

## MEDIA RELEASE

March 5, 2015

# HEIDE MARKS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WITH NEW SUPPORT FOR WOMEN ARTISTS

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Heide Museum of Modern Art is pleased to announce a significant bequest from the Estate of Erica McGilchrist (1926–2014), Australian artist and activist for women's art. In acknowledgement of McGilchrist's commitment to advancing the standing of women's art throughout her lifetime, this bequest will support exhibitions of work by women artists at Heide.



Erica McGilchrist | *The Airing Court (Kew Mental Hospital)* 1954 | oil on composition board | 90.5 x 160 cm | Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne | Gift of Erica McGilchrist 1999 | © Estate of Erica McGilchrist

The career of Erica McGilchrist spanned almost fifty years and she is celebrated both for her contribution to Australian modernism and her co-founding of the nationally recognised Women's Art Register, a local initiative formed in 1975 that continues to promote the work of women artists today.

Born in 1926 in Mount Gambier, South Australia, McGilchrist was educated there before moving to Melbourne in 1948, establishing herself as a painter active in the local modernist movement. In 1951 she held the first of more than forty solo exhibitions and in 1960 was the recipient of a scholarship to study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, an experience that had a decisive impact on the direction of her art.

McGilchrist's oeuvre is characterised by exceptional diversity, ranging from paintings and drawings to painted textiles and needlepoints that encompass a variety of abstract and figurative styles. Though stylistically broad and varied the subjects of her art are almost without exception sourced from her strong humanist interests—matters that affected or engaged her socially and politically.

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McGilchrist's endeavours were not confined to making art. She also lent her visual skills to many high profile commissions in the graphic and performing arts, and worked as an art teacher in adult education from 1964 until 1977. After her momentous meeting with the American art critic and feminist Lucy Lippard in 1975, McGilchrist devoted herself to feminist issues in the arts through her work with the Women's Art Register. Her many contributions to contemporary art and the women's art movement were recognised when she was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1992, three years before she ceased painting.

Erica McGilchrist died in May 2014 and in her will bequeathed the residue of her estate to Heide Museum of Modern Art. Of the bequest, Director and CEO of Heide, Kirsty Grant, said "Erica McGilchrist was a significant artist who contributed to the visual arts in Australia through the production of her own work, as well as her passionate advocacy for and support of other women artists. Heide Museum of Modern Art is delighted to be able to continue this support for women artists through our exhibition program with the assistance of the Erica McGilchrist Bequest."

Heide Museum of Modern Art has one of the most comprehensive collections of McGilchrist's art, comprising forty-two works and the Erica McGilchrist archive. Many of these works were gifted to Heide by the artist throughout her long association with the museum. In 2013 Heide presented the exhibition 'Erica McGilchrist: Selected Works 1951–1995', which surveyed the artist's remarkable career across five decades. McGilchrist's paintings also featured prominently in the exhibition 'Another Look: 6 Women Artists of the 1950s', organised by Heide in 2000.

### About International Women's Day

Sunday 8 March 2015 is not only International Women's Day, but marks the 40th anniversary of International Women's Year. International Women's Year was the name given by the United Nations in 1975. Since that year, 8 March has been celebrated each year as International Women's Day. Across the globe, International Women's Day represents an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women while calling for greater equality. 'Make It Happen' is the theme in 2015, encouraging effective action for advancing and recognising women.

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Museum Opening Hours  
Tuesday-Sunday 10am-5pm. Closed Mondays.