

David ASPDEN

born 1935 Lancashire UK, died 2005 Sydney NSW

Waterscape 1999

oil on canvas

Gift of Keith Clouton and Jim Deas through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program 2012

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Born and raised in the United Kingdom, David Aspden's early works marked a rigorous pursuit of hard edge abstraction, becoming a key artist in the seminal 1968 exhibition *The Field* at the National Gallery of Victoria. The exhibition, a watershed for the 'arrival' of abstract art in Australia in the 1960s, derived its name from one of Aspden's key works *Field I*. Aspden's fearless use of multiple media fed into his large format painting, in concert with his deft use of pastel, watercolour, ink, painting and various forms of printmaking.

Aspden's works reveal a fascination with the vacant spaces present between shape and colour that informed his large paintings. He was also highly influenced by his direct environment and a longstanding relationship to the water. In 1979 Aspden explained, '... it also relates to my experience last year when I did much more drawing outside and I was very interested in seascape and took a lot of photographs of works up on the beaches and so on. There's a lot of photographs of rocks and seascapes and natural drawings. So you could say it's a combination of that experience and also the environment and experience here.'

Living by the water at different times of his life, including inner city Balmain had a formative influence on his paintings. Aspden described this, 'like being in a boat really. Living right here on the water... because you're always in tune with the elements, with the natural thing going on there.'

Waterscape 1999 is a work from later in Aspden's career that carries with it the continuity of this rigid focus on colour, form and shape. Noting that Aspden's works were also fascinated by and informed by the power of Jazz music, there is an inherent sense of the creation of cordant and discordant notes throughout the physical act of mark making onto canvas. This culminated in a series of works on paper for the Manly Jazz Festival before his death in 2005.

Waterscape was purchased from The Sydney Art Gallery in Ultimo, Sydney in 1999 and was donated to Newcastle Art Gallery by Keith Clouton and Jim Deas in 2012.

Charles BLACKMAN

born 1928 Sydney NSW

Night tide at Flinders 1958

oil on composition board

Purchased 1958

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Studying at the prestigious East Sydney Technical College from 1943 – 1946, Charles Blackman worked as a press artist for the Sydney Sun in 1945 and gained exhibiting traction with the Contemporary Art Society and the Mirka Gallery established by avant-garde Melbourne based artist Mirka Mora.

Blackman's early works of the 1950s focused on the motif of the schoolgirl, leading to one of his most successful and influential series of works based on the story of Alice in Wonderland. Art critic Sasha Grishin suggested that Blackman's continued reference to the figure and motif of the schoolgirl alluded to themes that reflected the artist's own sense of isolation and paranoia at the time. Blackman said, 'The schoolgirl pictures had a lot to do with fear, I think. A lot to do with my isolation as a person and my quite paranoid fears of loneliness and stuff like that; and indeed you could almost say why I painted them.'

Night Tide at Flinders 1958 continues the image and metaphor of the lone schoolgirl within the painting frame. With a mysterious edge and illusive use of pigments Blackman's forms are still ethereal and nondescript – the figurative forms are more distinctive by their colours than by what they identify. *Night Tide at Flinders* captures the immediacy of the moment, 'the breathless seconds when a human figure... is overwhelmingly moved by the emotion of its environment.'

In a letter to Gil Docking from his home in London in 1963 Blackman wrote, '*Night Tide at Flinders* was painted after a visit spent with friends at Flinders in October 1957 when we walked by moonlight across the golf links beside the sea. It is therefore a product of the interim period between the Alice in Wonderland series and the group exhibited in the following year with the 'Antipodeans', and about concurrent with the [work of art] *Angry Young Girl* 1958 now owned by the New South Wales Art Gallery.'

As an artist, Blackman moves effortlessly between drawing, printmaking and painting. He is a prolific and competent draughtsman, and his love for drawing began at an early age. Nadine Amadio, the artist's biographer stated that, 'at the age of four he drew non-stop on every blank piece of paper he could find, often driving his family to distraction.'

This painting is one of the earliest works of art by Blackman in the Newcastle Art Gallery collection. It was purchased from the exhibition titled *Charles Blackman* at Newcastle City Art Gallery in July 1958 when the Gallery was situated in the War Memorial Cultural Centre Under the astute leadership of inaugural Gallery Director Gil Docking, the painting was acquired into the burgeoning permanent art collection.

Rupert BUNNY

born 1864 St Kilda VIC, died 1947 Melbourne VIC

In a summer house (portrait of the artist's wife) c1914 – 1921

oil on canvas

Gift of NBN channel 3 1969

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Rupert Bunny was born in St Kilda Melbourne in 1864 and grew up in a highly educated and affluent household in Melbourne. He studied architecture and engineering at the University of Melbourne and art at the National Gallery of Victoria School from 1881 – 1884. He first travelled to Europe with his father Judge Bunny in 1884 at age 20 and the lure of Europe's high art and culture proved intoxicating. He was the first Australian artist to exhibit at the prestigious Old Salon in 1888 at the age of 23. He married fellow artist Jeanne Heloise Morel in 1902.

In a summer house c1914 – 1921 was first exhibited at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in 1914. Another title *Portrait of the artist's wife* is written on the verso of the painting. Jeanne Morel, Bunny's wife, was a muse and frequent model for his luscious and exotic paintings. Unlike his other large paintings that often depicted the headiness of *La Belle Époque*, this portrait of Jeanne is understated and engages the viewer with her piercing gaze. It was described as, 'a vividly animated picture, full of detail without being photographic...Keeping their distance from the viewer...the right hand keeps the viewer at arm's length.'

The simple front-facing pose, with Jeanne's head and hat centrally placed in the composition, was unusual for Bunny's portraits. Her floral dress for the summerhouse portraits is adventurously offset by the geometric pattern in the woven grass matting of the background. Bunny often delighted in painting Jeanne in the long, flowing dresses of the period. He once said, 'when short skirts came in I no longer wanted to paint women.'

Newcastle Art Gallery's portrait of Jeanne is possibly when she was in her mid-40s. There is a picture (with subtle differences of detail) in the National Gallery of Australia collection.

In a summer house (portrait of the artist's wife) arrived in the Gallery collection through television channel NBN on 21 November 1969. They donated the sum of \$800 to the Gallery to purchase the painting from a Mrs J.S Reid in Melbourne. In a letter to NBN Chief executive Lawford Richardson from the Gallery Director, David Thomas, on 20 June 1969, it was acknowledged, '[we are] indebted to you and your directors for the acquisition of a very fine painting.' There are 16 works of art in the Gallery collection by Bunny who returned to Australia after 49 years abroad in 1933, following the death of Jeanne. This, combined with financial failure, had a devastating effect on the rest of his life and career.

Robert DICKERSON

born 1924 Hurstville NSW, died 2015 Nowra NSW

Guy 1957

oil on hardboard

Purchased 1959

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Born and raised in Sydney, Robert Dickerson never had formal art training and proceeded to become one of Australia's most renowned and recognisable artists with his signature figurative paintings. He was part of the influential 'Antipodeans' art group active in the 1950s and 1960s in Melbourne comprised of Charles Blackman, Arthur Boyd, David Boyd, John Brack, Clifton Pugh and critic Bernard Smith championing figurative painting as a counter to the rise of geometric abstraction.

Dickerson left school at the age of 14 working in factories and then becoming a boxer, a profession he later described, 'the cruellest in the world'. He joined the Royal Australian Air Force and served in South East Asia in the later stages of World War II. These experiences had influence on the ongoing themes in his later paintings of solitary figures isolated and disconnected from the world. It was in Morotai, Indonesia that he started drawing figures of the local children and an interest in painting developed. In 1950 he formally started painting and in 1956 he sold his first work to the National Gallery of Victoria. Dickerson said, 'some of my best early paintings were done in a caravan shed, and finished in the small hours of the morning before I left for work.'

Newcastle Art Gallery has 54 Dickerson works in its collection. In 2001 Jennifer Dickerson, the artist's wife, gave a large group of prints covering 30 years of work and in January 2002 the Gallery staged a survey exhibition to celebrate this gift.

The earliest painting by the artist in the Gallery's collection, a portrait of son Guy, was painted by Dickerson at their home in Moorebank (Lot 1 Epsom Rd) in 1957. The painting was purchased from the *Robert Dickerson* exhibition at the prestigious Farmer's Department Store Blaxland Gallery, Sydney in May 1959. Of the painting the artist wrote, '[The] Portrait of my eldest son Guy in enamels on hardboard. This relates to a particular period of the artist's life when he was painting children and is a story of Guy as the artist envisaged he might look when he was older.'

In 2002, Guy Dickerson, then 40 years old, visited the Gallery's survey exhibition of Robert Dickerson's work. During this visit he described the portrait as an image of him when aged three years old depicting an old man's face with a young child's body. The painting also has mystery to it. When the work was reframed over a decade ago, a painting by renowned Adelaide based artist, and Dobell alumni, Tom Gleghorn, was discovered on the verso of the painting. Prior to Dickerson's death, Gleghorn and Dickerson laughed about this discovery with Dickerson confessing that it occurred as he was, 'broke at the time of producing the portrait of Guy.'

Elioth GRUNER

born 1882 Gisborne NZ, died 1939 Sydney NSW

Mosman and Cremorne Bay 1919

oil on canvas on board

Gift of Dr Roland Pope 1945

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Mosman and Cremorne Bay 1919 is a unique work focused on the inner harbour of Sydney's prestigious lower north shore. Its luminosity and ethereal atmosphere underpins Gruner's extraordinary skill with paint, light and texture. In 1919 Gruner's paintings were focused on Emu Plains, at the base of the Blue Mountains, an area much loved and explored by artists Margo and Gerald Lewers that later became the basis for the Penrith Regional Art Gallery.

Born in New Zealand in 1882, Gruner and his family moved to Sydney in 1891. By the age of ten Gruner began to show exceptional drawing talent and his mother took him to Julian Ashton for art tuition, who also conducted classes for the Art Society of New South Wales. Due to the death of his father at age nine Gruner worked until the age of 30 before formally starting his art career. In later years Ashton reflected upon his teaching technique stating, 'I think now and then [Gruner] must have thought me a hard taskmaster with my insistence upon his observation of form, and it was with a sigh of relief that at last pushed his way into an investigation of the mysteries of colour.'

Mosman and Cremorne Bay was one of the 123 works of art from Sydney based Ophthalmologist, Dr Roland Pope, that established the Newcastle Art Gallery collection. Pope was a prolific collector regularly acquiring works of art through the prestigious Macquarie Galleries in Sydney in the 1930s through to the 1950s. Pope is believed to have acquired this work around 1930. It was previously owned and purchased by a Major General Sir Granville Ryrie in 1919 for 15 guineas. The Art Gallery of New South Wales records note that this work was also known as *The bay* and was first exhibited by a public institution in the *Elioth Gruner memorial loan exhibition* at the Gallery in 1940.

Emily Kame KNGWARREYE

born 1910 Alhalkere (Soakage Bore) NT, died 1996 Alice Springs NT

Summer storm 1992

acrylic on canvas

Gift of Colin Laverty OAM and Elizabeth Laverty through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program 2000

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Emily Kame Kngwarreye was an Anmatyarre elder and senior Utopia artist who arrived to painting at the age of 80. Her painting career was short but prolific with the completion of thousands of paintings in an eight year period. In 1989, Kngwarreye was described by art critic Terry Smith as, 'an outstanding abstract painter, certainly amongst the best Australian artists, arguably among the best of her time.'

The Utopia community's art making began in the 1970s with predominately female artists working with Batik textile designs and Emily's practice linked back to these origins. Following the emergence of painting from the Papunya Tula community, painting was embraced in Utopia in the 1980s.

Kngwarreye's paintings are inextricably linked with and of her country, Alhalkere. Kngwarreye describe her painting subjects as the, 'Whole lot, that's whole lot, Awelye (my Dreaming), Arlatyeye (pencil yam), Arkerrthe (mountain devil lizard), Ntange (grass seed), Tingu (Dreamtime pup), Ankerre (emu), Intekwe (favourite food of emus, a small plant), Atnwerle (green bean), and Kame (yam seed). That's what I paint, whole lot.'

Summer Storm is a striking painting from 1992, a period in which Kngwarreye entered a 'high-colourist' phase of painting and the National Museum of Australia described them as, 'characterised by a rapid succession of intensely high keyed works in hot pinks, oranges and electric blues.'

The paintings and colours used in this time were driven by the changing seasons, ranging from the verdant post wet season period which Kngwarreye referred to as, 'green time', through to the harsh arid period of the dry season. Although her painting originated from Awelye body painting, Kngwarreye's gestural and intuitive painting lent itself to broader themes, always referring to Alhalkere (her country).

Summer Storm arrived in the Newcastle Art Gallery collection through the enduring benefaction of Liz and Colin Laverty. Prolific collectors of Australian art, the Laverty's began to build their outstanding collection of Aboriginal art following a visit to the Brisbane *Expo 88* in 1988. It was during this visit that they first encountered Western Desert art from Papunya Tula and were immediately captivated by the power of these paintings. They continued to collect paintings by some of Australia's most celebrated Indigenous artists.

Joseph LYCETT

born 1774 Staffordshire UK, died 1828 London UK

Inner view of Newcastle c1818

oil on canvas

Purchased with assistance from the National Art Collections Fund, London UK 1961

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Newcastle Art Gallery's seminal painting *Inner view of Newcastle* c1818 uncovers a colonial outpost in its infancy. Joseph Lycett arrived in Newcastle in 1815 as a convicted forger and was in 1817 commissioned by Captain James Wallis, Commandant of Newcastle, to document the growing settlement on the shores of Newcastle (Coal River). Lycett's idealised visage of the colony in its relative infancy belies the hardened realities of Newcastle in this time, with fleeting reference to an existing Indigenous custodianship of the land. The vista of Newcastle's growing settlement is taken from the perspective near the present day site of Christ Church Cathedral.

A label removed from the verso of the painting reads, 'Inner view of Newcastle New South Wales left to Captain & Mrs Hilton by the late Major Wallis Prestbury nr Cheltenham 6th December 1859. The church the Government ordered Major Wallis to build in which he read prayers for two years.' Intriguingly, an additional Newcastle City Art Gallery label originating from 1961 on the painting's verso and removed for conservation in 2009 incorrectly cites the artist as Captain James Wallis. Wallis departed Newcastle for India in early 1819 serving from 1821 until retirement from the army and return to the United Kingdom in 1826. *Inner view of Newcastle* eventually returned to the United Kingdom with Captain James Wallis following his military tenure.

Captain and Mrs Hilton obtained the painting from Major James Wallis who died in 1858. Captain Hilton was an executor of Mary Ann Wallis's estate (wife of James Wallis). Curator John McPhee asserts that Ann Hilton was Captain Wallis' sister, which would explain the basis for the gifting of the paintings to the Hilton's, combined with the fact that James and Mary Ann Wallis had no children.

Who owned *Inner view of Newcastle* after the Hilton's until 1959 is unknown. Whether the painting remained in the family with any of Ann and Thomas Hilton's 13 children, or their descendants, is also uncertain. The paintings appeared at auction in 1960 in London consigned through an art sale firm, Appleby Bros, based in St James London. This appears to have been brought to the attention of then Gallery Director, Gil Docking, who pursued the painting for purchase. Part of the provision to acquire this work was to also purchase Lycett's other painting for sale, *Hunter River with cattle in foreground* c1818.

The Gallery records show that the paintings were purchased from Appleby Bros London with assistance from the National Art Collection Fund in London on 9 June 1961. Through extensive negotiation with Gallery Director Gil Docking, Town Clerk Burgess and numerous stakeholders in London and Australia between 1960 – 1961, Newcastle City Council paid 600 pounds sterling, in addition to 200 pounds sterling from the United Kingdom National Art Collections Fund. The paintings were shipped on the liner 'Afric' departing England on 20th July 1961 and arrived in Newcastle on 31st August 1961.

Margaret OLLEY AC, AO

born 1923 Lismore NSW, died 2011 Paddington NSW

Chinese pots and lemons 1982

oil on composition board

Gift of the Newcastle Gallery Society presented on the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Gallery 1997

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Margaret Olley's still lifes are some of Australia's most loved works of art. Growing up on the northern rivers of New South Wales she moved to Sydney and studied art at East Sydney Technical College with the support of artists Jean Bellette and Frank Medworth from 1943 – 1945. These final years of World War II were highly influential, as were her art school colleagues, Russell Drysdale, Donald Friend, James Gleeson and Carl Plate.

Olley started painting landscapes but it was her fascination with Cezanne that became a key influence on her practice for the rest of her life. Despite this, Olley's paintings remained distinctly hers and connected to the interiors of her home in Paddington Sydney, a treasure trove of art, ceramic, Chinese ceramics and accoutrements of everyday life. In 1990 Olley said, 'I collect things because I might paint them. I love shapes – I wanted to be a sculptor and at first studied both sculpture and painting.' Following Olley's death in 2011 Newcastle Art Gallery acquired a series of artist materials, paints, palettes and ceramics from her archive including the celadon green ginger jar that is a feature of this painting. Some of her key works in the Gallery collection feature energetic vistas of the working harbour and were created on these itinerant visits. Olley's connection to Anne von Bertouch and artists in the city endeared her to Novocastrians as, 'one of their own'.

The Gallery was also important to Olley and she wanted to help build upon the exceptional art collection with her continuing benefaction. On her birthday on 24 June each year, Olley would donate a work of art to the Gallery collection. Rarely were these her own works, but instead works by artists she felt were under represented, emerging or needed championing by cultural institutions. As a result 51 works of art entered the Gallery collection including works by Jean Bellette, Cressida Campbell, Carl Plate, and Ben Quilty.

The Newcastle Art Gallery Society acquired *Chinese pots and lemons 1982* and donated it to the Gallery collection in 1997 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Gallery.

Matthew PERCEVAL

born 1945 Melbourne VIC

Harbour entrance on king tide 1996

oil on board

Anne von Bertouch OAM bequest through the Newcastle Region Art Gallery Foundation 2003
Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Born in 1945 and raised in Melbourne, self-taught artist Matthew Perceval comes from one of Australia's most significant artistic dynasties. His late father, John Perceval, was an expressive painter and one of the Angry Penguins group of artists. His mother, Mary Boyd, was a painter and potter. Perceval spent his early adulthood in London, part of the artistic diaspora of the time. In 1967, at the age of just 22 he moved to the south of France to establish his own artistic voice.

Prior to moving to Newcastle in the early 1980s, Perceval lived and painted in France where he produced a large body of work comprised of expressive portraits of friends, acquaintances and family.

Today, Perceval lives in Newcastle. His hill top abode with views of this city and its harbour continue to inspire his landscapes and depictions of the region.

Harbour entrance on king tide 1996 arrived in the Newcastle Art Gallery collection through the Anne von Bertouch bequest. Anne von Bertouch ran Newcastle's longest running commercial Gallery and was a key figure of the Australian art scene. Inaugural Gallery Director Gil Docking referred to von Bertouch as having a, 'big heart and big visions' and her ambitious Gallery supported some of Australia's best artists and also local and emerging artists. Her catalogues proudly said, 'Newcastle – Art capital of Australia'.

Anne von Bertouch's support of the Gallery and her subsequent bequest brought over 150 works of art into the Gallery collection including artists such as Judy Cassab, Frank Hinder, James Gleeson, Thea Proctor and Lloyd Rees.

Lloyd REES

born 1895 Yeronga QLD, died 1988 Sandy Bay TAS

Pink hills at Gerringong 1975

oil on canvas

Gift of Anne von Bertouch OAM through the Newcastle Region Art Gallery Foundation 1981
Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Pink hills at Gerringong 1975 was painted by Lloyd Rees towards the end of his long and illustrious career at the age of 80. Gerringong, south of Sydney, was a long-time favourite location for Rees to paint since he first visited the area in 1938. Of the location Rees said, 'European experiences have of course played a major part in my artistic history, but by far the greatest amount of my outdoor work has been done in the Gerringong area on the south coast some ninety miles south of Sydney.' Rees painted the landscape there often and at various times of day.

Rees was a skilled draftsman and many early works in the Newcastle Art Gallery collection reflect his astute drawing skills leading to an unrivalled mastery of paint. In his later career Rees's eyesight was failing due to macular degeneration and despite this devastating diagnosis, his paintings took on a renewed luminosity. *Pink Hills at Gerringong* 1975 has the lament of these last bursts of bright light and colour, reminiscent of paintings by early Australian impressionists such as Tom Roberts and Charles Condor.

Of his painting style and the enduring search for luminosity Rees said, 'If you look for light you find it, and I found plenty ever more. The white also affected my style. I began to use big brush loads of light paint, or if I wanted to change a whole area on a canvas I'd put on a big blob of paint and distribute it; increasingly I used two brushes at once as I am ambidextrous. I paint fine work with the right, but can do broad work and tone with both, and sometimes the left hand has stirred the right to a greater vitality... come on, you on the right, get some punch into you!'

Pink hills at Gerringong was exhibited at von Bertouch Galleries from 27 June – 20 July 1975 and donated to the Gallery by Anne von Bertouch OAM through the Newcastle Art Gallery Foundation. On its verso are two titles, *Pink Cliffs at Gerringong* and the adopted title *Pink Hills at Gerringong*. It was one of the over 150 works donated by the late Anne von Bertouch OAM to the Gallery collection.

Brett WHITELEY

born 1939 Sydney NSW, died 1992 Thirroul NSW

Summer at Carcoar 1977

oil and mixed media on board

Gift of Dr William Bowmore AO, OBE through the Newcastle Region Foundation 1977

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Summer at Carcoar 1977 is an embodiment of Brett Whiteley's virtuosity as an artist. It is monumental in its scale and shows the artist's determination to push painting to its limits through the inclusion of three-dimensional elements into the picture plane.

In 1978 Whiteley entered the prestigious Archibald, Wynne and Sir John Sulman prizes with three key paintings *Art, Life and the other thing*, *Summer at Carcoar* and *The Yellow Nude*, respectively. *Summer at Carcoar* had been acquired by Newcastle Art Gallery the year prior so Whiteley contacted Gallery Director, Andrew Fergusson, to ask to borrow the work. In his letter to the Gallery Whiteley wrote, 'I consider the landscape one of my major landscape paintings, one of the best pictures I have ever made in fact...'

The letter dated 12 November 1978 was perilously close to the closing of entries for the prize, the 25th of the same month. For Whiteley, collecting the painting from Newcastle was to be what he called, 'a special mission'. The Gallery of course obliged and as a token of his appreciation to the loan, Whiteley donated a large screen print to the collection. He added, 'I would be pleased to present to the gallery a copy of my recent large screen print *Lindfield Garden* as a gesture of gratitude'.

Critics were aware of the loaded content of the 1978 Archibald entry *Art Life and the other thing*, as an allegorical depiction of Whiteley's ongoing battle with heroin addiction. While this may have seen to detract from the vitality of the other two works including *Summer at Carcoar*, the judges disagreed, awarding the prize trifecta to Whiteley – the first artist to achieve this acclaim, still to this day.

Summer at Carcoar presents Whiteley's vision of the Australian summer in its harshness and richness. Where on first impression this landscape may seem a vast, dry barren space, the painting is bursting with life with an abundance of animals represented, including a horse, bandicoot, a fox, a rabbit, a bee and various birds. These initially hidden elements are carefully integrated into the whole rhythm of the painting.

Summer at Carcoar was commissioned by entrepreneur and art collector Dr William Bowmore AO, OBE in 1977 and donated through the Newcastle Region Art Gallery Foundation. In March 1977, Robin Gibson Gallery in Paddington, launched an exhibition of Whiteley's paintings based on the theme of the river. The exhibition titled *Rivers* launched with a series of works ranging from a tapestry, six drawings, and eleven paintings with the seminal work, *Summer at Carcoar* centre stage. The painting is a direct contrast to Whiteley's more celebrated and recognisable blue 'love letters' to Sydney Harbour and makes its place in the Newcastle Art Galley collection all the more significant.

Sydney BALL

born 1933 Adelaide SA, died 2017 Sydney NSW

Canto No. 19 1965

acrylic on canvas

Purchased 1966

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Originally from Adelaide, Sydney Ball worked as a draftsman before studying art during the 1950s. He continued his studies in New York; undertook painting classes at the Art Students League; encountered the work of abstract expressionists and had his first solo exhibition at New York's Westerly Gallery.

Returning to Australia in the mid-1960s he exhibited his paintings at the Museum of Modern Art and Design in Melbourne (now Heide Museum of Modern Art) which confirmed his place as a leading exponent of colour painting and hard-edge abstraction in the Australian art scene. He continued to exhibit in high profile exhibitions internationally and in Australia and his work was included in the seminal exhibition *The Field* at the National Gallery of Victoria, which marked a new popularity in non-figurative art.

Canto No. 19 1965 is part of a series of paintings that has a distinctive format of a circle within a square exploring the principles of balance, symmetry and critical colour. Three earlier paintings from the 'Canto' series won Ball 1000 pounds from the Daily Mirror-Waratah Festival Art Prize in Sydney, as reported in *The Australian* on October 7 1965. His work was some of the first examples of hard-edge painting exhibited by an Australian artist.

In 1966 he wrote to Newcastle Art Gallery about *Canto No. 19*, 'I had in mind... Antonio Gaudi, the great Spanish architect whose work contains an immense spatial quality as well as a silence of form and colour. I am concerned with colour as a sensation of light and as a spatial unit... although they often have Op elements in them, are not optical paintings as such... they are a collection of personal experiences and sensations. Colour in my paintings has been influenced greatly by the local landscape, including the commercial landscape of signs, shop-fronts and hoardings.'

Ball pursued painting over a long career, developing a unique approach to questions of colour through his innovative practice. He has had many solo exhibitions including his first survey exhibition *Sydney Ball Survey* October – November 1975 at the Gallery. He passed away in 2017 at the age of 83.

Canto No. 19 was purchased by the Gallery from the exhibition *From South Australia, Painters* 9 – 25 May 1966 at Kym Bonython's Hungry Horse Art Gallery, in Paddington Sydney.

Arthur BOYD

born 1920 Murrumbeena VIC, died 1999 Melbourne VIC

Shoalhaven River afternoon (The four times of the day: afternoon: version II) 1983

oil on canvas

Gift of the Newcastle Region Art Gallery Foundation 1986

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Coming from a family of artists, Arthur Boyd was a painter, potter and printmaker. He was taught by his parents, Merric and Doris Boyd, his grandfather, Arthur Merric Boyd, in addition to taking night classes at the National Gallery of Victoria School in Melbourne. During World War II he was conscripted although he did not see active service. The horrors of war however influenced many of his paintings and prints from this time and he also drew on biblical narratives as metaphors. After the war he travelled around Australia and grew interested in social issues including Aboriginal welfare, as he was shocked by living conditions in Alice Springs.

From the 1950s Boyd also associated with a group of artists called the 'Antipodeans', who promoted figurative art at a time when abstract painting was popular in Australia. He lived in England between 1959 – 1971 and during this time he continued to paint distinctly Australian themes. Returning to Australia he moved to an idyllic property at Bundanon, nestled on the Shoalhaven River south of Nowra in New South Wales.

In *Shoalhaven River afternoon (The four times of the day: afternoon: version II)* 1983 Boyd painted the distinctive shape of Pulpit Rock near Bundanon, capturing the effects of light. Its glaring high-keyed colour and lack of shade suggests it was painted around the middle of the day. The watery reflections of Pulpit Rock and doubling of imagery suggests the axiom 'as above, so below'. Throughout his Shoalhaven works, Boyd often became fixated on the duality of the landscape he loved so much.

Boyd commented on the Shoalhaven area that, 'It is a fierce country, subject to violent changes such as floods and intense heat. The actual size of things about the country, the boulders, the actual timber, is just larger. It's very challenging. Of course, you get the marvellous gentle aspects of places like the mild Bundanon pond, with its subtle colours and bird life.' Boyd lived at Bundanon until his death in 1999. *Shoalhaven River afternoon (The four times of the day: afternoon: version II)* was first exhibited at Fischer Fine Art Limited in London in 1983 and then again in the exhibition *Arthur Boyd: The Bundanon Paintings*, at von Bertouch Galleries in Newcastle, September – October 1986. The painting was purchased by the Newcastle Region Art Gallery Foundation and donated to Newcastle Art Gallery in the same year.

John COBURN

born 1925 Ingham QLD, died 2006 Sydney NSW

Distant relations 1957

oil on board

Gift of Mr David Klippel 1994

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Throughout his career John Coburn was concerned with tonal abstracts. An idiographic artist, he turned away from figuration early and instead used flat surface styles to build up simple organic forms. Coburn was born in 1925 in Ingham and was raised in the rainforest regions of northern and western Queensland. His childhood memories were a key influence on his work, especially the shapes and rich colours of both rainforests and tropical gardens.

Coburn served with the Royal Australian Navy from 1942 – 1946 before moving to Sydney where he studied fine art under Wallace Thornton and Frank Hinder. Continuing his passion for art he taught at the East Sydney Technical College and the National Art School in Canberra. Coburn moved to France to oversee the weaving and creation of his tapestry works, including the curtains made for the Sydney Opera House and returned to Sydney to take on the position, Head of East Sydney Technical College.

The tones in Coburn's work construct harmonies in the negative space between his shapes. There is a visual enchantment with an underlying order of nature. Each element was placed carefully to create an immense whole. His inspiration in the abstract spurred from viewing the travelling exhibition *French Painting Today* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1953. Coburn felt he had found 'his way' after seeing works by Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse.

One of the earlier works by Coburn in the Newcastle Art Gallery collection, *Distant relations* 1957, is a small and surreal painting. For this work Coburn used a handful of simple shapes as positives and negatives, carefully balancing them to hover over their red background. His flat painting style relies solely on colour and shape to evoke mood and emotion. Coburn's art is full of idiosyncratic imagery and symbols based on humankind and nature.

Corburn said of his work, 'My aim is to create formal harmonies of shapes and colours that exist in their own right and at the same time evoke moods and feelings. I seek images that are charged with associations and memories of places and things I have experienced. Art to me is visual and must be decorative in the best sense. All art is basically an arrangement of forms and colours that appeal to the eye but can be appreciated on a level that is more profound.'

Distant relations was originally purchased by the artist David Klippel from a Coburn exhibition at Watter's Gallery in Sydney during the 1960s. Previous to that, the work of art had been exhibited at the David Jones Gallery in the late 1950s. It was donated to the Gallery by Klippel through the Taxation Incentive for the Arts Scheme that pre-dated the current Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program.

Grace COSSINGTON SMITH

born 1892 Sydney NSW, died 1984 Sydney NSW

Trees c1927

oil on plywood

Purchased with assistance from the Art Gallery and Conservatorium Committee 1967

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Grace Cossington Smith was born in 1892 in Sydney. One of Australia's first post-impressionists, she is considered one of the country's most important artists. She was renowned for her iconic urban images and radiant interiors; the modern environment captivated her. Among her recurring themes are the metropolis and Sydney Harbour Bridge, portraits, still lifes, landscapes, religious and war subjects, theatre and ballet performances, and domestic interiors infused with light.

Cossington Smith was the second child of wealthy English immigrants. She grew up comfortably in Neutral Bay, Sydney and through the support of her family she was able to work as an artist throughout her life. She trained privately with Antonio Dattilo-Rubbo, who also taught the likes of Roland Wakelin, Roy de Maistre and Donald Friend. She travelled to England and Europe with her family in 1912 and returned before World War I. She was transformed and confident in her art making abilities, absorbing herself in the light and colours of her native city.

Influenced by her travels in Europe she began working in oil paint to capture the energy and dynamism of the Sydney Harbour Bridge construction, as well as her surroundings at her newly built studio at the family home in Turramurra. She had her first solo exhibition in 1928. Reflecting on her works she said, 'All form – landscape, interiors, still life, flowers, animals, people – has an inarticulate grace and beauty; painting to me is expressing this form in colour, colour vibrant with light – but containing this other, silent quality which is unconscious, and belongs to all things created.'

Trees c1927 is an important painting in Cossington Smith's oeuvre; an intimate response to her garden. Through her careful consideration of subject matter, she created a deeply personalised view of the world around her. This painting was exhibited in her first show and was immediately recognised for its great strength and vitality, although criticised by anti-modernists. The domesticated garden leads to the untamed bush and domestic details such as the bucket, tap and hose are championed within the luminescent presence of nature. It is a bold, thoroughly modern painting with ravishing colour and a radiating composition.

Shortly before this painting was purchased for the Newcastle Art Gallery collection, Cossington Smith wrote to the Gallery describing *Trees* as, 'A very early painting, when I was beginning to paint – at that time I felt forms very simply, and expressed things I saw in planes of almost flat colour. The subject is the garden seen from the studio. One of the very few first paintings accepted by the Society of Artists, entirely owing to the approval expressed by Thea Proctor and George Lambert.'

The painting was purchased directly from the artist by Newcastle Art Gallery in conjunction with the Conservatorium Committee in April 1967.

William DOBELL

born 1899 Newcastle NSW, died 1970 Lake Macquarie NSW

Portrait of a strapper 1941

oil on canvas

Gift of Captain Neil McEacharn 1959

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

William Dobell grew up on the corner of Bull and Corlette Streets in Cooks Hill. He worked for an architect in Newcastle before moving to Sydney in 1924 and enrolled in evening classes at the Julian Ashton School of Art. In 1929 Dobell won the Society of Artists' Travelling Scholarship which enabled him to travel to England and Europe.

Portrait of a Strapper was painted in 1941 while Dobell was teaching at East Sydney Technical College and exhibited in the Archibald Prize the same year. Recent conservation on the painting has revealed the verso inscribed in Dobell's handwriting, 'Title Portrait of a Strapper Artist William Dobell Union Bank Chambers Darlinghurst Road Kings Cross.'

The much debated subject of the painting is an unemployed strapper by the name of Ron Davis. Of the painting, artist and critic James Gleeson wrote, '...this quality of fine grooming is in the paint, you get it in the character of every little section of the paint, again he has given the features of this young man an almost equine grace, it's an elongated form which suggests something of the speed of a racehorse.'

Dobell sold the painting for 60 pounds in 1942, to a Captain Neal McEacharn from a wealthy family who had made their fortune in Australia. The painting was taken to McEacharn's palatial Italian estate 'Vila Tarranta' on Lake Maggiore which he had purchased in 1930. Its extensive and picturesque gardens were opened to the public in 1952 for garden tours.

It was on one of these tours in 1959 that Myra Thomson, President of the Newcastle Art Gallery and Conservatorium Committee and her husband Douglas made a special visit to see Captain McEacharn and his villa containing Australian art including *The Strapper*. Myra was heavily involved in fundraising for a new Gallery space and also knew Dobell. Newcastle's inaugural Gallery Director Gil Docking recalled that Myra had mentioned to McEacharn at this meeting in Italy that Newcastle didn't have any Dobell's in the collection and that this painting should return home.

The visit evidently made an impression on McEacharn, as three months later Gil Docking received a crate at the Gallery unannounced. The crate contained *The Strapper* and a letter from Captain McEacharn saying that, 'while he was fond of the painting, it was unsuitable for an old villa in Italy'. Docking immediately called Dobell upon the arrival of the crate, not telling him of its contents. Gil later recalled, 'Dobell was quite overcome, because [the painting] was in perfect condition. He was amazed at the quality, the picture had not deteriorated...and here was this beautiful painting looking at him. I could see the tears in his eyes.'

The Dobell Loan exhibition at Newcastle City Art Gallery in 1960 formally announced the presentation of *The Strapper* on 21 June 1960 by Mrs Thomson on behalf of Captain McEacharn. It was always believed that that *The Strapper* was Dobell's favourite painting.

Roy JACKSON

born 1944 London UK, died 2013 Wedderburn NSW

Bough Yard Ridge 2003

acrylic on canvas

Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Martin Browne 2016
Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Roy Jackson, one of Australia's great abstraction artists was born in London and migrated to Australia with his parents at the age of 15. Jackson attended junior art school in the south of England during the post war period. In Australia he initially studied under Ron Lambert, a Wollongong artist whom he met on the ship travelling to Australia and with Godfrey Miller at East Sydney Technical College.

He returned to London to study at the Sutton School of Art and the Wimbledon College of Art in the 1960s; exhibiting his work in solo and group shows from 1967. He undertook a number of residencies, including the Australia Council Studio in New York in 1978 and Power Studio at the Cite in Paris in 1994. Throughout his career he won numerous art prizes including the Fisher's Ghost Purchase Prize in 1995 and the Mosman Art Prize in 2002.

Jackson was part of the original group of artists who lived and practiced in the bushlands of Wedderburn, south west of Sydney. The land was gifted to this group (Elisabeth Cummings, Joan Brassil, Fred Braat and Jackson – with John Peart joining them later) by Barb and Nick Romalis in the early 1970s. Although mostly an abstract artist, the idea of 'place' is at the heart of many of Jackson's works. He stated, 'My painting has been most affected by living in this [Wedderburn] environment. The studio opens onto it and I look at it every day. If someone asks me what has influenced me most in my work I simply point to the landscape of this place.'

Bough Yard Ridge 2003 is no exception, it is an abstracted landscape inspired by camping trips Jackson took in the Great Dividing Range in New South Wales. His earlier works were intuitive and spontaneous while works such as *Bough Yard Ridge* seem more measured with harmonious fields of pattern created with shapes and colours directly relating to place. Jackson described his work as actively growing from nature, 'I work with nature close up; I sense how it works and use paint similarly. A painted line moves across the canvas like a branch of a tree grows out toward light. Space and form are like water moving across rocks. Every direction is active simultaneously. Small and large energies move side by side. I am not a city person, nature informs all my work, and I have always tried to use paint and colour to get as close as I possibly can to the earth.'

This painting is the first work of art by Jackson to enter the collection and was donated to Newcastle Art Gallery in 2016 by Sydney Gallerist, Martin Browne.

Hilda Rix NICHOLAS

born 1884 Ballarat VIC, died 1961 Delegate NSW

Grace c1914

oil on canvas

Purchased 1976

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Born in Ballarat in the late 19th century Hilda Rix Nicholas was to become a well-travelled and internationally recognised Australian female artist. Supported by her family she travelled to Europe in 1907, spending summers in the artist colony at Etaples, France and had works exhibited in the 'New' Salon in Paris. She also spent time with her sister in Spain and Morocco.

The painting *Grace* c1914 is believed to have been produced following the outbreak of the World War I in 1914 after Rix Nicholas and her sister were evacuated to London from Étaples, France. Rix Nicholas experiments with the luminosity of light and a cool palette. The textured brushwork of the garden points to the influence of French impressionism in her work.

It became a period of significant tragedy for Rix Nicholas with the sudden deaths of her sister and mother, and also her husband of only six weeks Major George Nicholas, who died in the Battle of the Somme on the Western Front. In many ways *Grace* resonates with this difficult period in her life: there is a sombreness expressed in the girls as they sit heads bowed, sharing a child's tea party. While the vibrant colour palette presents a flourishing garden punctuated by a bright vase of orange flowers, it is contrasted by a lingering sense of melancholy that hangs over the girls.

Rix Nicholas returned home to Australia in 1918 and brought with her an extraordinary cachet of paintings and drawings. They were extremely well received by critics in Melbourne and Sydney. She went on to travel throughout New South Wales and back to Europe in the 1920s and she was made an associate of the Société Nationale de Beaux Arts in France in 1926. Rix Nicholas moved to New South Wales and remarried in 1928. Although her later works were not favoured by the contemporary art scene at the time, she continued painting and her last exhibition was in 1974. However, in recent times her works have been rightfully acknowledged as paving the way for female painters in Australia.

Grace was purchased in 1976 by Newcastle Art Gallery from the Rix Nicholas family.

John OLSEN AO, OBE

born 1928 Newcastle NSW

King Sun & the Hunter 2016

acrylic on linen

Purchased with the assistance of the Les Renfrew Bequest, Newcastle Art Gallery Foundation, Newcastle Art Gallery Society, Laurel Bale, Experienced Office Furniture, Peter Frost (in memory of Denise Frost), Eric Hardman Family Trust, John and Margaret Tonkin and public donation 2016
Newcastle Art Gallery collection

John Olsen AO, OBE was born in Newcastle in 1928 just around the corner from Newcastle Art Gallery in Dawson Street. He is considered a master painter and an Australian living treasure, awarded the Art Gallery of New South Wales Wynne Prize in both 1969 and 1985 as well as the Archibald Prize in 2005. His formative years spent in Newcastle influenced the light-hearted lyricism his paintings are so well known for.

As a student of the Julian Ashton Art School and East Sydney Technical College in the late 1940s, he began exploring abstract modes of expression in his practice. In 1955 Olsen exhibited the Gallery's notable painting *Still life with boy* 1954 in his first exhibition at Macquarie Galleries. In the late 1950s he travelled to Europe and became enamoured with Spain, spending several years producing works of art whilst abroad. Olsen has remained heavily influenced by this experience and in *King Sun & the Hunter* 2016 the artist's free-flowing, experimental technique, the trademark of his career is exemplified.

In January 2016, Olsen accepted the Gallery's invitation to create this iconic painting for the exhibition *JOHN OLSEN: The City's Son*, capturing the essence of his birthplace. This was a personal project and a reflection on his beginnings. Captivated by the Hunter River, Olsen believes many in the region will see what they already feel when they view this painting and he hopes the work of art will encourage all of us to observe the river more carefully – and to cherish it. He said, 'The importance of this painting is it reaffirms what they already feel and think. When the picture is shown, they're going to say, 'Yes, we can feel that' – the city's son has presented the Sun!'

King Sun & the Hunter was commissioned by the Gallery in 2016 and acquired through a successful fundraising campaign assisted by the Newcastle Art Gallery Foundation, Newcastle Art Gallery Society and members of the community.

Tom ROBERTS

born 1856 Dorchester UK, died 1931 Kallista VIC

Roses 1888

oil on canvas on plywood

Gift of Mr J O Manton 1972

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Tom Roberts was born in Britain and arrived in Australia in 1869 aged 13. Considered an influential landscape painter in Australia, he was formally trained at the National Gallery of Victoria School from 1874 – 1880. Roberts continued his studies in Britain at the Royal Academy from 1881. Similar to many artists of the time he toured around Europe with what he described as, ‘a determination to learn all he could from a wide range of paintings.’

Returning to Australia in 1885 Roberts started painting with fellow artists Charles Conder, Frederick McCubbin and Arthur Streeton (and other notable Australian Impressionists from the Heidelberg school), sketching and drawing Melbourne’s outer suburbs. By 1888 – the year that *Roses* was painted – he had started preparing what would become one of his most iconic works, *Shearing the Rams* 1890. Roberts’ quintessential impressionist views of the Australian outback from this time, created a new genre of art in Australia.

Roses is a contrasting painting to the landscapes, portraits and Federation scenes that Roberts became well known for. It is an unusual example and highly romantic aspect of his artistic practice. Roberts returned to still life paintings in 1911 and 1919 respectively, but little is documented of his still life works from the late 19th century. There are only five known still life works of art created by the artist, however it was an obvious area of interest for him as his studio and home, ‘... was always well supplied with flowers of the season, masses of colourful dahlias, chrysanthemums, roses and daffodils.’

This painting was donated to Newcastle Art Gallery by Mr Jack O Manton from Victoria, Australia after he and his daughter Melissa visited the Gallery in April 1972. He was described as a, ‘noted art collector’ by eminent art curator Daniel Thomas and it was donated on the condition that it would provide Manton a tax concession.

Arthur STREETON

born 1867 Mt Duneed VIC, died 1943 Olinda VIC

Australian December, the first crop 1886 (inscribed with date 1887)

oil on canvas

Gift of the Newcastle Region Art Gallery Foundation 1993

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Arthur Streeton is one of Australia's best-loved painters. He was born at Mount Duneed, near Geelong in 1876. His family moved to Melbourne in 1874 and he became apprenticed as a lithographer. From 1882 – 1888 Streeton attended night classes at the National Gallery of Victoria's School of Design (under Frederick McCubbin) and joined the regular students 'en plein air' painting parties to Heidelberg, Oakleigh and Templestowe.

In 1887 he founded the Heidelberg camp at Eaglemont and became known for his landscapes of the area. Moving to Sydney he painted harbour-scapes and scenes from the Blue Mountains. As with many artists of the era, Streeton undertook a 'grand tour' and travelled extensively in Europe and the United Kingdom to broaden his experiences as an artist. He was renowned for his depictions of a pastoral ideal of Australia and was knighted in 1937.

Streeton was a devoted en plein air artist and his method of depicting light has been one of the most important contributions to Australian art. Artist and teacher Julian Ashton, later described Streeton's paintings as, 'having extraordinary vitality... an accuracy of observation and the simplicity of the means used to produce that blaze of light and colour.'

Australian December, the first crop 1886 was exhibited at the Australian Artists Association exhibition in 1887. With subject matter reminiscent of Emmanuel Philips Fox's *Harvesting* c1900, the painting is a poetic and highly romanticised view of the Australian landscape. An Australian adaptation of what was considered a European subject, he created a rural still life where the play of light and portrayal of the land was key. Streeton had a deeply romantic vision of nature.

Although this work is of an Australian scene, it is influenced by Streeton's time travelling around England. He was drawn to depicting pastoral harvest scenes in rural counties such as Essex, Kent, Surrey and Sussex. His treatment of light, tonal contrast and colour are reflected.

One of his earliest works of art, it was originally sold to a private collection from the Australian Artists' Association *Second Annual Exhibition* at Buxton Art Gallery in Melbourne for eight pounds. In 1906 it sold on the secondary market for nearly ten times the original amount, spurring him to return to Australia from England, to sell a new body of work. It was owned by three private collectors before it was loaned to Newcastle Art Gallery in October 1992. The work was then purchased from the collector, David Waterhouse by the Newcastle Region Gallery Foundation and donated to the Gallery in 1993.

Tony TUCKSON

born 1921 Ismalia EGYPT, died 1973 Sydney NSW

Untitled (black and white lines, vertical centre) 1970 – 1973

synthetic polymer paint on composition board

Purchased 1976

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Tony Tuckson was born in Egypt, studied art in England and migrated to Australia after World War II. Following his service, Tuckson enrolled in the Commonwealth Serviceman's Reconstruction Training Scheme at East Sydney Technical College. From 1950 until his death, Tuckson held the position of Deputy Director at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

His early works could be described as expressionist with the broadness and colour of Paul Cezanne. He was exposed to Cezanne's style through viewing Rupert Bunny's paintings, which were regularly exhibited in Sydney during the 1940's, however the early modernists Ralph Balson and Grace Crowley were considered to have great influence over his work. They both taught at East Sydney Technical College and remembered Tuckson as one of their most, 'sincere' students.

In the 1950s Tuckson became heavily influenced by American abstractionists including Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock, demonstrated through Tuckson's limited colour palettes and gestural paintings from this time. His work was also transformed by Aboriginal art. In 1958 Dr Stuart Scougall invited Tuckson and his wife Margaret to visit Snake Bay on Melville Island to see the carved and painted grave posts. A year later Tuckson travelled north again with Dr Scougall, to study the Aboriginal art of Yirrkala in Arnhem Land. It was there that Tuckson purchased 68 works of art for the Art Gallery of New South Wales and he also prompted Dr Scougall to donate six bark paintings to Newcastle Art Gallery.

The Gallery has six Tuckson works of art in the collection, ranging from 1952 to 1973.

Untitled (black and white lines, vertical centre) 1970 – 1973, is one of the last paintings of his career in the Gallery's holdings. Throughout his oeuvre his work became both freer and more simplified and this painting exemplifies his minimal aesthetic. It has two long lines that draw the eye both up and down, placed in a field of glowing ochre-like colour. It has all the immediacy of a single creative idea.

Tuckson's career was marked by a distinct absence of publicly exhibiting his work due to competing demands in his professional life at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Tuckson only had two exhibitions during his lifetime – one in 1970 and again in 1973. *Untitled (black and white lines, vertical centre)* was exhibited at his second solo exhibition at Watters Gallery, Sydney in April 1973 – the same year that he died. It was also exhibited after his death at Monash Gallery and Mildura Gallery in 1975. Importantly this painting was included in the Art Gallery of New South Wales *Tony Tuckson Retrospective* that ran from April – May 1976. The Gallery purchased the work of art from Watters Gallery in 1976 and received it in June, following the survey exhibition.

Fred WILLIAMS

born 1927 Richmond VIC, died 1982 Hawthorn VIC

Landscape in Upwey 1965 – 1966

oil on canvas

Purchased 1966

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Born in Melbourne in the late 1920s, Fred Williams studied at the National Gallery of Victoria School and with the George Bell Art School before travelling to London in the 1950s. Inspired by European modern and contemporary art, he saw the Australian environment in a new light. Returning to Australia his works focused on landscape and became increasingly abstracted. He was the first Australian artist to have a solo exhibition in New York's Museum of Modern Art, and became known for his modernisation of Australian impressionism.

Williams played upon unconventional perspective and a lack of focal point, a distinctive trait that grew throughout his later career. Between 1963 – 1969 he moved with his family to Upwey, outside Melbourne, close to the Dandenong Ranges. His early 'Upwey landscapes' series, such as *Landscape in Upwey 1965 – 1966* introduces a definite horizon line, yet the spotted trees appear to float across the picture plane defying gravity. The lack of tree trunks suggests that they are disconnected and are still not firmly rooted into the soil.

The dramatic bushfires of 1968 had a direct impact upon his works – his sparse landscapes collapsed even further into minimalist representation, as the charred remnants of the local bushland pervaded his works. Through this however came regeneration and with a renewed vigour Williams captured the transitional state between destruction and creation that epitomises the cyclical nature of the Australian bush.

Williams wrote in a letter to Newcastle Art Gallery dated 21 November 1966, 'There are seven pictures in this series... all of them painted from gouache sketches done outdoors. They were started immediately after I returned from Rubinstein in January 1965 and were all finished by September 1966... I think the one that Newcastle has is possibly the most successful of the series.'

The painting was purchased by the Gallery from Rudy Komon Gallery, Sydney from the *Fred Williams* exhibition held October – November 1966.

Ralph BALSON

born 1890 Bothenhampton Dorset UK, died 1964 Mittagong NSW

Construction 3 1941

oil on cardboard mounted on pineboard

Purchased 1978

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Ralph Balson was born in the United Kingdom, migrated to Australia in 1913 and settled in Sydney. He worked as a house painter until his retirement in 1955. After developing an interest in the visual arts he attended art classes at the Julian Ashton Art school in the early 1920s. By the mid-1930s, Balson had become a member of a dynamic group of artists which included Grace Crowley, Rah Fizelle and Frank and Margel Hinder. These artists were very familiar with current overseas trends and were at the forefront of modernism in Australia.

In 1941 Balson held his second solo show at Anthony Hordern's Fine Art Gallery in Sydney, exhibiting a group of totally abstract geometric compositions of which *Construction 3* 1941, is a fine example. This exhibition is generally considered to be the first totally abstract show in Australia. Many of Balson's constructive paintings follow the rigid format set out by Piet Mondrian who was very influential on Balson's development as an artist.

Construction 3 however is a much more fluid and energetic work. The introduction of circular shapes provides feelings of movement and floating. There is also the sensation of spinning and bouncing within the rectangular frame. Spatial depth is achieved through the use of colour and the overlapping of one shape by another as well as variations in shape sizes.

The title, *Construction 3* helps to remove any associations with the visible world and concentrates our attention on the fact that the picture is indeed made or constructed from purely elementary geometric shapes and clean, unadulterated colour. Abstract in its entirety this work demonstrates Balson's ability with his mastery of colour and abstracted form.

Balson continued working on his constructive series until the mid-1950s, after which he began to explore what he termed his 'matter' paintings which were more closely related to abstract expressionism. Balson remains a pioneer in the course and development of modernist Australia.

Construction 3 was purchased by Newcastle Art Gallery in 1978 from Gallery A in Sydney with the assistance of Ann Lewis. A letter from Ann Lewis to the Gallery in August 1978 confirmed that the painting was originally exhibited in the *Second Memorial Exhibition* at Gallery A in 1968, directly from Balson's estate. After Balson, Newcastle Art Gallery is the sole owner of this work.

Jim Woodbury – Gallery Guide

Clarice BECKETT

born 1887 Casterton VIC, died 1935 Melbourne VIC

Lights, St Kilda c1931

oil on canvas on board

Gift of Lady Drysdale 2001

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Forgotten for three decades after her death, Clarice Beckett is now recognised as one of the great and highly individual painters in Australia's landscape tradition. After study with Frederick McCubbin at Melbourne's National Gallery of Victoria School she studied and exhibited with Max Meldrum and his circle. Unmarried, Beckett lived with and cared for her parents when they moved to Beaumaris, on Melbourne's Port Phillip bay.

She was not allowed a studio but painted on the kitchen table, often at times snatched between housekeeping chores. She fashioned a cart for her paints and small canvases, transporting them to paint en plain air usually in the morning or early evening, times when she could escape from the role of companion and housekeeper to her parents. She worked swiftly for the sheer joy of it, never reworking a painting.

Beckett's biographer, former Gallery owner Rosalind Hollinrake, relentlessly foraged for information on the artist. A chance meeting with the artist's sister Hilda who owned a property near Benalla, finally uncovered hundreds of works in an open air barn. Many were rotting from exposure to the weather. The discovery resulted in a major touring exhibition of her work in 1999.

Clarice Beckett was a modernist. In *Lights, St Kilda* c1931 her unusual choice of subject matter and fascination with atmospheric conditions is apparent. The reflection of the city's lights through the water lightens the misty darkness. She valued the familiar with the ability to make the everyday strange. She preferred mists and fogs and sought effects which blurred borders, suggesting a dream rather than reality. Her paintings are small with a minimal style. They stress the importance of local content with a hazy, misty quality that sets her apart.

Sadly it was her love of painting outdoors at night that ended her career. She worked in a storm, caught a chill which turned to pneumonia and died five days later. She was 48.

Lights, St Kilda was given to Newcastle Art Gallery on loan by David Bradshaw, on behalf of Lady Maisie Drysdale in 2001, who had acquired the painting through Niagara Galleries. Later that year after her death, Drysdale's estate bequeathed this work of art to the Gallery through the Cultural Gifts Program.

Nancy Tapp – Gallery Guide

Peter BOOTH

born 1940 Sheffield UK

Untitled 1962

acrylic on canvas

Purchased 1994

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Born in England, Peter Booth is a figurative and surrealist painter. He left school at the age of 15 and attended drawing classes at the Sheffield College of Art. After moving to Australia with his family he was taught at the National Gallery of Victoria School under John Brack. He graduated in 1965 and taught art at both the Prahran Technical College and part time at his former place of education, the National Gallery of Victoria School.

Untitled 1962 is an example of geometric abstraction, a style of art influenced by American modernism during the 1960s. *Untitled* is an early career work by Booth which represents a time when Australian artists adopted an International approach to art making based on radical ideas that emerged from American artists in New York.

Booth was amongst a movement of artists interested in non-objective art, abstraction, colour field painting and hard edge minimalism. These artists rejected mainstream ideas of figuration, emotionalism, overt symbolism and nostalgic interpretations of the bush. The lack of title means the viewer can experience the work in any way, free from storytelling or other associations. Artists of this movement deliberately resisted naming their paintings.

In this large scale painting Booth has used bright primary and secondary colours similar to those found amongst Pop artists of the 1950s. He has employed architectural and mechanical shapes which may have been influenced by the industrial city of Sheffield, England, his place of birth from which his family migrated when he was aged 18. Hard-edged shapes were possible through the use of masking tape; at that time a new material used by artists.

In 1968 Booth went on to exhibit with forty young and emerging Australian artists in the inaugural exhibition *The Field* at the National Gallery of Victoria, an exhibition regarded as a landmark in Australian art history. It helped launch the careers of a generation of Australian artists including his own. From 1978 his work took on drastic changes to become painterly, textured and expressionistic. He portrayed monstrous humanoid hybrids in the landscape, circular motifs and the warping of pictorial space.

Untitled was purchased by Newcastle Art Gallery in 1994, after it had been on extended loan to the Gallery from William Arthur Peacock. It had originally been commissioned at the recommendation of John Brack for Peacock's Soft Drink Factory foyer. The composition is full of action and energy created by diagonal lines and the central cylinder shown in perspective.

Russell DRYSDALE

born 1912 Sussex UK, died 1981 Sydney NSW

The crow trap 1941

oil on fibro-cement panel

Gift of Dr Roland Pope 1945

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Russell Drysdale was born in 1912 in the United Kingdom. His family moved to Melbourne and he continued his study of art in London and Paris. His early works as a student were influenced by the School of Paris style. He returned to Australia in 1939 and shortly after applied for military service but was rejected because of loss of sight in one eye. His move to Sydney in 1940 saw the emergence of his own distinctive style and imagery that characterised the harshness, colour and vastness of Australia's outback. This new direction saw his artistic style move away from international modernism.

The Australian outback provided Drysdale with the artistic challenges that he sought. His paintings after this time typically depicted country Australians as elongated, angular figures, frequently in small groups with static imagery, in settings otherwise devoid of human activities. These graphic images depicted scenes of devastation from droughts and of desolate rural towns, buildings and pubs. He was undoubtedly one of the great Australian and 'Australiana' artists of the 20th century, widely regarded by his fellow artists, particularly Donald Friend, his painting companion over many years.

The crow trap 1941 is one of a select group of Drysdale's paintings that are recognised as important works of art, depicting the mastery of the artist's portrayal of Australia. It is one of the earliest of his works portraying the harshness of outback life. The painting shows a crow trap being constructed. The man standing on the box, with the length of timber, is completing the construction of the crow trap frame. There are two rolls of wire mesh on the ground that will be wrapped around the frame, to form the wire cage for the trap. The ladder will then be fitted to the top of the frame and when the trap is complete, crows will be attracted to the cage by a dead animal carcass placed inside the structure. Crows will enter the cage through the ladder treads. Once inside, they are trapped.

The crow trap was purchased from Macquarie Galleries in Sydney in March 1942. It was donated to Newcastle Art Gallery by Dr Roland Pope in 1945, as part of the first donation of 123 works of art to the City of Newcastle which began the Newcastle Art Gallery collection.

Georgie Blythe – Gallery Guide

W.B. GOULD

born 1803 Liverpool UK, died 1853 Hobart TAS

Flowers and fruit c1840

oil on canvas

Purchased 1961

Newcastle Art Gallery

William Beulow Gould (born in Liverpool as William Holland) was one of the most prolific artists of still life paintings in Australia in the first half of the 19th century. He trained as an artist under William Mulready, R.A. who had an interest in 17th century Dutch painting and later worked in The Strand in London under German lithographer and printer Rudolph Ackerman.

Married with two children he was transported to Tasmania for seven years for stealing a coat in 1826. He was twice assigned to colonial officials who had him paint natural history studies of fish and plants. On occasion his still life paintings were of flowers and fruit. Receiving his freedom in 1835, he continued to paint mainly still lifes for the next eighteen years. He was described as a 'drunkard and a very dangerous person' and painting paid for his alcohol and gambling debts.

Gould was the only artist specialising in still life painting in Sydney or Hobart at this time and created many works of flowers and fruit. Newcastle Art Gallery's painting is from the 1840s. His repertoire consisted of fish, cockfights, dead game, fruit and flowers. When assigned to Dr James Scott, colonial surgeon, he showed aptitude for perfect technical detail in his paintings of botanical specimens. He apparently had little interest in Australian flora and fauna, as most of his fruit and flowers reflected European specimens, either copied from engravings or painted from wax flowers and memory.

Gould was not an accomplished artist, his portraits could be described as caricatures and his self portrait lacks true likeness. The colonial nostalgia for works reminiscent for things European can be seen in the style of this work and it is unlikely that Gould would have made an impression in art history had he not been transported to Australia. Gould married Ann Reynolds in 1836 and died in poverty as an emancipated citizen in Macquarie Street, Hobart in 1853.

Flowers and fruit c1840 was purchased in 1960 at an Adelaide auction from the estate of Miss Dankel, a private collector originally from Melbourne by Terry Clune, owner of Clune Galleries, Sydney. Newcastle Art Gallery purchased the work from Clune Galleries in May 1961.

Val Rutherford – Gallery Guide

Nora HEYSEN

born 1911 Hahndorf SA, died 2003 Sydney NSW

Self portrait in a velvet coat 1933

oil on linen

Purchased with assistance from Newcastle Art Gallery Society 1986

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Best known for her still life paintings of fruit and flowers, Nora Heysen holds the distinction of being the first female artist to win the Archibald Prize at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. A prize historically dominated by male artists, Heysen's portrait of *Mme Elink Schuurman* (a diplomat's wife) caused quite a stir amongst artists and critics in 1938.

Nora Heysen was the fourth child of Selma and Hans Heysen, and her first training in art was from her father – the eminent landscape artist. At home in her father's studio she painted self portraits, which she continued throughout and after her formal arts training at the School of Fine Arts in Adelaide. Her first solo exhibition was at the Royal South Australian Society of Arts in 1933.

With a somewhat theatrical, haughty expression, the 21 year old artist, palette and brush in hand, glances confidently from the canvas in *Self portrait in a velvet coat* 1933. In a letter from Heysen to Newcastle Art Gallery in 1986, the artist relates how she had been instructed by her mother to, 'Go into town and buy yourself some clothes.' Dressed in the new clothes – a dark brown velvet coat, silk shirt and check skirt, Heysen liked what she saw so began to paint.

From 1943 – 1946 Heysen was the first female to be appointed an official war artist. With the rank of captain in the Australian Imperial Force, she worked in New Guinea and Australia. A skilled artist, who was thought to have lived in the shadow of her famous father, Nora Heysen continued to paint in her own right until her death in 2003.

The portrait hung in the family home *The Cedars*, Hahndorf, South Australia before it was sold at an Adelaide exhibition in 1933. During World War II Heysen's father bought the painting back and it apparently remained in his room for the rest of his life. In 1986 the painting was purchased by the Gallery with assistance from the Art Gallery Society.

Prue Viggers – Gallery Guide

Dale HICKEY

born 1937 Melbourne VIC

Painting 1968

oil on cotton duck canvas

Purchased 1969

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Dale Hickey was born in Melbourne and educated at Swinburne Technical College between 1954 – 1957. At college Hickey was influenced by American artists such as Frank Stella. He explained, 'I got into flat painting, because of what I was doing in graphics at school, which was, of course, flat, hard-edged stuff.'

As a teacher, Hickey helped define Preston Technical College's leadership role in art education in the late 1960s as a radical, conceptual school. He was a teacher who fostered an open classroom environment by authorising the impulses of his students to be creative. Importantly Hickey's work was also included in the influential exhibition, *The Field* at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1968.

The diversity of Hickey's stylistic practice makes him a distinctive artist. He describes his work as 'simplified' rather than minimalist. His work spans from formal geometric abstraction in the 1960s, still life paintings in the 1970s, landscapes filled with energy in the 1980s, to a sustained series of sparse, schematic diagrams of the artist's workspace through the 1990s.

Hickey's work is philosophical and his paintings are about ideas not just illustrations of theories. Hickey's legacy is that he straddles an internationalist, formalist style while referencing regional motifs. His efforts to elevate suburbia beyond what was once considered its limited cultural worth in the 1960s indicated the beginning of the decay of an elitist culture in art.

Painting 1968 is the last and most colourful of his 'Quilt' series begun in 1967. His paintings of quilted forms were based on eiderdowns, taking his mundane surroundings into the world of contemporary art. Hickey describes this work as, 'A saturation of red intensified by a modular, heraldic and architectural structure'. He further defines it as a 'surrealist/pop/cubist ziggurat both stained and opaque'. Part of his 1969 Fences exhibition at Pinacotheca in Melbourne, the Quilt series was inspired by suburbia. *Painting* brings the ordinariness of the suburbs to our consciousness.

It was purchased by Newcastle Art Gallery through Pinacotheca Gallery in November 1969.

Marilyn Bayley Sainsbury – Gallery Guide

Robert JACKS

born 1943 Melbourne VIC, died 2014 Melbourne VIC

Kentish fire and heavy boots 3 1983/2001

oil and wax on linen

Purchased 1983

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Born in Melbourne, Robert Jacks studied at Prahran Technical College at age 14. He went on to study painting at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 1961 – 1962, moving from initial studies in sculpture. He later said, 'I knew I would be a painter a couple of years into my sculpture course, on the other hand, when I became a painter, I realised right away that my training in sculpture would influence how I painted.'

In 1966 Jacks made his exhibiting debut at age 23 with a solo exhibition in Melbourne. The exhibition established him as the 'hottest' young artist in Australia and critic Patrick McCaughey wrote it was, 'a distinctively new voice to assuage the Antipodean hangover'. In a break from the abstract expressionism being made in Melbourne at the time, his influences included Constantin Brancusi and Pablo Picasso.

The following year Jacks travelled to New York via Toronto where he came under the spell of minimalism, serial and process art. He concluded ten years in North America in Austin, Texas, drawing landscapes, which, he said, triggered his break away from the grid on his return to Australia.

Jack's abstraction departed from the conventions of the grid instead focusing on geometric abstraction and a signature use of what Jacks called 'wedges', as seen in *Kentish fire and heavy boots 3* 1983/2001 that were, '... like windows looking out into the night of the unknown.'

Kentish fire and heavy boots 3 took its name from one of Jacks' favourite authors, James Joyce and his inaugural novel *Portrait of the artist as a young man* published in 1916: 'The entry of the professor was signalled by a few rounds of Kentish fire from the heavy boots of those students who sat on the highest tier of the gloomy theatre under the grey cobwebbed windows...'. Although originally completed in 1983, the painting was re-touched by Jacks in 2001.

Jacks passed away in August 2014, shortly before his first large scale retrospective, *Robert Jacks: Order & Variation* opened at the National Gallery of Victoria. Director, Tony Ellwood said, 'Robert Jacks was a pioneering figure of Australian abstractionism whose example has offered an alternative path to subsequent generations of Australian artists... while recognising the deep and lasting influence he has had upon the field of Australian art.'

Kentish fire and heavy boots 3 was exhibited at the exhibition *Robert Jacks* at Roslyn Oxley Gallery in 1983. It was then purchased from this exhibition by Newcastle Art Gallery.

Jeffrey SMART

born 1921 Adelaide SA, died 2013 Arezzo ITALY

E.U.R. I 1964

oil on hardboard

Gift of the Art Gallery and Conservatorium Committee 1965

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Jeffrey Smart was born in Adelaide. Although he wanted to become an architect his family overruled this career choice and sent him to teachers college. Smart joked that most architects are frustrated artists but he was a frustrated architect. After completing teacher training at Adelaide Teachers College, Smart taught art and studied at the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts. He was influenced by Dorrit Black, who taught him the Golden Mean and Ivor Hele who emphasised the importance of draftsmanship.

On his first trip to Europe as an adult, Smart took lessons from Fernand Leger and visited the old masters in the European galleries. When he returned to Sydney he started teaching again as well as working as an art critic at the Daily Telegraph and created a character, Phidias, for an ABC children's show, *The Argonauts*. However in 1963 Smart returned to Europe. In 1964 – 1965 Smart decided his, 'work was getting somewhere' and decided to try to make a living by painting. It was also the period he became an expatriate, deciding to live in Italy permanently. With Justin O'Brien, he rented a flat from their friend Eleanora Arrighi. The flat was located in the Esposizioni Universal di Roma and next door to the gardens of Mussolini's residence.

In 1970 Smart wrote to Newcastle Art Gallery, about *E.U.R. I* 1964, 'E.U.R stands for, 'Esposizioni Universal di Roma. The concept of the Exhibition was cancelled owing to the war 1939 – 1945. However many buildings were finished to inspire Chirico – of his landscapes many good ones are from the E.U.R. It is now a satellite city and has many ministries.'

It has been identified that the fascist architecture has the elements of three different classical periods; a classical staircase that the bookish purple shirted man is lightly perched upon, a renaissance dome curving away behind him and the modern lamp posts looming above. This figure that sometimes features in Smart paintings, was described by Smart as, 'you and me', an everyman.

Smart remained a studio painter who would make studies and series; in the same Macquarie Galleries exhibition that *E.U.R I* was first shown, another work *E.U.R II* was exhibited.

The painting was purchased by the Art Gallery and Conservatorium Committee for the price of \$388 from the *Jeffrey Smart* exhibition, 29 September – 11 October 1965 at Macquarie Galleries. The Art Gallery and Conservatorium Committee was the precursor committee for the Newcastle Art Gallery Society when the Gallery collection was based in the War Memorial Cultural Centre, now the present day library.

Eugene VON GUÉRARD

born 1812 Vienna AUSTRIA, died 1901 Chelsea UK

Lake Gnotuk, near Camperdown 1858

oil on canvas

Gift of Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd 1971

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Eugene von Guérard was the son of Bernhard and Josepha von Guérard. Bernhard was a miniaturist and court painter to Francis I of Austria. From 1840 – 1845 von Guérard and his father travelled to Europe including Dusseldorf and Rome where he attended art school.

By 1852 he was acknowledged as a professional artist. However, he responded to the call of adventure and sailed from England to join the gold rush in Victoria, Australia. In 1854 he moved to Melbourne to resume his career as a painter and in 1870 he was appointed Master Painter and Curator of the National Gallery of Victoria.

He began painting Australian landscapes from 1854. *Lake Gnotuk, near Camperdown 1858* is a fine example of his exploration of place. Lake Gnotuk, a salt water lake, is situated on volcanic plains of western Victoria. Von Guérard visited this area in 1857 in search of commissions from land owners. Whilst there he was intrigued by the vegetation, making detailed sketches and accompanying notes.

In this classic landscape, von Guérard created a sweeping vista of vast plains leading to a mountain range on the horizon. Lake Gnotuk is central to a balanced and harmonious composition. Gentle hues of blue sky and scattered clouds create a romantic, atmospheric contrast. Cattle grazing, a small boy playing his flute and a dead branch lead the eye to a lonely sapling which divides the composition: a 'tool' to anchor surrounding vegetation. An asymmetrical balance with trees on the left reinforces depth.

Von Guérard believed, 'that beauty in nature and beauty in art were synonymous.' This painting is one of two of the Lake Gnotuk area. It is a significant pictorial record of Australian landscape in the 19th century.

Lake Gnotuk, near Camperdown was presented to Newcastle Art Gallery by Broken Hill Propriety (BHP) in 1971. BHP had purchased the painting from Clune Galleries in Sydney. BHP have been a supporter of Newcastle Art Gallery over the years and have donated three works of art between 1971 and 1987.

Cherry Craig – Gallery Guide

Roland WAKELIN

born 1887 Greytown NZ, died 1971 Sydney NSW

The white house 1918

oil on pulpboard

Purchased 1966

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Roland Wakelin was born in New Zealand and moved to Sydney permanently in 1912 where he studied art at Antonio Dattilo-Rubbo's Royal Art Society classes for four years. There he met Roy de Maistre and together with Grace Cossington Smith was instrumental in establishing the modernist movement in Sydney. Norah Simpson also had a profound influence on his work, when she returned from Europe with black and white reproductions of paintings by Paul Cezanne, Paul Gauguin and Vincent Van Gogh.

The white house 1918 was a spontaneous sketch as seen one morning – a little house across the street in Challis St, Waverton. This was on the corner opposite where Roland and his wife Estelle lived and where he had his studio named 'Cezanne'. Cubist inspired effects dominate the painting and the light saturated colours are soft, muted and serene. It foreshadowed the first Australian ventures into abstract art. For Wakelin it was painted during a period of experimentation with colour and colour related to music. He later rejected this theory but it did result in his gaining a mastery of colour that was one of the major aspects of his work and changed the course of Australian art.

Wakelin and de Maistre were part of a ground breaking exhibition *Colour in Art* in 1919, which featured first ever abstracts of the streets and buildings of the lower north shore, Sydney. The paintings were so innovative in colour and form that they shocked audiences. De Maistre left Australia never to return but Wakelin remained.

During a stay in London from 1922 – 1924 he was able to visit Paris and see the works of the post Impressionists first hand and the influence of Cezanne dominated his work for several years. He learned the post-impressionist method of painting thickly in small brushstrokes with high-keyed colours to simulate the vibration of light. Black was never used as it would have deadened the colour. He was one of the first to apply early 20th century colour theories. These experimentations were in marked contrast to the still flourishing landscape tradition of the Heidelberg painters.

The white house was exhibited at the Royal Art Society in 1918 and at the exhibition *Roland Wakelin* at Macquarie Galleries in Sydney in August 1937, where it was purchased by A J L McDonnell. It went on to be loaned for an exhibition at the Bank of New South Wales in Sydney. It was purchased by Newcastle Art Gallery from the exhibition, *Collection of the Late A J L McDonnell* at Macquarie Galleries in August 1966.

Daniel WALBIDI

born 1982 Bidyadanga WA

Ilyara 2008

synthetic polymer paint on linen

Purchased by the Newcastle Region Art Gallery Foundation with assistance from Don and Justine Osborne 2010

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

In the 1960s, due to severe drought, Daniel Walbidi's parents and other members of his community moved from their traditional desert homeland to the coast. Walbidi was born in 1982 at Bidyadanga WA, a coastal community 250km south of Broome. He grew up on the former La Grange Mission on the homeland of the Karrajarri people.

Growing up he was fascinated by the Dreaming stories from the five different cultural groups living at Bidyadanga. The stories were about the desert landscape and waterholes – the resting places of spirits and ancestral creators. At a very young age, Walbidi painted on wooden boards, doors and any other materials available. He studied Aboriginal artists such as Albert Namatjira, Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, Emily Kame Kngwarreye and Rover Thomas.

In 1998 at the age of 16, Walbidi approached Short Street Gallery in Broome to exhibit his work. He also wanted their support to facilitate artistic expression for the cultural leaders of the community. He was influential in establishing the Yulparitja Artists, who include artists such as Weaver Jack and Jan Billycan.

In 2007 Walbidi organised a group of senior Yulparitja artists to return to their traditional land. It was an emotional visit with the Aboriginal elders painting Dreaming stories on their ancestral ground. Walbidi's style changed through this trip, in particular after he had a helicopter flight over the country. He became aware of the different layers and then started to include more blocks of intense colour also introducing gold and silver to show the reflection of sand and water. *Ilyara* was painted in 2008 after this important trip.

Walbidi painted several artworks with this title, he said, 'Ilyara is where my father was born... Ilyara is a sacred place where people used to camp, to set up for a while. The white areas show the salt water lakes surrounding the jila (living water hole). The seven sisters who passed through here camped a night and sang and danced then left in the morning. They were being chased by a man who wanted to marry them so they kept on the move. These sisters are depicted in the constellation Peliades. That constellation is also my grandfather, Meridoo's father's dreaming.'

Ilyara was sold originally from Short Street Gallery in Broome to a private collector in New South Wales, who sold it at auction through Deutcher and Hackett on 6 October 2010. It was purchased by the Newcastle Region Art Gallery Foundation from this auction with assistance from Don and Justine Osborne.

Sidney NOLAN

born 1917 Melbourne VIC, died 1992 London UK

Easter Show 1964

acrylic on hardboard

Gift of Dr William Bowmore AO, OBE 1976

Newcastle Art Gallery collection

Born in Carlton, Melbourne in 1917, Sidney Nolan received his art training from Prahran Technical School and through sporadic classes at the National Gallery of Victoria School. He was influenced by Pablo Picasso, Paul Cezanne, Henri Rousseau, Henri Matisse and Vincent Van Gogh whose works he saw in the 1939 Herald exhibition of French and British contemporary art at the Melbourne Town Hall. Known as a significant modernist in Australian art history, Nolan's representations of life in Australia, particularly of the Kelly Gang, saw him rise to fame.

Supported by art patrons, John and Sunday Reed, he became part of the Angry Penguins avant-garde group. They sought to modernise Australian art and poetry and were influenced by surrealism; the group included Albert Tucker, Joy Hester, John Perceval and Arthur Boyd. Nolan said of learning to paint, 'My own history is involved in what I can probably call with truth a working class background... I learnt to paint in precisely the same way as any other worker would have to do. Look around him, use his eyes, fight for the opportunity to strengthen his vision.' Nolan had his first exhibition in 1940, and was conscripted into the army in 1942.

In the late 1940s after deserting the army, Nolan painted his iconic Kelly Series, using the shapes of armour layered over the Australian landscape. He travelled across Australia to far north Queensland and central Australia following the stories of explorers Burke and Wills, and settled for a short period of time in Sydney. Nolan then travelled to England, Greece and the United States of America from 1951. Throughout this time he returned to his iconic subject matter of the Kelly Gang. Residing in London, in 1981 he was knighted and in 1987 made an associate member of the Royal Academy of Arts.

Easter Show 1964 bears many similarities to Nolan's 'Adelaide Ladies', a series of portraits of women looking at animals, following a 'best-in-show' motif. When William Bowmore AO OBE donated this painting he wrote, 'The subject matter is a calf and its owner (his wife Cynthia). It appears to me the model dressed up in her country best refinery matching bonnet and frock, beads and lipstick... I feel Nolan has done this painting with 'tongue in cheek' and it could be interpreted as a 'send-up'... this is an excellent Sidney Nolan and I laugh every time I see it.'

Bowmore donated *Easter Show* and a William Dobell painting to Newcastle Art Gallery, to mark the opening of the Lord Mayor's Hunter Regional Art Gallery Appeal in 1976, the year before the Gallery moved to its current location. Bowmore was an avid collector throughout his life and donated a total 76 works of art to the Gallery.

David Porter – Gallery Guide