

Against The Odds

Mid-Century Australian Women Artists from the Collection

Artwork Labels

Prompted by the recent purchase of a significant early painting by the Melbourne-based artist Helen Maudsley, *Against The Odds* celebrates the work of women artists held in the State Art Collection. The exhibition focuses on art made in the 1950s in Australia by Maudsley's contemporaries, and features the work of thirty-two artists, working across all media. These women identified as professional artists at the time, but the details of the careers of many have since faded from view.

It was largely women artists who championed modernism in Australia in the early twentieth century, and the works on display here illustrate how a modernist sensibility, and a drive to abstraction, remained key to the practice of many into the 1950s. During their working lives many of these women had to balance the demands of the private and professional in ways that their male counterparts did not, including the fact that the identity 'artist' was aligned almost exclusively with the masculine, while women were expected to be either muses or helpmates to a creative male.

Invention and adaptability were also important aspects of these women's lives and ranged from the need to work at a smaller scale due to lack of dedicated studio space, choice of domestic subject matter that was readily to hand, to modifying a washing machine mangle into a printing press. Despite constraints, these artists also include amongst their number winners of major art prizes, the director of a commercial gallery, a member of an international cultural delegation, and the maker of major public sculptural commissions.

Helen Grey-Smith

born 1916 Coonor, India

died 2009 Pemberton, Western Australia

Colombo Temple Heads **furnishing fabric**

(also known as *Kings and Queens*)

1955–1965

silkscreen print on cotton, mounted on board

Purchased 1997

1997/0094

Helen Grey-Smith

born 1916 Coonor, India

died 2009 Pemberton, Western Australia

Furnishing fabric with segments motif

1955–1965

silkscreen print on cotton and linen, mounted on board

Purchased 1997

1997/0089

Heather McSwain

born 1921 Mildura, Victoria

died 1996 Perth, Western Australia

Crusader pot

1959

glazed earthenware

Purchased 1996

1996/0365.a-b

Left to right

Jean Darbyshire

born 1910 Kalgoorlie, Western Australia

died 1996 Angaston, South Australia

Darbyshire Pottery manufacturer

est 1946 Perth, Western Australia

closed 1956 Perth, Western Australia

Cup and saucer

1950s

glazed porcelain

Gift of the descendents of Jean Darbyshire, 2004

2004/0027.a-b

Anita Aarons

born 1912 Sydney, New South Wales

died 2000 Brisbane, Queensland

***Hermosa* range cup and saucer**

1955

glazed earthenware

Purchased 1955

1955/00C8.A-B

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Heather McSwain

born 1921 Mildura, Victoria

died 1996 Perth, Western Australia

Covered pot

c1959

glazed earthenware

Purchased 1996

1996/0354.a-b

Eileen Keys

born 1903 Christchurch, Aotearoa / New Zealand

died 1992 Perth, Western Australia

Vase

1959

glazed stoneware

Purchased 1959

1959/00C2

Covered jar

1959

glazed stoneware

Purchased 1959

1959/00C3.a-b

Jean Appleton

born 1911 Sydney, New South Wales
died 2003 Bowral, New South Wales

Cafe interior

1958

oil on hardboard

Purchased 1958

1958/OP12

Jean Bellette

born 1908 Hobart, Tasmania
died 1991 Majorca, Spain

Bottles

1953

oil on hardboard

Purchased 1954

1954/00P8

Judy Cassab

born 1920 Vienna, Austria

died 2015 Sydney, New South Wales

Still life

1954

oil on canvas

Purchased 1954

1954/OP20

Kathleen O'Connor

born 1876 Hokitika, Aotearoa / New Zealand
died 1968 Perth, Western Australia

Still life with apples

c1955

oil on linen on card

Donated by Dr Harold Schenberg, 1990

1990/0044

Margaret Preston

born 1875 Port Adelaide, South Australia

died 1963 Sydney, New South Wales

Native flowers of Western Australia

c1955

oil on canvas

Presented in memory of Mrs E Brackenreg, 1955

1955/OP33

Grace Crowley

born 1890 Cobbadah, New South Wales

died 1979 Sydney, New South Wales

Abstract Painting

1953

oil on hardboard

Bequest of the artist, 1981

1981/OP17

Margo Lewers

born 1908 Sydney, New South Wales

died 1978 Emu Plains, New South Wales

Composition in red

oil on hardboard

Purchased 1959

1959/00P7

Audrey Greenhalgh

born 1903 Ravensthorpe, Western Australia
died 1991 Perth, Western Australia

Doth suffer a sea change

1950

oil on canvas on board

Gift of the WA Jubilee Art Committee, 1951

1951/00P3

Tina Wentcher

born 1887 Constantinople (Istanbul), Türkiye
died 1974 Melbourne, Victoria

Legong Dancer, Bali

c1953

lead

Purchased 1954

1954/00S1

Margaret Priest

born 1922 Barrhead, Scotland

died 2017 Margaret River, Western Australia

Flame

1959

rosewood

Purchased 1965

1965/00S2

Kathleen Shillam

born 1916 Devonshire, England
died 2002 Brisbane, Queensland

Horse and rider

1950
sandstone

Purchased 1956

1956/00S1

Lidija Dombrovska-Larsen

born 1925 Riga, Latvia

Sculpture

c1952

stoneware with overglaze cobalt decoration

Purchased 1987

1987/0132

Lorna Prendiville

1950s active Perth, Western Australia

Manifesto

1958

oil on canvas

Purchased 1958

1958/OP13

Left to right, top to bottom

Mary Macqueen

born 1912 Melbourne, Victoria

died 1994 Melbourne, Victoria

Still life

1956

colour lithograph on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/0Q44

Studio interior

1956

colour lithograph on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/0Q45

Still life

1956

colour lithograph on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/0Q43

Helen Maudsley

born 1927 Melbourne, Victoria

The charming ladies

c1956

watercolour and gouache on paper

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2022

2022/0027

Joy Hester

born 1920 Melbourne, Victoria

died 1960 Melbourne, Victoria

Lovers VI

from the *Lovers* series

1956

ink on paper

Purchased through the Sir Claude Hotchin Art Foundation,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2011

2011/0078

Margo Lewers

born 1908 Sydney, New South Wales

died 1978 Emu Plains, New South Wales

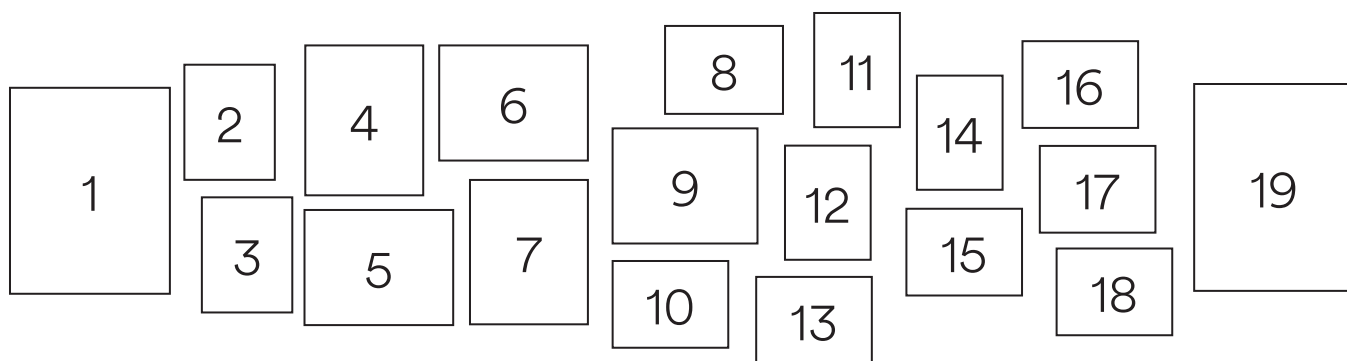
Burnt Out

1954

gouache on paper

Gift of the Apex Club, 1954

1954/OW10



1

Norma Redpath

born 1928 Melbourne, Victoria

died 2013 Melbourne, Victoria

Drawing for a sculpture 'Fountain'

1957

pen and coloured ink on paper

Purchased 1960

1960/00D2

2

Barbara Brash

born 1925 Melbourne, Victoria

died 1998 Melbourne, Victoria

Native dancer

1953

colour linocut on paper

Purchased 1955

1955/0Q78

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3

Florence Higgs

born 1918 Victoria

died 2006

Petrouchka

1955

colour linocut on paper

Purchased 1955

1955/0Q80

4

Barbara Brash

born 1925 Melbourne, Victoria

died 1998 Melbourne, Victoria

Head

1956

colour linocut on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/0Q31

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5

Eileen Mayo

born 1906 Norwich, England

died 1994 Christchurch, Aotearoa / New Zealand

Woman and Siamese cat

1952

colour lithograph on paper

Purchased 1955

1955/0Q71

6

Elaine Haxton

born 1909 Melbourne, Victoria

died 1999 Adelaide, South Australia

Rooster

1955

gouache and ink on paper

Purchased 1955

1955/00D9

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7

Eileen Mayo

born 1906 Norwich, England

died 1994 Christchurch, Aotearoa / New Zealand

Spring Morning

1952

colour lithograph on paper

Purchased 1955

1955/0Q69

8

Barbara Brash

born 1925 Melbourne, Victoria

died 1998 Melbourne, Victoria

Bird

1953

colour linocut on paper

Gift of the Friends of the Art Gallery, 1955

1955/0Q65

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9

Lesbia Thorpe

born 1919 Melbourne, Victoria

died 2009 Ninderry, Queensland

Emu Chicks

1955

colour linocut on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/0Q26

10

Florence Higgs

born 1918 Victoria

died 2006

Two horses

1955

colour linocut on paper

Purchased 1955

1955/0Q79

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11

Helen Ogilvie

born 1902 Corowa, New South Wales
died 1993 Melbourne, Victoria

Eucalyptus Seed Pods

1953

colour linocut on paper

Purchased 1955

1955/0Q74

12

Helen Ogilvie

born 1902 Corowa, New South Wales
died 1993 Melbourne, Victoria

Banksia

1952

wood engraving on paper

Purchased 1955

1955/0Q72

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13

Florence Higgs

born 1918 Victoria

died 2006

Rock pool

1956

colour linocut on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/0Q33

14

Edith Wall

born 1904 Christchurch, Aotearoa / New Zealand

died 2012 Camberwell, Victoria

Botanic Gardens

(also known as *Treasury Gardens*)

1956

lithograph on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/0Q28

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15

Anne Scott

1950s active Melbourne, Victoria

Three white leopards

1950

etching and aquatint on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/0Q39

16

Barbara Brash

born 1925 Melbourne, Victoria

died 1998 Melbourne, Victoria

Plant Pattern

1956

colour linocut on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/0Q30

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17

Christine Miller

born 1913 Blackwood, South Australia
died 1970 Melbourne, Victoria

The Top of the Hill

1956

etching and aquatint on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/OQ42

18

Jacqueline Hick

born 1919 Adelaide, South Australia
died 2004 Adelaide, South Australia

Dead gums

1942

aquatint on paper

Purchased 1960

1960/OQ16

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19

Eva Kubbos

born 1928 Didsilininkai, Lithuania

Sitting girl

1957

colour woodcut on paper

Purchased 1961

1961/0Q14