

Abstraction

Celebrating Australian women abstract artists

This timeline includes critical events in the development of abstraction, the contribution that women have made to its growth and expression, and key moments of socio-political history occurring concurrently with its evolution as a dominant tendency in the art of the twentieth century.

1844

In England, Joseph Mallord William Turner paints *Rain, Steam and Speed*.

1875

American artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler paints *Nocturne in Black and Gold – the falling rocket*.

1885

Georges Seurat paints *Le Bec du Hoc, Grandcamp*, now in the Tate Gallery, London. The study was acquired by the NGA in 1984. The artist employs a scientific basis for this series known as Divisionism, where he juxtaposes small brushstrokes of colour to create light and shade to form the composition.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=92051>

1877

French Impressionist artist Claude Monet paints *La Gare Saint-Lazare*.

1883

In England, married women obtain the right to acquire their own property.

1883

Paul Gauguin paints *The vision after the sermon*. He employs flat, coloured planes where composition, shape and colour take on an independent value; a dream sequence, the subject goes beyond the depiction of observed reality. For Gauguin, art is more about 'the idea', and members in his circle increasingly dissect the new art as having inherent 'musical' qualities, another step on the road to abstraction.

1891

The Women's Christian Temperance Union is established in Melbourne. This highly active union campaigned for women's suffrage.

1894

South Australian women are granted voting rights and the right to stand for Parliament. Both of these rights established together were a world first.

1895–99

Paul Cézanne paints a series of proto cubist landscapes considered to be a bridge between Impressionism and Cubism at Bibémus Quarry, Aix-en-Provence.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=251113>

1897

In South Australia, Catherine Helen Spence becomes the first woman in the world to stand for election.

1900

Queen Victoria proclaims the Declaration of the Commonwealth of Australia to take effect on 1 January 1901.

1901

Australia becomes an independent nation. Federation of Australia occurs and the Australian Federal Parliament opens in Melbourne, the temporary capital.

Author and feminist Stella Maria Miles Franklin, also known as Miles Franklin, publishes *My Brilliant Career*.

The *Immigration Restriction Act* is passed, leading to the 'White Australia Policy' kept in place for the next 60 years.

1902

The *Commonwealth Franchise Act* becomes law declaring that women could vote in all Commonwealth elections. Indigenous Australians and people of Asian, African and Pacific nationality were excluded. Australian women (other than those excluded on racial grounds) were given the vote in South Australia (and thus the Northern Territory) and Western Australia. Those in New South Wales, Tasmania, Queensland, and Victoria achieved the right to vote in the federal election on 16 December 1903 under this act. These women finally won the right to vote in their state elections in 1902, 1903, 1905 and 1908 respectively.

1904

Rose Macpherson (later known as Margaret Preston) and Bessie Davidson move to Paris where they remain until 1906. During this period, they study at the Académie La Grande Chaumière in Montparnasse.
<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=24997>

1905

Henri Matisse exhibits a revolutionary landscape, *Luxe, Calme et Volupté* 1904 at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris. Painted in pure primary colours, its very title suggests that it is about ideas and sensation, as much as the figure in the landscape. It is also a painting about painting, not simply a painting of a scene.

At the Salon d'Automne, Henri Matisse, André Derain and Maurice de Vlaminck cause a sensation when they exhibit brightly coloured paintings referred to by journalist Louis Vauxcelles as *les fauves*, or 'wild beasts', thus coining the term Fauvism. Margaret Preston and Bessie Davidson visit the controversial exhibition having already seen the van Gogh retrospective in Paris in March.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=98696&PICTAUS=True>

1906

Margaret Preston and Bessie Davidson visit the Gauguin retrospective at the Salon d'Automne. This exhibition has a decisive influence on Preston's future directions.
<http://cs.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=54550>

In Sweden, Hilma af Klint begins work on a major cycle of abstract painting comprising 193 works titled *The Paintings for the Temple*. Deeply concerned with the spiritual dimension, she believed they were 'commissioned' during séances held by a spiritualist group of women named 'the Five', of which she was a member. Although unseen by the art world until 1986, they are now believed to be among the first wholly abstract works of art to be produced in Western art.

The Australian silent film *The story of the Kelly Gang* was released in Australia (1908 in England). It is the world's first feature length film.

1907

Retrospective of the work of Paul Cézanne at the Salon d'Automne in Paris greatly influences

the avant-garde artists in Paris, contributing to the advent of Cubism.

Pablo Picasso paints *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)*, which is not publicly shown until 1916. It is revolutionary on many fronts but, in terms of the development of abstraction, it marks an important moment in both the abandonment of illusionistic space and perspective and the anarchic depiction of the female form reduced to disjointed angles and shapes painted in a minimal palette. The profound influence of African and Oceanic art, which Picasso had seen in museums, is first made explicit in this work.

French inventor Louis Lumière develops a process for colour photography using a three-color screen. The process proves to be adaptable to the industrial production of images and is one of the few available for nearly thirty years. With his brother Auguste Lumière, Louis is also credited with having invented the motion picture.

1908

Georges Braque paints *Houses at l'Estaque* depicting the scene in an arrangement of 'bizarre cubiques', as described by influential French art critic Louis Vauxcelles. Braque submits works to the Salon d'Automne in Paris where they are rejected, but he is adopted by the art dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, who shows the work in his gallery near the Madeleine. Vauxcelles reviews the exhibition describing the works as 'full of little cubes', thus the term Cubism is coined.

Filippo Marinetti writes *Manifesto del Futurismo* – a rejection of the past embracing youth, industry and the velocity of the machine age.

Core of my Heart, later known as *My Country*, by Dorothea Mackellar, is first published in *The Spectator*, London, on 5 September. It is reprinted in numerous Australian newspapers turning her into one of Australia's most well-known poets.

Site for Canberra is selected for the capital of Australia.

1909

Manifesto del Futurismo is published in *Gazetta dell'Emilia*, Bologna and *Le Figaro*, Paris, and immediately becomes influential in modernist circles.

1910

Sonia Delaunay, along with Kazimir Malevich and Alexander Archipenko, exhibit at the Salon des Indépendants.

Wassily Kandinsky paints *Untitled (First Abstract Watercolor)*.

1911

Salon des Indépendants includes a room dedicated to Cubism, Salle 41, with work by Robert Delaunay, Albert Gleizes, Jean Metzinger and Fernand Léger.

La Pittura futurista, manifesto tecnico is signed by Carlo Carrà, Umberto Boccioni, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla and Gino Severini.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=162456>

Wassily Kandinsky publishes *Concerning the spiritual in art*, in Munich. He also forms *Der Blaue Reiter* with Franz Marc, a loose knit group of artists exhibiting regularly in Munich who are interested in free experimentation and expression. Brightly coloured, the works present a lyrical form of abstraction that tap a spiritual dimension. These early exhibitions are considered as laying a foundation from which abstraction evolved.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=1958>

1912

Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger publish *Du Cubisme* and establish La Section d'Or, a collective of artists, poets and critics associated with Cubism and Orphism who are concerned with the intellectual underpinning of cubism and the ascendancy of the 'idea' over 'nature'. They subscribed to a pure abstraction based on a geometric cubism determined by the mathematical theory behind the notion of the golden section.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=110534>

Marcel Duchamp submits his futuristic *Nude descending a staircase* to the Salon des Indépendants, but it proved to be too radical even for the avant-garde and it was rejected, despite his brothers being on the selection committee.

October, exhibition of the *Salon de la Section d'Or*. Duchamp's *Nude descending a staircase* is shown here and illustrated in Albert Gleizes' and Jean Metzinger's groundbreaking publication *Du Cubisme*.

Poet Guillaume Apollinaire coins the word *Orphism* to describe the trajectory of cubism that appeared as pure abstraction painted in bright colours. Apollinaire believed that the style was close to music in its commitment to anti-figuration. Orphism's main exponents were François Kupka and Roger and Sonia Delaunay and it is regarded as the key transition from cubism to abstraction. Derived from the Classical Greek figure of Orpheus, the name has mystic connotations.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=97876&PICTAUS=TRUE>

Margaret Preston commences her second visit to England and Europe on 8 February, returning initially to Paris and then settling in England. She carefully studied Cézanne and returned to the work of Gauguin before discovering the Japanese tradition of ukiyo-e printing. In London she was influenced by Whistler and became increasingly drawn to the modernist theories of Roger Fry and the Bloomsbury set. She came into close contact with the quasi-scientific theories circulating at the time about colour-music synchrony. She brought back these progressive theories upon her return to Australia with fiancé, William Preston, in 1919, extolling them in her numerous published essays about the need for a new modern national art form.

1913

Guillaume Apollinaire publishes *Les Peintres Cubistes*, in Paris.

Marcel Duchamp exhibits his first 'ready-made' *Roue de bicyclette (Bicycle wheel)*, now lost.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=49305&PICTAUS=TRUE>

Norah Simpson returns to Sydney after studying in Europe, bringing with her a collection of art books and reproductions of modernist works. This material is highly influential on several of her students, including Grace Cossington Smith, Roy de Maistre and Roland Wakelin.

Chicago architect Walter Burley Griffin wins the competition to design the city of Canberra with his wife Marion Mahony Griffin, also an architect. She collaborated with him on the design competition entry, and is known to have prepared the design drawings.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=243689>

1914

Wyndham Lewis founds British avant-garde group, Vorticists, who are interested in expressing the dynamism and velocity of the modern world. Launches the magazine *Blast* in which he wrote, 'The New Vortex plunges to the heart of the Present – we produce a New Living Abstraction!'

The Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria is assassinated. Austria declares war on Serbia. Due to treaty obligations, Britain, France, Russia and other countries are suddenly brought into war with Germany, Austria and their allies. Britain declares war on Germany. First World War begins. Australia is again at war for the British Empire.

1915

Kazimir Malevich publishes *From Cubism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism*. He then exhibits the revolutionary *Black square* in the *The Last Exhibition of Futurist Painting 0.10* in Petrograd in December. The show also contained *Stroyuschyysya dom [House under construction]* of 1915–16, now in the collection of the NGA. Many of the abstract artists in Russia regarded themselves as Constructivists.

<http://nga.gov.au/International/Catalogue/Detail.cfm?IRN=36797>

1917

The Dutch collective De Stijl (The Style), otherwise known as neo-plasticism, is founded in Amsterdam. Key members of the group are Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian. In both architecture and painting, they advocated a simple linear abstraction of primary colours. Mondrian publishes '*De Nieuwe Beelding in de schilderkunst*' ('The New Plastic in Painting') in twelve instalments during 1917 and 1918.

February, Bourgeois Democratic Revolution occurs in Petrograd, Russia forcing the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II, marking the end of the Romanov dynasty. This is followed by the far more radical Bolshevik Revolution (Red October), which saw the overthrow of the Provisional Government, all of which paved the way for the political and social arrival of Marxist/Leninist Communism and the establishment of the Soviet Union.

1918

Roy de Maistre begins experimenting with colour-music theory based on the relationship between colours of the spectrum and notes of the musical scale. He later produced a Colour

Harmonising Disc, which he patented in 1924 and sold through Grace Brothers, Sydney.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=102178>

The First World War ends with over nine million combatants and seven million civilians dying as a direct result of the war. A total of 61,720 Australians died and 153,509 were wounded. In 1914 the Australian population was 4,940,952, with 161,910 more men than women.

Influenza epidemic kills approximately 12,000 Australians and continues into the following year.

1919

Walter Gropius founds the Bauhaus school of art and design in Weimar.

Piet Mondrian moves to Paris in 1918 and begins to paint his first grid-based paintings at the end of 1919. He then turns the canvas 90 degrees and produces his first lozenge works, such as *Composition in Black and Gray* and *Composition with Grid 4 (Lozenge)* 1919 (Philadelphia Museum of Art).

Roy de Maistre and Roland Wakelin exhibit a group of works in their *Colour in Art* exhibition. De Maistre paints *Rhythmic composition in yellow green minor* (AGNSW) and *Arrested phrase from Hayden Trio in orange-red minor* and *Arrested phrase from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in red major* (NGA), perfectly illustrating his colour harmonisation theory.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=102178>

1920

'Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services', now known as Qantas, is founded.

1921

5 x 5 = 25 exhibition opens in Moscow including Alexander Rodchenko's deconstructed triptych, *Red, Yellow and Blue* before he abandons painting to focus on graphic production for the Revolution. His pioneering experimental inquiry into the elements of pictorial and sculptural art produced purely abstract artworks that separate out the components of each image — line, form, space, color, surface, texture and the work's physical support.

1921

Anthony Hordern's Fine Art Gallery shows *Exhibition of Paintings in Oil and Water Colours and Drawings in Black and White by Eleven Australian Women* in which Dorrit Black exhibits 10 paintings alongside her friends Grace Crowley and Ann Dangar. The three friends later travel to Europe where they become immersed in modernist practices, which they transfer to Australia upon their return.

1923

Construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge begins. This new structure introduces a strikingly modern statement to the skyline of Sydney.

1924

André Breton publishes *Manifeste du surréalisme*.

1925

Iain Macnab founds the Grosvenor School of Modern Art, Pimlico, London, which he runs with Claude Flight. It was the most progressive school of modern art in London at the time and pioneered linocut printmaking techniques. Sybil Andrews, Ethel Spowers and Dorrit Black all study there and revolutionise printmaking in Australia as a consequence.

1926

Grace Crowley and Anne Dangar leave Australia for France on board the *Ville de Strasbourg* and in March they visit Cézanne's studio in Aix-en-Provence.

Dorrit Black's friend, Nancy Hall, publishes her first edition of the progressive magazine *Undergrowth* (1926–29). The magazine published news from abroad including Grace Crowley's 'Letters from France' and Anne Dangar's visit to Cézanne's studio in Aix-en-Provence.

The owners of Café de l' Aubette, Strasbourg commission Sophie Taeuber-Arp to design the interior decoration.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=116207>

1927

Dorrit Black sets sail for Europe aboard the SS *Comorin* arriving in London on 27 September 1927. She immediately joins the Grosvenor School of Modern Art in Pimlico, studying with Claude Flight and Iain Macnab.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=264252>

1928

Crowley, Dangar and Black all attend André Lhote's summer school in Mirmande.

The Great Depression hits Australia.

<http://nga.gov.au/crowley/details/133752.cfm>

1929

Michel Seuphor and Joaquin Torres Garcia founded Cercle et Carré (Circle and Square) in Paris dedicated entirely to abstraction and concerned with its capacity to tap the mystical realms. The group was absorbed into Abstraction-Création in 1933.

Crowley and Black continue their studies with André Lhote in Paris. Crowley has two paintings accepted by the Salon des Artistes Français Indépendants, Paris. Both Crowley and Black take lessons from Albert Gleizes in his Paris studio and then join his artist colony at Moly-Sabata, Sablons, France in October.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=72419&PICTAUS=TRUE>

Grace Cossington Smith creates *The bridge in building* painted from her favourite viewing position at Milson's Point, Sydney.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=131114>

1930

Dorrit Black and Grace Crowley return to Sydney. Anne Dangar departs Sydney in February for Albert Gleizes' artist colony Moly-Sabata in central France in the Rhône valley, where she remains until her death in 1951.

Dorrit Black has a large exhibition of French and Australian works at Macquarie Galleries on 10 September 1930 with *Provençale Farmhouse* included in this exhibition. A modernist group of artists loosely forms called the 'Group of Seven' including Grace Crowley, Dorrit Black, Grace Cossington Smith, Enid Cambridge, Roy de Maistre, Roland Wakelin and Frank Weitzel. They hold their first exhibition at Macquarie Galleries on 6 March 1930.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=116207>

Theo van Doesburg publishes *Manifesto of Concrete Art* in the first and only issue of his magazine, *Art Concret*. In the concise document, he states, 'the painting must be entirely built up with purely plastic elements, namely surfaces and colours. A pictorial

element does not have any meaning beyond "itself"; as a consequence, a painting does not have any meaning other than "itself". Concrete art may be thought of as an extreme form of abstract art that is entirely free of any basis in observed reality and that has no symbolic meaning.

1931

Australian expatriate artist John Wardell Power is a founding member of the Abstraction-Création group in Paris, bringing together both geometric abstract artists alongside those practising a more organic or biomorphic form of abstraction. The group establish a gallery space and a publication (1932–36), which artists such as Albert Gleizes, the Delaunays, Piet Mondrian, Barbara Hepworth and Brancusi contributed to, among many others.

In March Dorrit Black unofficially opens her Modern Art Centre at 56 Margaret Street, Sydney, which runs for three years hosting a sketch club and exhibitions. It was probably the first Australian arts organisation to use the word 'modern' in its title and Dorrit Black was the first woman to run an art gallery in Australia.

1932

Sydney-born doctor John Wardell Power, who adopted painting after the First World War with studios in Brussels, Bournemouth and Paris, publishes *Éléments de la construction picturale*, in Paris.

16 March – Dorrit Black's Modern Art Centre in Margaret Street Sydney is officially opened.
19 March – Sydney Harbour Bridge is officially opened.

Grace Crowley and Rah Fizelle establish the Crowley-Fizelle school, which becomes the principal centre for modernist painting and art theory in Sydney until its closure in 1937.

1935

British art critic and librettist Myfanwy Evans founds *Axis*, a periodical devoted to abstract art.

1936

Alfred H Barr Jr, founding director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, publishes *Cubism and Abstract Art*. The catalogue accompanied the exhibition of the same name, held from 2 March to 9 April. The book's

famous cover presents a diagram explaining the evolution of Cubism and abstraction.

American Abstract Artists (AAA) group is established in New York to encourage interest in abstraction and opportunities for artists to exhibit non-representational work to an otherwise hostile public.

1937

Fabric designer Frances Burke founds Australia's first textile screen-printing business, Burway Prints, in Melbourne.

1939

The Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art is held at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Melbourne Town Hall and David Jones Gallery, Sydney. The highly influential show included works by Cézanne, Bonnard, Braque, de Chirico, Dali, Gauguin and van Gogh, among many others. Of the 215 works, only five women artists were included. The catalogue announced that, 'This exhibition is designed to give Australian people an opportunity – their first opportunity – of direct contact with the work of those great masters whose discoveries are so profoundly influencing the artistic expression of our time'.

At the instigation of German émigré artist Eleonore Lange, *Exhibition 1* is held at the David Jones Gallery, Sydney in August 1939 and includes the work of Ralph Balson, Grace Crowley, Rah Fizelle, Frank Hinder and Margel Hinder. The exhibition is organised around Lange's theory of abstract art, which is also explained in the exhibition's catalogue essay.
<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=36454>
<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=41703>

1 September – German Invasion of Poland and the commencement of the Second World War. Australia goes to war again as a part of Great Britain's forces.

1940

May – June, Fall of Paris to Nazi occupation. Many European artists leave Paris and make their way to New York. American art collector and gallerist Peggy Guggenheim assists a number of European modern artists to escape to New York as well as rescuing many modern masterpieces from the Nazis.

1941

Ralph Balson holds a solo exhibition at Anthony Hordern Gallery in Sydney, which is credited as being the first entirely abstract painting exhibition in Australia, comprising work that is non-figurative and non-representational.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=200120>

1942

Jean Arp writes his manifesto *Art Concret*, published in the catalogue to Peggy Guggenheim's exhibition *Art of This Century: Objects – Drawings – Photographs – Paintings – Sculpture – Collage 1910 to 1942*, at her gallery 'The Art of This Century'. It is later reproduced in the catalogue for the first international exhibition of concrete art in Basle in 1944. He argues that concrete art 'doesn't have the slightest trace of abstraction' and that it is an art constructed of lines, surfaces, forms and colours and not abstractions of a concept.

1943

Jackson Pollock is signed to Peggy Guggenheim's The Art of This Century Gallery (1942–47), New York. She commissions him to paint *Mural*, which her adviser Marcel Duchamp recommends to be painted on canvas. Clement Greenberg views the work and declares Pollock the greatest living American-born painter.

Mary Alice Evatt is appointed to the board of the Art Gallery of New South Wales in March 1943, becoming the first woman trustee of an Australian state gallery. Evatt learned painting from her friend, Grace Crowley, and in the early 1930s was affiliated with the Sydney modernist circle. Evatt served as a gallery trustee until 1970 and is viewed as a champion of modern Australian painting.

Darwin is bombed with 243 people killed. Australian soldiers and conflict between with the Japanese Imperial Forces on the Kokoda Track begins. At this time there are 3000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men enlisted for service.

The 'Directorate of Manpower' in Australia declares women can now be employed in factories, commerce, transport and the public service.

Dorothy Tangney from Western Australia becomes the first woman elected to the Australian Parliament.

1944

Constructive Paintings is held at Macquarie Galleries, Sydney in May. The exhibitors, Grace Crowley, Frank Hinder, Gerald Ryan and Ralph Balson, all show non-objective paintings. A similar exhibition is shown at David Jones Gallery, Sydney in 1948.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=41705>

1945

Pollock moves to the Springs, East Hampton with his new wife, painter Lee Krasner, by whom the NGA has nine works. He begins to paint on canvas laid on the floor, creating what became regarded as 'drip paintings', or 'action paintings'. These works contained no negative or positive space and line was totally freed from its traditional task of representing objects or movement.

14 August – Armistice and VE Day.

2 September – formal surrender of Japan.

Both dates accepted as the close of the Second World War.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=29510>

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=45694>

1947

American painter Clyfford Still begins to paint large-scale works of few colours applied with the palette knife, forming the basis of Colour Field painting, which emerged out of Abstract Expressionism.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=101773>

1948

Barnett Newman begins his *Onement* series and the *Zip* paintings, which were composed of a simple colour plane organised by the inclusion of a zip line.

An exhibition of Australian designers is curated by Marion Hall Best in her new position as director of the David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney.

Frances Burke co-founds Australia's first professional design organisation, the Society of Designers for Industry in Melbourne (Industrial Design Council of Australia from 1956).

Burke becomes a founding member of the Museum of Modern Art's governing council (later the Museum of Modern Art at Heide).

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=85454>

1949

The Snowy Mountain Hydro-Electric Scheme commences.

1950

The Commonwealth Basic Wage inquiry concludes that women should receive only 75% of the male minimum wage.

1951

The New York School, an informal group of painters, poets, dancers and musicians emerged, holding their first exhibition *The 9th Street Art Exhibition* in a building slated for demolition at 60 East 9th Street. Curated by Leo Castelli, it includes works by Franz Kline (who also designed the flyer), Jackson Pollock, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, Helen Frankenthaler, Philip Guston, Hans Hofmann, Robert Motherwell, Joan Mitchell, Robert Rauschenberg, among many others. The group was largely held together by Frank O'Hara, a poet and influential curator at the Museum of Modern Art, but dispersed in the early 1960s.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=43903>

1952

Pollock paints *Blue poles (Number 11)*, now in the National Gallery of Australia.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=36334>

New York artist Helen Frankenthaler paints *Mountains and Sea*, a seminal example of the 'stain' painting technique, later referred to as Colour Field. As such she was a pioneering influence upon the artists who formed the Colour Field school of painting, Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis. Her technique involved pouring thinned paint directly onto raw canvas laid on the floor, creating the effect of floating fields of translucent colour.

Yvonne Audette departs Australia for America and in October enrolls in the Arts Students' League of New York.

1954

Audette is awarded the Fogg Scholarship to study at the New York National Academy of Design, School of Fine Arts. During this time, she is influenced by Willem de Kooning and visits Franz Kline's studio, which has a significant effect upon her work, especially *The Flat Landscape*.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=105828>

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=269797>

1955

Audette moves to Florence, Italy, where she becomes increasingly interested in Concrete Art (Arte Concreta).

1956

The one millionth 'New Australian', Barbara Porritt, is welcomed to Australia.

The Olympics are held in Melbourne.

Melbourne's Cultural Olympiad includes five significant exhibitions: architecture and sculpture at the University of Melbourne; painting and drawing at the National Gallery of Victoria; Aboriginal art at the National Museum (of Victoria); displays of literature at the Melbourne Public Library; and graphic arts, industrial design and ceramics at the Royal Melbourne Technical College (now RMIT University).

Black and white television begins in Australia.

1957

Canadian-born Minimalist painter Agnes Martin settles in New York, where she begins to paint 'empty' works of few and gentle colours structured by lightly stencilled grids. Although restrained and deeply ordered, her work is about the expression of humanity's essential emotions, but in a fashion that is not cluttered or clouded by individual gesture.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=116209>

1958

Influential Belgian painter and writer, Michel Seuphor, publishes *A Dictionary of Abstract Painting*, London 1958. The later edition, in 1974, includes Australian abstract artists Mary Webb, Margel and Frank Hinder, Clement Meadmore and Janet Dawson. Seuphor previously co-founded the abstract artists' group Cercle et Carré in Paris in 1929.

1959

Furniture and interior designer Max Hutchinson opens Gallery A in Melbourne, featuring the work of emerging abstract artists. In 1963 he opens Gallery A in Sydney. It was the leading gallery of abstract art in Australia and many of the treasured works in the NGA's substantial collection of abstract art were acquired through Max Hutchinson.

1960

First Adelaide Festival held.

1962

Bridget Riley's first solo show is held at Gallery One, Soho. The exhibition features a series of monochrome works constructed from only simple geometric shapes that explore the potential of optical illusion. This style would later be coined 'Op-art' and become one of the most influential subsets of abstract art.

Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War begins.

Legislation gives Indigenous Australians the right to vote in federal elections in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

1963

American President John F Kennedy assassinated.

1964

The Beatles tour Australia.

1965

Bridget Riley, along with Victor Vasarely, is included in *The Responsive Eye* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, establishing Op Art as an important international style. One of Riley's paintings is featured on the cover of the exhibition catalogue. The exhibition is hugely popular with tickets selling out on the same day they were released.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=82544>

1966

American hard-edge abstract painter of urban landscapes James Doolin takes a position as painting teacher at the Prahran Technical College, Melbourne at a time when a highly influential coterie of young painters were studying and teaching there, including Lesley Dumbrell, who adopted his preferred medium Liquitex.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=41620>

First banknotes of Australia's new decimal currency are issued.

Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt promotes Annabel Rankin to Minister for Housing. She is the first woman to hold a portfolio.

1967

Two Decades of American Painting curated by the Museum of Modern Art, New York tours Melbourne, Sydney, Tokyo and New Delhi. The exhibition includes postwar masterpieces of the New York School. While knowledge of these artists had already circulated through the Australian art world, it had a profound influence on a new generation of abstract Australian artists.

Australian Federal Referendum for Indigenous rights. Indigenous Australians finally gain full constitutional rights as citizens.

The federal government announces two major arts projects: the formation of the Australia Council and the decision to accept the Lindsay Report to establish a new national gallery for Australia.

1968

The Field exhibition of Australian hard-edge, geometric and Colour Field abstraction opens at the newly built National Gallery of Victoria and then travels to the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The exhibition represented the works of a new generation of young artists and includes three female artists, Wendy Paramor, Normana Wight and Janet Dawson. The latter two are represented in *Abstraction: Celebrating Australian Abstract Women Artists*.

Max Hutchinson relocates his Gallery A to New York where he is instrumental in building the career of Australian Sculptor Clement Meadmore. He is also influential in negotiating the sale of Jackson Pollock's *Blue poles* to the National Gallery of Australia in 1973.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=48491>

Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy assassinated.

1969

Apollo 11 lands on the moon.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=49519>

Brisbane born artists Virginia Cuppage and Denise Green relocate to New York City.

1970

More than 150,000 people march in protest against Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=155233>

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=90701>

1971

Linda Nochlin publishes her ground-breaking essay, 'Why have there been no great women artists?', which becomes a seminal text within feminist art history and art theory.

The Aboriginal flag is designed by Harold Thomas.

1972

Queensland senator Neville Bonner becomes the first Indigenous Australian to be elected as a Member of Parliament.

1973

A major retrospective of Grace Cossington Smith's work is held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, after which she retires from painting. This is viewed as the first institutional recognition of Cossington Smith's contribution to Australian art history.

First Biennale of Sydney.

Queen Elizabeth II opens the Sydney Opera House

1974

The Women's Art Movement is established with groups formed in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide. The aim of the organisation is to promote women artists and to expose the gender inequalities within the arts industry.

A Room of One's Own: Three Women Artists is held at Ewing Gallery, University of Melbourne and showcases the work of three contemporary female artists: Lesley Dumbrell, Julie Irving and Ann Newmarch. It is viewed as one of the first feminist art exhibitions in Australia.

'Advance Australia Fair' becomes the new national anthem of Australia.

Cyclone Tracy occurs on Christmas Eve in Darwin.
<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=41620>

Australian Commonwealth Parliament passes the *Racial Discrimination Act*.

1975

Influential American art critic and curator Lucy Lippard travels to Australia to deliver the Power Lecture at Sydney University on women's art. During her trip, Lippard also conducted numerous informal lectures about gender inequality in the arts, and conducted studio

visits with women artists. Her visit is regarded as coalescing several feminist art initiatives.

The Women's Art Register (WAR) is established by a group of women artists including Lesley Dumbrell and Erica McGilchrist, and the-then directors of the Ewing and George Paton Galleries, Melbourne, Kiffy Carter and Meredith Rogers. Conceived as a 'Museum without walls', it began with 100 women artists contributing slides of their work, along with paper documentation, articles and ephemera which were stored and administered at the Ewing Gallery. WAR has continually archived material relating to Australian women artists for use as a public resource.

Australian feminist academic journal *Hecate: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Women's Liberation* is founded. In addition to literary criticism, the journal also discusses contemporary arts more broadly from alternative perspectives.

Janine Burke curates *Australian Women Artists: One Hundred Years 1840–1940*, shown at the Ewing Gallery and George Paton Galleries in Melbourne. The exhibition was produced as an Australian response to Linda Nochlin's 1971 essay 'Why have there been no great women artists?'. The show toured extensively, receiving critical acclaim and also acted as a contrast to Bernard Smith's popular text *Australian Painting* (1962), which focused on the achievements of male artists.

1976

The first issue of *LIP, A Feminist Arts Journal* is self-published by a feminist collective based in Melbourne. The interdisciplinary publication presents a variety of critical feminist positions and art forms, with the aim of situating Australian art practice within an international context. *LIP* ceases in 1984.

Art critic and curator Lucy Lippard publishes *From the Centre: Feminist Essays on Women's Art*, which investigates the state of contemporary art criticism and critically considers the idea of 'feminist art'. Despite its American focus the book resonates within the Australian sphere.

Commonwealth Parliament passes the *Aboriginal Land Act*.
<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=2554>

1977

The commercial gallery Important Women Artists opens on 2 April 1977 at 13 Emo Road, East Malvern, Melbourne. Directors Helen and Jim Alexander focus on the works of early to mid-twentieth century female artists.

1978

The WAR publishes the first catalogue of its comprehensive holdings. An updated version was printed in 1999.

1978

Denise Green, who had relocated to New York in 1969, is included in two major American institutional exhibitions: *Young American Artists: 1978 Exxon National Exhibition* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York and *New Image Painting* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Green's involvement in these shows launches her career in the US.

1979

Margaret Thatcher becomes the first female British Prime Minister.

1982

Rosalie Gascoigne is selected as the first female artist to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale in 1982, alongside Peter Booth. Her work *Harvest 1982* comprised 256 piles of cut newsprint nailed to a plywood board.

1982

Lesley Dumbrell's monumental painting *February 1976* is displayed prominently in the National Gallery of Australia during its opening and for several years to follow. The work was acquired for the NGA by James Mollison, the inaugural Director, in 1977 after he viewed the work in Dumbrell's solo show at Powell Street Gallery, South Yarra.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=103842>

Queen Elizabeth II opens National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

1988

WAR publishes its first *Bulletin* in 1988. The objective of the periodical is to keep members informed about art events, news and provide analysis by peers.

1989

Internet first available in Australian Universities.

1990

Betty Churcher is appointed as the Director of the National Gallery of Australia, becoming the first woman to hold the position. Previously, Churcher had been the first female director of a state art gallery at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Aboriginal artist Rover Thomas, from the Kimberley in Western Australia, represents Australia at the Venice Biennale.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=77119>

1992

A Room for Abstraction opens at Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne and includes the work of Brent Harris, Charles Anderson, Kim Donaldson, Diane Kilderry, Angela Brennan and James Clayden. The exhibition is seen as showcasing the next generation of artists working with geometric abstraction and reinterpreting it from a postmodern position. The exhibition *Abstract Art*, curated the following year by John Nixon for Roslyn Oxley 9, Sydney, includes Melinda Harper and similarly showed how younger artists were working with examples of abstractions.

1993

The National Gallery of Australia acquires Emily Kam Kngwarray's *Alhalkere Suite 1993*, a monumental installation of 22 canvases.

<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=17872>

1995

Heritage: The national women's art book edited by academic Joan Kerr is published by Craftsman House.

Opened by the Hon Dr Carmen Lawrence, the *Women hold up half the sky* exhibition shows at the National Gallery of Australia.

Sydney by design: wood and linoblock prints by Sydney Women artists between the wars tours regional Australia.

1997

Emily Kam Kngwarray, Yvonne Koolmatrie and Judy Watson, from Central Desert, South Australia and Queensland respectively, become the first female indigenous artists to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale. The three artists presented diverse works which focused on the fluidity of visual expression.

1997

A major, posthumous retrospective of Emily Kam Kngwarrray's work is staged by the Queensland Art Gallery, which travels throughout Australia. In the previous year Kngwarrray makes a tribute to the NGA producing for them her final major installation the eighteen-part *Utopia Panels*.

Jenny Shipley appointed first female Prime Minister of New Zealand (1997–99).

1999

Past Present: The National Women's Art Anthology, edited by Jo Holder and Joan Kerr, is published and comprises a collection of essays on feminist art, art history, criticism and museum practices in Australia.

2001

Jane Hylton curates the major exhibition *Modern Australian Women: Paintings & Prints 1925–1945* at the Art Gallery of South Australia, which highlights the work of Dorrit Black, Grace Crowley, Margaret Preston, and Grace Cossington Smith, among many others.

2007

The Cruthers Collection of Women's Art is donated to the University of Western Australia, Perth by Sir James and Lady Sheila Cruthers. The collection includes works by Australian women artists from the 1890s until the present across a variety of mediums. A substantial survey exhibition of the collection *LOOK LOOK AGAIN* was presented at Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Perth in 2012.

Sydney Opera House is declared a World Heritage Site. This is the youngest cultural site to be included on the list.

Julia Gillard is appointed the first female Australian Deputy Prime Minister on 3 December.

2008

Quentin Bryce becomes first female Governor-General of Australia (2008–14).

2009

Personal Journeys: 40 years of Australian Women's Abstract Art is held at the Shoalhaven City Arts Centre, Nowra and explores the work of female abstractionists working between 1960 and 2000.

2010

Julia Gillard challenges and deposes Kevin Rudd and becomes the first female Australian Prime Minister (2010–13).

2011

Utopia: The Genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye, the second major survey of Kngwarreye's work, is organised by the National Museum, Canberra, and travelled to the National Museum of Art, Osaka and the National Art Centre, Tokyo.

2012

The *Contemporary Australia: Women* exhibition at Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art celebrates the diversity, energy and innovation of contemporary women artists working in Australia.

2015

The new Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale showcases contemporary artist Fiona Hall's exhibition *Wrong Way Time*.
<http://nga.gov.au/WrongWayTime/Default.cfm>

Other Australian artists represented at the Biennale include the late Emily Kam Kngwarreye, Daniel Boyd, Emily Floyd, Marco Fusinato, Newell Harry, Sonia Leber and David Chesworth.

2016

For the first time, women have won three of Australia's best-known art awards on the same day. Melbourne artist Louise Hearman wins the Archibald prize; The Sulman Prize was awarded to Melbourne artist Esther Stewart; and five sisters from the Ken family – Tjungkara Ken, Yaritji Young, Freda Brady, Maringka Tunkin and Sandra Ken – who live in the remote Aboriginal community of Amata in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, win the 2016 Wynne Prize.

Compiled by Lara Nicholls, Sheona Whyte and Bianca Hill