western Australia Purchased
1955



Leonard Crawford
Trio no.2 (interplay) 1963–65
3 parts: 91.5 x 61 cm each 91.5
x 183 overall
Courtesy of Charles Nodrum,
Melbourne



Daniel Crooks
Static no. 9 (a small section of something larger) 2005
 video still
 DV/DVD 16:9 min duration,
 stereo
 Courtesy of the artist and Anna
 Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne



James Angus
Bicycles 2007
 metal, rubber, paint
 108 x 54 x 182 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

The bicycle was a motif used in several early cubist artists to convey ideas of leisure, but also motion and speed. From a distance James Angus' *Bicycles* 2007 appears like any other gleaming brand new bike. On closer view, the work reveals itself as a unique object, one that vibrates between the singular and the plural as if three separate bicycles have perfectly fused into one or one bicycle has split into three. Angus describes the work as a 'sculpture-in-motion', a visual effect created by moulding each part of the bike in triplicate.

Cubism's visualisations of time and space were influenced by time-lapse and stop motion photography and its ability to capture movement in a sequence of still frames. Angus makes a link between his sculpture and today's use of advanced photography to heighten our viewing of sport. He says 'Think of *Bicycles* as a photo-finish made actual, a series of frames at the conclusion of a race transferred permanently into three dimensions'.

Beginnings: Cubism and Australian Art

Soon after Cubism first emerged in 1907, it began to evolve. Initially, Cubism amounted to a major break from established conventions of painting, shattering naturalistic forms and the illusion of perspectival depth by showing objects from more than one view at once. Principally a form of realism that attempted to convey the way we experience and perceive things in the world, Cubism was seen by its early proponents as an art of conception, not an art of imitation. 'I paint things as I think them, not as I see them', Picasso said. Such thinking spawned many versions and offshoots of Cubism as its ideas were communicated and newly interpreted from one artist and place to another. Though France was Cubism's epicentre, before long its influence had made its way around the world, including to Australia.

The story of Cubism in Australian art begins in the 1920s, when Sydney artists and art teachers Grace Crowley, Anne Dangar and Dorrit Black enrolled at the Académie Lhote in Paris. André Lhote was a cubist who exhibited with like-minded artists Marcel Duchamp, Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger and Albert Gleizes in the Paris Salons from 1911. His Academy was popular among international students. It offered an accessible cubist formula that remained figurative, but emphasised geometric form and strict compositional arrangements to achieve an overall pictorial balance and harmony.

The three Australians also sought instruction from Albert Gleizes. Taking a different tack to Lhote, Gleizes was interested in how the constructive art of Cubism could illuminate the universal rhythms and cycles of life. His art theories stemmed from broader and socially conscious interests in collectivism and social renewal. Both Gleizes and Lhote were to have a lasting influence on cubist art in Australia via Crowley, Dangar and Black, who in turn translated and adapted the approaches they had learnt and disseminated them on their return.

Léger's Cubism was self-consciously modern, as he sought to relieve art from the decorative and ornamental and return to the essential in his paintings. He used bold and defined shapes and colours and preferred subjects based on the world of mass-produced objects, derived from the machine-age.

La bicyclette came to Australia with the landmark Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art in 1939. The exhibition attracted record crowds and included over 200 works of art, with fine examples of European Cubism were among them. Picasso, Braque, Gris and Léger were all generously represented.

Sometimes described as a classical cubist, André Lhote looked to the history of art when devising his theories. He drew on the lessons of the Italian Renaissance and usually arranged his compositions according to the geometries of the Section d'Or, or golden mean (a rectangle in the ratio of 8:13). In addition, Cézanne's use of *passage*—the transition between adjacent shapes, where solid forms are fused with the surrounding space—was an important device used by Lhote and his followers to disrupt single-point perspective.

Lhote painted the port of Bordeaux, his birthplace, many times and this version demonstrates his use of the Section d'Or as an organising principle: he places flattened geometric elements upon an underlying architecture to create rhythm and unity in the composition. More unusual in this painting is the 'picture within the picture' which adds an alternative view of the scene.

Albert Gleizes first rose to prominence in the art world as one of the original ‘salon cubists’, and along with André Lhote was known as one of Cubism’s most influential theoreticians.

In 1912 he wrote *Du ‘Cubisme’* with Jean Metzinger, a manifesto of the freedom of the artist against imitative realism. It emphasised the concept of simultaneity—movement, space and the dynamism of modern life—and this was matched to Cubism’s new forms of pictorial organisation.

Painted in Barcelona in 1916, *Acrobats* was one of a number of works Gleizes made there depicting Spanish dancers and circus performers which explored rhythmic movement and the sensations of temporal reality. It also predates the artist’s religious conversion, around 1918. After this time, Gleizes’s laws of painting were to become enmeshed with the search for spiritual experience and he developed a more reductive and increasingly abstract cubist style.

Teaching Cubism

Grace Crowley, Anne Dangar and Dorrit Black all returned to Australia with an unambiguous desire to teach and promote the cubist ideas that had so impressed them overseas. Dorrit Black opened the progressive Modern Art Centre in 1932, offering art classes and—vital for publicising the new art—an exhibition venue. Grace Crowley joined Rah Fizelle in establishing the Crowley–Fizelle School (1932–37), where they trained artists in André Lhote’s methods. And Anne Dangar, the first to return to Australia in 1929, resumed her position at the Sydney Art School but held private classes in her studio teaching cubist methods.

Dangar left for France only a year later and joined Albert Gleizes’s art colony, Moly-Sabata at Sablons in the Rhône Valley region. Here she participated fully in the French cubist movement, while remaining a firm presence and influence on Australian artists through her regular correspondence with Grace Crowley. Her detailed descriptions of Gleizes’s abstract–cubist laws would soon make a visible impact on the work of artists associated with the Crowley–Fizelle School, as Crowley, Ralph Balson and Frank Hinder all began to pursue Cubism’s abstract possibilities.



Anne Dangar
Mirmande, La Drôme 1928
oil on canvas on board
55.5 x 72.5 cm
Private collection



Ralph Balson
Painting no. 17 1941
 oil and metallic paint on
 cardboard
 91.7 x 64.8 cm
 Hassall Collection

By 1941 Ralph Balson had abandoned the figure for a completely abstract style. He announced this breakthrough in a solo exhibition at the Fine Art Galleries at Anthony Hordern and Sons in Sydney with paintings that evolved in part out of Albert Gleizes's style of Cubism: uninflected surfaces, essential forms, respect for the two-dimensionality of the picture surface and the sense of a search for a deeper, universal truth.

Though at the time unusual for Australian art, such developments were concurrent with advancements in abstraction in the UK and US. This new mode of painting was to preoccupy Balson and Crowley, and to a lesser extent Frank Hinder, for the rest of the decade.

Balson's 'constructive' pictures became sophisticated and intricate, characterised by *Constructive painting* (1945), with its overlapping translucent planes and array of discs, squares and rectilinear shapes in an animated state of flux, and perhaps culminating in *Constructive painting* (1951). This work has a different kind of luminosity, as if the picture has an inner light. As Balson himself said of such images, they are 'abstract from the surface, but more truly real with life'.

Expatriate cubists

Like Anne Dangar, John Power and Roy de Maistre left Australia permanently and became fully-fledged participants in European Cubism and successful contributors to the international avant-garde.

Trained in medicine but a talented amateur artist and musician, John Power studied with Brazilian cubist Pedro Araújo in Paris from 1920 to 1922 and exhibited with Leonce Rosenberg, one of the most important dealers in cubist art, from whom he also acquired works by Fernand Léger, Albert Gleizes, Juan Gris, Joseph Csàky and Pablo Picasso for his personal collection. Power's Cubism was experimental and idiosyncratic, combining imagery from popular culture and cubist devices such as interlocking planes and multiple viewpoints.

Roy de Maistre, unlike Power and Dangar, did not arrive at his cubist style via specific training. He had already achieved notoriety in Australia for his experimental modernism and had an auspicious start in London in 1930, where he became associated with artists Francis Bacon and Henry Moore, noted art historian and cubist commentator Douglas Cooper (also an Australian), the notorious Mayor Gallery, and influential writer Herbert Read. De Maistre developed a decorative Cubism using pared-back forms and a reduced palette.



Roy de Maistre
The football match 1938
 oil on canvas
 71.5 x 92 cm
 The Janet Holmes à Court
 Collection

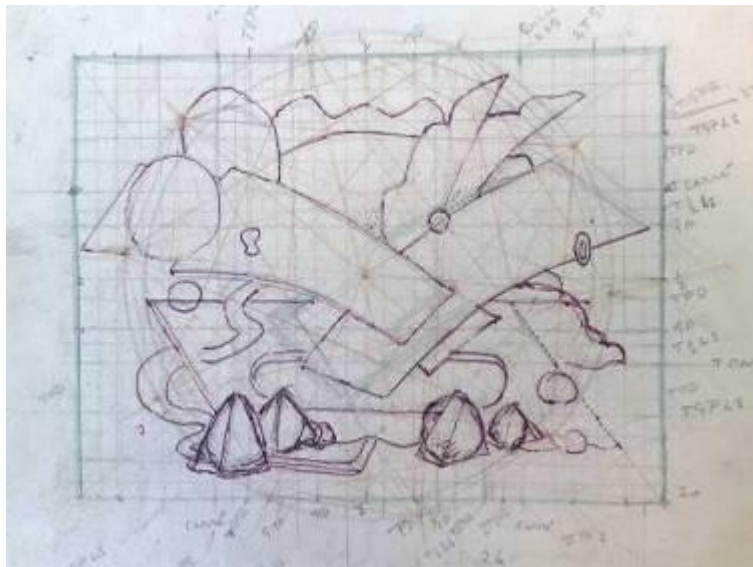


John Power
(Still life with toothbrush) c.
 1934
 oil on canvas
 32 x 52.2 cm
 JW Power Collection, Museum
 of Contemporary Art, Sydney,
 Mrs Edith Power Bequest 1961

Many of John Power's themes derive from popular culture and the affectations of his privileged, affluent lifestyle: music, the circus, seaside and café scenes and the still life.

In *Still life with toothbrush*, Power returns to the primary concerns of Synthetic Cubism, using surface realism and textural variation, and a regard for the *tableau-object*, when the picture is both a conceptual recreation of reality and a new reality in itself. However, rather than the usual cubist still-life objects of communal use, such as bottles and glasses, playing cards, musical instruments and elements from the café table, Power incorporates personal motifs, lending the picture a lighthearted, or perhaps ironic tone.

One of Power's earliest surviving cubist paintings, *Seaside still life* owes much to the 'window' paintings that French cubist Juan Gris painted after 1915, whereby the problem of recessive perspective is added to the compositional challenges of cubist pictorial construction. The flattened tableau of interlocking beachside accoutrements is presented across the horizontal span of the picture, softening the otherwise sharp shift from the front plane to the background.



John Power
Diagram for *Paysage* c. 1930s
ink and pencil on paper
24.5 x 35.5 cm
JW Power Collection
Museum of Contemporary Art,
Sydney
Mrs Edith Power Bequest,
1961



John Power
Paysage (Landscape) c. 1930s
oil on canvas
50.9 x 66.3 cm
JW Power Collection
Museum of Contemporary Art,
Sydney
Mrs Edith Power Bequest, 1961

A hybrid style of Cubism and Surrealism, Power's *Paysage*, a curious and unnatural landscape, demonstrates how flexible and inventive the artist's painting style became in the 1930s.

In 1932 Power published a book, *Éléments de la Construction Picturale* in Paris, in which he focused on the geometric and mathematical foundation of picture-making via a series of analyses of successful paintings from the canon of art history. According to André Lhote the theory was an 'ingenious system of mechanics'. Power's preparatory drawing for *Paysage* shows the application of his constructive principles.

The second wave

A decade after Grace Crowley, Dorrit Black and Anne Dangar had studied under cubist masters in France, a second generation of Australian artists sought instruction in cubist methods overseas. However they looked not to the techniques of Salon Cubism already being taught in Australia but instead to the earlier, post-1912 art of Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso and Juan Gris, now described as Synthetic Cubism, characterised by low-relief texture, pasted elements and compressed picture space.

Jean Appleton, Eric Wilson and Paul Haefliger all worked in London in the late 1930s, and studied the conventions of synthetic cubist painting, collage and abstract design. Braque's painting was a particular influence. From Braque they learnt to limit the number of colours in the picture and to use a few simple prompts to help the spectator see the object. As cubist art dealer Daniel Kahnweiler wrote: 'Parallel lines drawn on a white surface changed it into a page of music; lines of type turned it into a newspaper; a flatly drawn ring made it into a plate'.



Eric Wilson
Theme for a mural 1941
 oil on plywood on corrugated
 iron
 53.2 x 106.8
 National Gallery of Victoria
 Purchased 1958

Antipodean Cubism

In Melbourne new modes of Cubism first appeared in the early 1930s and were developed independently from the schools of Paris. Sam Atyeo created cubist-inspired paintings based on his reading and careful study of modernist pictures in books, while Moya Dyring looked to earlier models: Picasso's investigations of the 'primitive' during 1908–09 and Gertrude Stein's fiction. Meanwhile at the George Bell School, students were assigned cubist exercises as homework, designed by Bell to teach students to simplify and abstract forms from real life and alert them to the integral forms of a picture. For Russell Drysdale, Eveline Syme, Adrian Lawlor and other 'drop in' students such as Albert Tucker, these considerations would not persuade them to become cubist artists, but instead provided them with a means of distilling reality. The idea was to permit

the intellect to overrule the eye, a principle which was important to each of them in their future practice.

Albert Tucker and Sidney Nolan also combined stylistic interests in Cubism, such as faceted forms and spatial ambiguity, with literary influences. The modernist poetry of TS Eliot, in particular, offered them a theoretical basis for juxtaposing random mental imagery and 'cracking' space in their paintings.



Sidney Nolan
Rimbaud royalty 1942
synthetic polymer paint on
composition board
59.5 x 90 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Bequest of John and Sunday
Reed



Albert Tucker
Two abstract studies 1949
pencil, watercolour, crayon
and gouache on paper
Heide Museum of Modern
Art
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2005

Albert Tucker, like colleagues Sidney Nolan and Adrian Lawlor, studied closely and regarded highly Picasso's cubist and surrealist strategies when developing their own distinctive personal styles. They each admired Picasso's effortless conflation of myth, image and internal phenomena. Speaking of his technical inventions, Tucker remarked, 'When one deals with a distortion, it's impossible to avoid Picasso because of the way he ... disintegrated the image, pulled it completely to pieces and kept putting it back together in different ways'.

Australian Cubism 1950s–1960s

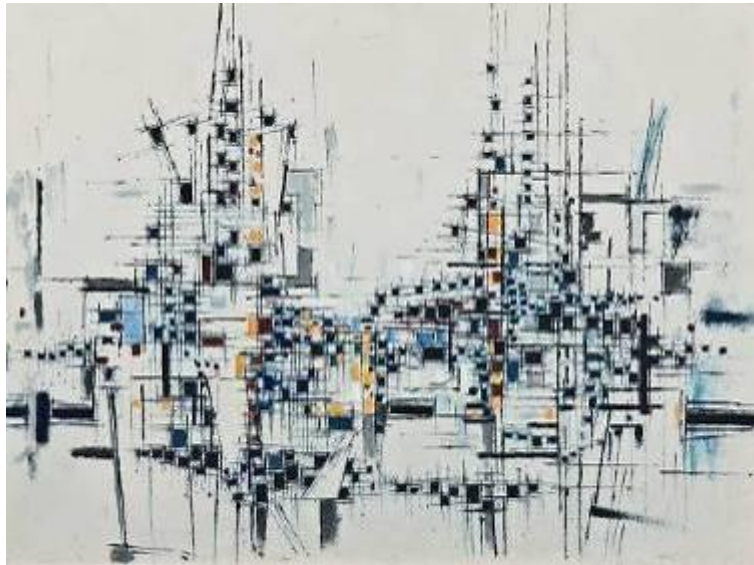
This period saw the flowering of a ‘cubist intelligence’ in works by artists who viewed Cubism as a formal and conceptual idiom able to be adapted and interpreted to various ends. Among these were artists who had moved beyond Cubism’s advanced form of realism to pursue pure abstraction (Roger Kemp, Leonard Crawford, James Meldrum, William Rose and Frank Hinder), believing it to be the way forward in the postwar world; and others who used Cubism as a means to structure figurative paintings (Godfrey Miller, Ian Fairweather and Fred Williams).

For many artists in the 1950s Cubism offered a formal language through which to realise their modernist aspirations. Their interest was heightened by the exhibition *French Painting Today*, which toured to six Australian states in 1953 and included not only works by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque and Fernand Léger, but also by a new generation of Paris-based painters whose personal styles had evolved out of cubist methods and ideas, such as Maria Helena Vieira da Silva. For artists seeking a metaphysical dimension to their art, Cubism’s analytical geometries provided a way to uncover a fundamental or spiritual reality beneath surface appearance, ‘to pierce beneath mere aspect of the world’, as Godfrey Miller said.

In the 1960s a new generation of abstract artists looked to New York rather than Paris for inspiration, particularly to the new Colour-Field painting characterised by large areas of flat colour. While Cubism’s fractured picture plane, spatial dynamics and figurative remnants were largely at odds with this new abstraction, several artists such as Alun Leach-Jones, Dale Hickey and Dick Watkins revisited cubist ideas using the bold shapes, overall composition and large-scale canvases typical of their time. In the 1960s and 1970s, Ron Robertson-Swann and Lenton Parr created open-form sculptures that rejected modelling and carving in favour of construction, inspired by the works of British sculptor Anthony Caro and deriving from cubist assemblage.

Portuguese-born French artist Maria Helena Vieira da Silva was a leading figure in the school of post-cubist abstract art in Paris in the 1940s and 1950s. Her work was included in *French Painting Today* in 1953, the most influential exhibition of international art to visit Australia in the 1950s. *La serre (the greenhouse)* has a spatially ambiguous, lattice-like composition similar to *City Perspectives* (c.1950), Vieira da Silva’s painting in the 1953 exhibition.

Of the works in *French Painting Today*, Vieira da Silva’s attracted a particular local following among the postwar generation of artists, several of whom are represented in this exhibition. *City Perspectives* was acquired by the private collector Colonel Aubrey Gibson and remained in Australia after the exhibition. William Rose’s labyrinthine grids were often compared to Vieira da Silva’s, though Rose vigorously denied her direct influence; both artists shared a language that was purely abstract, yet evoked urban structures such as buildings and scaffolding. The matrix of lines that both advance and recede in Lawrence Daws’s painting *Astrolabe II* (1956) also relates strongly to the spatial dynamics of Vieira da Silva’s painting.



William Rose
Cosmorama 1957
 oil on composition board
 82.4 x 121.4
 National Gallery of Victoria
 Purchased 1959

Typical of William Rose's work from the 1950s, *Cosmorama* features finely wrought grids with patches of colour that float within limitless space. They bear a strong, familial relation to the suspended and fractured grids of early Cubism. Rose, however, has jettisoned figurative imagery, despite what some have seen as echoes of cities, scaffolding or buildings, aesthetic reflections perhaps of 1950s urban development. Moving beyond Cubism's refined form of realism into purely non-objective art, Rose would surely agree with Georges Braque's maxim that the purpose of painting is 'not to reconstitute an anecdotal fact, but to constitute a pictorial fact'.

As with early Cubism, Rose's paintings are strikingly similar to one another, different viewpoints of the same thing—though close attention allows an appreciation of their many differences. Each can be described as a metaphysical structure exploring, as Rose said: 'that mysterious something which ... comes somewhere between a materialised form and a spiritual grace'.



Robert Klippel
Opus no. 90 1960
 metal
 72.4 x 60 x 36 cm
 Hassall Collection

Abstraction

In breaking from the imitation of nature and discovering forms not based on a visual likeness of things, Cubism laid ground for the development of pure abstraction, a vital stream of modernism that continues within art today. The abstract paintings and sculptures exhibited here and in adjacent rooms extend Cubism's visualisation of a dynamic and shifting pictorial space in which there is little or no reference to objects or figures. Many of these works are also characterised by Cubism's stylistic traits—fragmented, overlapping or intersecting planes or intensely faceted surfaces. Some artists, such as George Johnson, Stephen Bram and Justin Andrews, emphasise structure by using a subdued range of colours reminiscent of the earliest Cubist paintings. The shifting, multiple perspectives of Cubism are extended by other artists into new forms such as installation and video or through the play of colour and light.



Justin Andrews
Acid yellow 3 2008
acrylic and enamel on
composition board
75 x 60 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Charles Nodrum Gallery,
Melbourne

Post-Cubism: 1970s to today

The diverse contemporary works exhibited here can be broadly termed post-cubist because they are difficult to imagine without Cubism having occurred. Cubism's discovery of a new way of representing reality and visualising time and space has had continuing relevance for artists, who have variously developed and adapted its conceptual and stylistic precepts. Cubism's radical rethinking of pictorial perspective, its inclusion of readymade materials in *papiers collés* and collage and its analysis and representation of form have had far-reaching ramifications for art practice, beyond the medium of painting where these breakthroughs were first made.

Leaving behind the long tradition in Western painting of using one-point perspective to depict an object or scene, the early cubists painted images in which multiple viewpoints are simultaneously shown. This 'free, mobile perspective' as French artist Jean Metzinger described it in 1910, enabled the cubists to convey reality as fractured and shifting rather than stable and fixed, in keeping with emerging modern understandings of the world. This new way of looking and thinking foreshadowed postmodern art, for example in its validation of many different practices and beliefs rather than any singular point of view or absolute truth. Cubism's fragmentation of time and space has taken new form in works by artists using video and digitally manipulated photography.

From 1912 Picasso, Braque, Metzinger, Juan Gris and other cubist artists began to attach pieces of newspaper, wallpaper and other everyday items onto their paintings, further adding to Cubism's portrayal of a layered and complex reality. The use of found objects and materials in art was widely taken up and explored by modern and contemporary artists, as evidenced by the assemblage, sculptural, collage and installation works in this exhibition. Some artists use collage principles in a different way by bringing together or quoting images and motifs from various sources.

Although originally a form of realism, Cubism's breakdown of visual reality into geometricised forms also laid ground for the development of a pure geometric abstraction, a strand within contemporary practice where Cubism's influence continues to be felt today.



Elizabeth Gower
Flutter 1979
synthetic, polymer paint and
resin on rice paper, newsprint
and garment patterns
75 x 105 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne

Elizabeth Gower found a new relevance for Cubism in her abstract series *Shaped works* (1978—84), of which *Flutter* is an example. Cubist collage combined with feminist ideas to inspire her use of everyday materials such as newsprint and garment patterns. Transparent rice paper adds a delicacy and lightness to the work. The dynamic overlap of flat planes and juxtaposition of contrasting shapes, textures and patterns relates directly to the legacy of Synthetic Cubism. The work of Sonia Delaunay was also a particular inspiration for Gower.

Cubism in motion

Several works in this section evoke the painting *Nude descending a staircase, no. 2* 1912, a cubist masterpiece by French artist Marcel Duchamp. Inspired by time-lapse photography and featuring a faceted single figure in motion, Duchamp's painting was very likely the first cubist work to be reproduced in the Australian press. A picture of it was published in Sydney's *Sun* newspaper on Sunday 4 May 1913. The painting had caused a sensation when exhibited at the 1913 Armory Show in New York City and made news all around the world, revealing for the public at large the 'crisis in representation' wrought by Cubism.

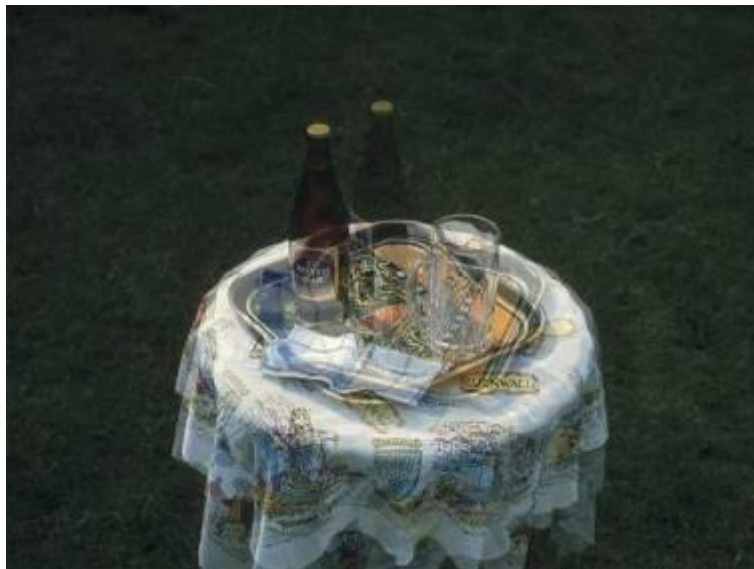
Some of the works here directly quote *Nude descending a staircase* like Raafat Ishak's paintings. Others link to Duchamp's masterpiece through their subject matter like Frank Hinder's painting of a surge of figures on an escalator or John Dunkley-Smith's slide projection showing the view from a spiral staircase in a sequence of images suggesting, 'what Duchamp's nude might have seen when descending the stairs'. A number of other works create a sense of movement through successive and overlapping planes or explore the dynamic effects of colour and light.



Frank Hinder
Subway Escalator 1953
tempera and oil on canvas laid
on composition board
92.8x72.5cm
Art Gallery of South Australia,
Adelaide
Elder Bequest Fund, 1972



Raafat Ishak
*Ascent, descent and
congratulation #3* 2009
Oil on canvas
61 x 42.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Sutton Gallery, Melbourne



John Dunkley Smith
Pale ale 1975, remade 2009
stills from digital video scanned
from original 35mm colour
transparencies
indefinite duration
dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Still life and portraiture

Still life and portraiture were genres favoured by the early cubists. As well as conveying the café culture and artistic milieu of early twentieth-century Paris, they served as useful vehicles for the cubists' new ways of visualising time and space. Cubism's groundbreaking treatment of these well-established art-historical genres allowed for a dialogue between past and present, tradition and innovation.

The still lifes and portraits shown here, by both international and Australian artists, are drawn from the 1920s right up to the present. They are linked by the formal treatment of their subject—in them objects overlap or intersect one another, are seen from many sides at once, or are abstracted into geometric forms. The same kinds of motifs—bottles, drinking glasses, bowls—are depicted by artists using media as diverse as drawing, sculpture and digital video, each medium offering its own potential for the realisation of cubist form and a different viewing experience.



Daniel Crooks
Portrait #2 (Chris) 2007
Lambda photographic print
102 x 102 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Anna
Schwartz Gallery

Collage and assemblage

The cubists' incorporation into painting of collage elements such as wallpaper, newspaper, fabrics and fragments of printed words brought the everyday into the realm of art. This use of 'real' elements within painting led to the inclusion of three-dimensional objects and eventually to the development of cubist constructions, called 'assemblages' to indicate they were assembled out of various materials.

The contemporary works in this section use found objects and recycled materials in a variety of ways that extend this lineage. They include collages, assemblages and sculptural reliefs pieced together from materials resourcefully scavenged by the artists. Pieces of wood, cut-up signs, packaging and pages from magazines echo the early cubists' introduction of language into art via printed material. Collage reinforces the value of signs, which had entered early cubist paintings first through lettering and stencils as a response to the modern city. Today as then, 'inscriptions,

signs and advertisements play an important artistic role and are suitable to be incorporated into art', as poet and critic Guillaume Apollinaire wrote in 1913.

Other works here link with the theme of music, a favourite of the early cubists. The piano keys in Madonna Staunton's work resonate with the inclusion of musical fragments in early cubist collages. And Eugene Carchesio's cardboard guitars eloquently evoke Picasso's early construction *Maquette for guitar* (1912), a work sometimes cited as marking the origins of cubist assemblage.



Eugene Carchesio
Untitled (guitar) 2004—5
 cardboard on canvas
 18 x 13 x 4.5 cm each
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Milani Gallery, Brisbane

Post-Cubism

Artists in this section quote and draw from a great variety of motifs and images, in a way that valorises their experience of coming to art via reproduction or popular culture, or of belonging to a culture at a distance from the 'centre'. Their postmodern appropriations, cover versions and remixes are inseparable from the technique or concept of collage, perhaps Cubism's greatest legacy within contemporary art.

Some artists look back to earlier local versions of Cubism, re-discovering Australia's own modernist traditions and reflecting on its place in the world. For instance, Ian Burn turns art history on its head by speculating on what might have happened if Cubism had originated in Australia rather than France. Robert Rooney draws on his own history as a student inspired by local proponents of Cubist ideas, while Andrew Donaldson offers a personal tribute to the expatriate Australian cubist painter John Power.

In proposing multiple viewpoints, Cubism foreshadowed postmodernism's challenge to the authority of any single or privileged point of view. This ultimately opened its own operations up to critique, as seen in the world of artists here who quote, adapt and analyse its workings. Juan Davila and Gordon Bennett for example, extend the use of collage techniques to assert the potential of hybrid rather than pure forms. They bring Indigenous and non-European perspectives to bear on Cubism's modernist history, including its appropriation of so-called primitive art.



Robert Rooney
Buildings 1953
 gouache on paper in spiral-bound sketchbook
 11 x 14.5 cm
 Collection of the artist



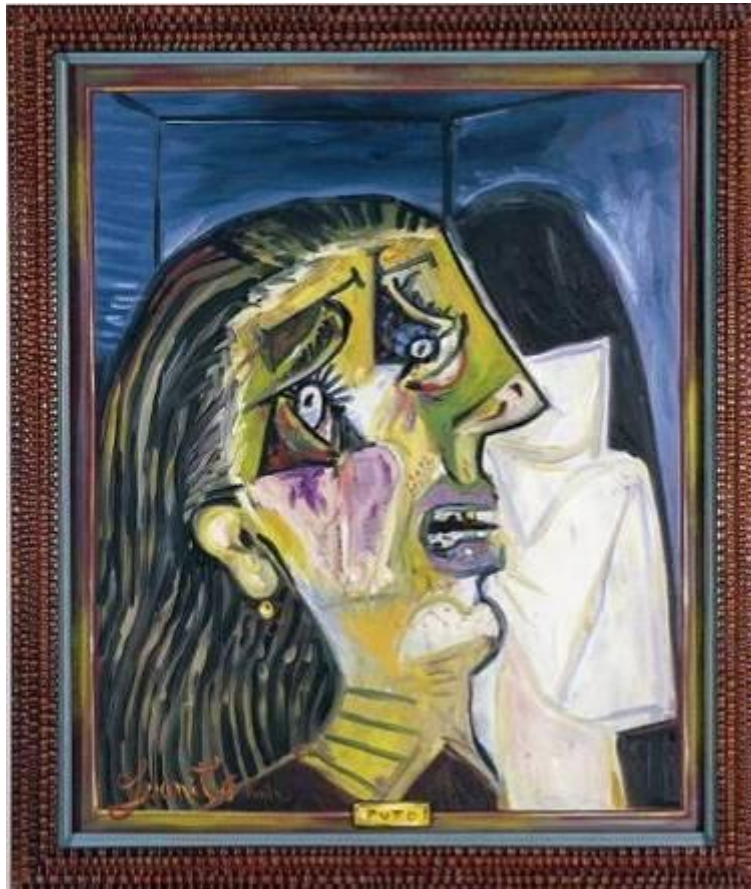
Robert Rooney
After Colonial Cubism 1993
 synthetic polymer on canvas
 122 x 198.3 cm
 Heide Museum of Modern Art
 Purchased through the Heide
 Foundation Collectors' Group
 and the Robert Salzer Fund
 2008

Robert Rooney's painting *After Colonial Cubism* (1993) shows a vibrant streetscape rendered in deliberate and self-conscious cubist style that declares itself to be a second-hand quotation of Cubism, rather than an example of the original style. The streetscape has not been drawn from life but is a faithfully scaled-up version of a much earlier gouache sketch *Buildings* (1953) that Rooney did as a young student in Melbourne. The sketchbook page is indicated in the painting by the vertical bands on either side of the image which effectively serve as quotation marks.

In highlighting the second-hand nature of the image in his painting, Rooney more broadly comments on the dispersal of cubist ideas from Paris, Cubism's place of origin, to more local contexts such as Australia. The painting carries with it the artist's memories of his student days, of learning about Cubism through magazines and books. Rooney remembers visiting exhibitions of cubist works by Australian artists and being fascinated by how these ideas were translated locally. Further meaning in the work derives from its title which refers to the painting *Colonial Cubism* 1954, by Stuart Davis, an American artist whose cubist works are a further instance of the dispersal of the style to localities outside of France.

The sketchbook is displayed here in a cabinet. *Buildings* is one of a number of modestly scaled works by Rooney from 1953 including the collages *Still life (Firth)* (1953) and *Still life (Ernst)*

(1953) shown in the Collage and Assemblage section of this exhibition and the drawing *Still life* 1953 shown in the Still Life and Portraiture section.



Juan Davila
Picasso theft 1993
 oil and collage on canvas,
 wood
 66.5 x 56.5 cm
 Monash University Collection,
 Melbourne
 Gift of Professor Graeme
 Smith, 1994

Juan Davila's painting *Picasso theft* (1991) arises from the notorious episode in 1986 when Pablo Picasso's cubist masterpiece *The weeping woman* (1937) was stolen from the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne. Picasso's painting was one of a series made as a passionate protest against the carnage of the Spanish Civil War. Responsibility for the theft was claimed by a group identifying themselves as the Australian Cultural Terrorists in protest against the Victorian Government's arts policies. Whilst the painting was later recovered, those responsible have never been found.

Juan Davila painted his first version of *Picasso theft*, in effect a copy of Picasso's stolen original, two days after it disappeared from the gallery in 1986. He exhibited it in a street window of the Tin Sheds Gallery in Sydney, from which it too was stolen, though never found. The painting displayed here is a second version painted by Davila in 1991.

In making a copy of Picasso's famous masterpiece and offering it to the NGV as a replacement for the stolen work (an offer that was refused), Davila argued that the cubist 'original' had in any case been emptied of its intended anti-war meaning and become just a fetishised object. As Denise Robinson says Davila identified that 'what had been at stake in Picasso painting this work' had already been lost 'through the historicising process of the museum.'



Gordon Bennett
Self portrait #9 15 April 2003
Digital print on photo lustre
paper
61 x 72 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Milani
Gallery, Brisbane and Sutton
Gallery, Melbourne

This photo-collage focuses on Cubism's problematic embrace of 'primitive' art. Bennett has digitally copied the head of one of the women in Picasso's painting *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) inspired by an African mask, and used this image to cover a photograph of his own face, obscuring his Indigenous identity. In this complex, symbolic act of self-portraiture Bennett reclaims the modernist 'primitive', borrowing it back from the painting often cited as the origin of Cubism, and at the same time inserting his work into its art-historical lineage. The fact that Bennett, an Indigenous Australian, should wear an African-inspired mask wilfully turns the tables on Cubism's misappropriation of non-Western sources.

An interview with the curators

Are there any works that haven't been seen before or are exclusive to Heide in this exhibition?

The exhibition will include new work by contemporary artists Diena Georgetti, ADS Donaldson, Justin Andrews and Masato Takasaka. We discovered an early work by John Dunkley-Smith *Pale Ale* 1975 made when the artist was living in London; originally a photographic slide piece transferred onto film, this work will be presented in the exhibition as a digital video – like a still-life painting that moves. The work was inspired by George Braque's etching and drypoint *Pale Ale* from 1911 in the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Dunkley-Smith's *Pale Ale* has not been exhibited before in Australia and is not known within this artist's oeuvre.

Similarly, Dunkley-Smith's photographic slide projection *Interior no.6* 1982 has not been displayed before in Australia. The work comprises a sequence of images photographed on the steps of the spiral staircase at PS1 in New York. Dunkley-Smith likened it to "what Duchamp's nude might have seen when descending the staircase" in reference to Duchamp's famous early cubist painting *Nude descending a staircase* 1911.

What works have been brought to light or are the highlights in the exhibition?

The abstract paintings of James Meldrum and Len Crawford from the 1950s and early 1960s have not received the attention they deserve, but their contributions are acknowledged in this exhibition. Both artists work in a geometric abstract style based in Cubism and are brilliant colourists.

Crawford's abstract forms relate strongly to the rhythms, structures and lyricism of music: for example - *Cadenza* 1957 and *Trio no.2 (interplay)* 1963-1965. The latter work *Trio no.2 (interplay)* 1963-1965 is a special gem within the exhibition because it is a work in three parts which can be arranged in any formation.

James Meldrum's *Dark and light* 1952 and *Light play (flow past II)* 1961 are examples of Meldrum's beautiful cubist abstractions from this period; their decorative style is typical of certain kinds of 1950s and early 1960s painting.

Carl Plate's collages, for example *Night passage* 1974 showing a train in motion are other highlights. What makes these collages particularly fascinating is that they foreshadow later digital photographs and video works by contemporary artist Daniel Crooks, for example his *Portrait #1 (self)* 2007 which similarly cuts-up images and reassembles them into a newly fragmented whole.

Highlights.....

Maria Helena Vieira da Silva's painting *La Serre (The Greenhouse)* 1950 is another notable inclusion by an international artist. We were very happy to discover the painting in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, though the work has not been displayed for several years and is little known. Vieira da Silva was born in Lisbon, Portugal, but lived in France where she became a central figure in the Parisian school of post-cubist painting. A painting by Vieira da Silva very similar to *La Serre (The Greenhouse)* was exhibited in *French Painting Today*, the influential exhibition which travelled to several states in Australia in 1953 and which included key examples of cubist and post-cubist art. The paintings of Vieira da Silva were especially popular amongst the younger generation of Australian artists who visited this exhibition.

Godfrey Miller's *Landscape with Orange Cliffs* 1949-53 is a major painting by this important Australian artist and a fine example of Miller's geometric treatment of landscape, his use of dynamic symmetry and Cubism. Several works by Miller are in the exhibition and all can be considered highlights in their way.

Fred Williams' *The Charcoal Burner* 1959 clearly shows how Cubism shaped this artist's painterly interpretation of the Australian landscape. Paintings such as this have had a profound influence on Australians' appreciation of the distinctive, non-European qualities of their natural surroundings. Arguably, through William's paintings Cubism has had a lasting effect on how Australian view their landscape.

Leonard French's mural *The legend of Sinbad the sailor* 1956 was originally commissioned for the Legend Café and Espresso Bar in Bourke Street in the city. We've included selected panels from this large-scale mural, an example of a public art work in Melbourne influenced by Cubism. French was an avid admirer of the Paris based Cubist Fernand Léger who also did many public murals.

Grahame King's *Tree Form* 1953 is a painting in Heide's collection. Grahame King (husband of the notable sculptor Inge King) died last year. The debt to Cubism in his work has not to date been fully acknowledged. Also a highlight is Inge King's *Musicians, Homage to Zadkine* 1947, a modestly-scaled sculpture made in tribute to Ossip Zadkine, the Russian-born, Paris-based cubist painter and sculptor.

Robert Jack's *Suite Espanola* 1996, a sculpture showing the continuing influence of Cubism and the curvaceous, guitar-derived form in Jack's art. (Jacks is best known as a painter but there will be a number of sculptures by him in the exhibition).

Daniel Crooks' *Static no.9 (a small section of something larger)* 2005, a large screen digital video piece encapsulating the idea of contemporary Cubism, or Cubism as it appears in new media. Crooks refers to his technique as 'time-slicing'. It can also be understood as a form of digital collage. At first appearing to the viewer as purely abstract, the work actually uses footage of people walking on a city street.

Juan Davila's *Still-life with Red Indian* 1993 depicts a strikingly beautiful red-skinned woman, a non-Western figure subversively inserted into a classical European-style painting, with all the hallmarks of Synthetic Cubism – painted wood-grain, guitar bottle and playing card'.

James Angus *Bicycle* 2007 might be described as a synthesis of three bicycles into one. It is a gleaming racing bike which vibrates between the plural and the singular, 'as if three bikes have merged into one, or one bike has split into three'. The artist describes it as a 'sculpture-in-motion'.

Stephen Bram's *Untitled (three-point perspective)* 2006, is a painting that shows an 'explosive fracturing of pictorial space'. Bram extends Cubism's challenge to one-point perspective painting, using multiple vanishing points to generate the structure of his paintings.

What new research has been done and has anything controversial been discovered in your research?

To a large degree, the entire exhibition and book are evidence of new research since the topic of Cubism and Australian Art has never been addressed in this way before.

Our focus on the timeliness of Cubism's uptake in Australia is part of what makes our research unique; for instance we have argued that Australian artists' interaction with Cubism was concurrent with its uptake and evolution as a style in Europe and elsewhere internationally (initially in the 1920s and 1930s). In other words, we debunk the often held view that Australian artists' were late, lagging behind, or merely derivative in taking up and exploring Cubism; we argue instead for the freshness and validity of local interpretations, adaptations and translations of cubist ideas.

By viewing Cubism as a set of stylistic and conceptual discoveries, rather than a style defined by as particular historical period, we have uncovered the extent of its ongoing, generative impact on Australian artists. Our exploration of the reverberations of Cubism across successive decades up to the present day is, to our knowledge, unique to our project; no other exhibition or book that we know of has taken this approach.

More specific discoveries:

We have discovered that Margaret Preston was the first Australian artist to make a cubist painting in this country. Also that Preston's written passage on Cubism was taken directly from a 1913 article in the *Blue Review* It is fascinating to consider why her cubist paintings (responses to the work of Fernand Léger) are no longer in existence.

Our research shows that the Salon Cubists, notably Andre Lhote and Albert Gleizes, were more influential for Australian artists than the more famous Gallery Cubists, Picasso, Braque and Juan Gris. A particular discovery is how many times Salon Cubist Fernand Léger emerges as an influence on artists from differing generations ; for example for Margaret Preston, Leonard French, Ian Burn and Diena Georgetti.



Masato Takasaka
*Return to forever
(productopia)* 2009
cardboard, wood, plastic,
mdf, acrylic, paint, paper,
soft-drink cans, tape and
discarded product
packaging installation
dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

Additional Education Programs & Publications

Cubism & Australia Art Educators Twilight Viewing

Wednesday 24 February, 5-6.30pm

Cubism & Australia Art Educators Forum

Thursday 18 March' 9am-3pm

New perspectives on Cubism and Australia

Monday 29 March, 5.30–8pm

School Excursion options:

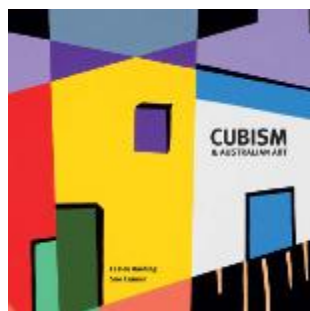
Exploring and responding tour

Students gain a historical understanding of the aesthetics and philosophical concerns of Cubism through the broad range of artworks by international and local artists from the early twentieth century to the present day. With this knowledge students will discover for themselves how cubist principles were disseminated in a pre-digital media world to influence Australian artmaking and resonate for contemporary arts practitioners. This can be taken as a stand-alone excursion or combined with a Creating and Making workshop.

Creating and making workshop

Students create age appropriate collages, drawings, paintings or assemblages inspired by artworks in Cubism & Australian Art. Incorporating a range of media, mediums such as everyday materials students create multi-layered, fragmented and fractured artworks which invite personal readings and interpretations of the contemporary cultural experience. Practical art-making education programs are conducted in the purpose built Sidney Myer Education Centre. Creative programs are tailored to meet student groups' capabilities and needs across all year levels from K-12.

Visit heide.com.au/education for details on Heide's Education programs.



Cubism & Australian Art by Sue Cramer and Lesley Harding

A 309-page book illustrated in full colour accompanies the exhibition, co-published by Heide Museum of Modern Art and the Miegunyah Press, an imprint of Melbourne University Publishing. ISBN: 9780522856736

Bookings and further information

Bookings are essential for all programs. For more information, visit heide.com.au/education or contact the Heide Education Coordinator:

T 03 9850 1500

education@heide.com.au

Pre-booked group tickets

1 hour facilitated tour \$5 /student

2 hour facilitated tour \$8 /student

Facilitated workshop (includes materials) \$10 /student

Teacher and carers (accompanying a group) FREE

Teachers are encouraged to visit Heide prior to a booked school visit (complimentary ticket available) to familiarise themselves with the exhibitions and facilities.

Heide is committed to ensuring its programs and activities are accessible to all. Schools recognised as having a low overall socio-economic profile on the Government School Performance Summary are eligible to apply for a reduced fee. Please contact the Heide Education Coordinator for more information. Prices and programs may change without notice.

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