

NGV INTERNATIONAL 50TH ANNIVERSARY

ARTWORK LABELS

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NGV International 50th Anniversary

2018 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the National Gallery of Victoria's relocation from the site of the State Library in Swanston Street to 180 St Kilda Road. The new NGV building, designed by Sir Roy Grounds, opened in August 1968, providing a new permanent home for the renowned art collection and a location for temporary exhibitions.

The anniversary is being celebrated across level one of NGV International with a series of displays focused on the story of the building's commission, its architectural features and reproductions of fashion photography staged in the Great Hall.

Level 1 Mezzanine

In 1959 Melbourne architectural firm Grounds, Romberg and Boyd was awarded the contract to design the National Gallery of Victoria building and Victorian Arts Centre. On display are Sir Roy Grounds's architectural sketches and design submission to the NGV Building Committee, alongside interior furnishings and designs by Grant and Mary Featherston.

From Ground to Gallery: An Illustrated Timeline looks at the construction of the St Kilda Road premises.

Level 1 Balcony

Created by Leonard French between 1963 and 1967, the Great Hall ceiling remains the world's largest cutglass ceiling. This display includes footage of the artist at work and original glass samples.

In 1962 Melbourne artist Leonard French was invited by architect Roy Grounds to design a coloured cutglass ceiling for the NGV's Great Hall. Grounds had recently visited the gardens at Fontainebleau, France, and the effect of light filtering through the trees inspired Grounds to commission a ceiling that would capture something similar. In the words of Leonard French, it was also to be like a 'Persian carpet', and to be 'rich and heraldic'.

Beginning in 1963, French spent five years designing and making the ceiling – his first cutglass work. It was unveiled in 1968 as part of the first stage of the opening of the new building.

The ceiling comprises 224 triangular elements and incorporates imagery and symbols that also appear in French's paintings of this period. In the centre of the ceiling is an enormous sun flanked by two turtles. White doves appear in each of the ceiling's corners, and the entire work is set in a kaleidoscopic array of more than fifty different colours.

At 15 by 51.5 metres it is the largest cutglass ceiling in the world.

Verriere de Saint-Just manufacturer

Saint-Just Saint-Rambert

France 1826–

Glass slab samples

Dalle de verre

c. 1966
glass

Proposed gift from Bernd Sonntag

The Great Hall ceiling comprises approximately 10,000 pieces of hand-cut coloured glass pieced together in a style referred to as *dalle de verre*, meaning 'slab of glass'. The pieces in their uncut form weigh three kilograms each and are 25 millimetres thick.

To cut the glass to the specific shapes required, Leonard French used a method similar to that employed by stonemasons, where the glass slab was scored and broken, and the edges of the pieces trimmed using a hammer. This process enabled facets to form along the edges that cause light to refract, and give the ceiling its unique sparkling effect.

Leonard French working on the Great Hall ceiling

reproduced in *Life Australia*, vol. 45, no. 4

19 August 1968

Glass section being carried into place

reproduced in *Life Australia*, vol. 45, no. 4

19 August 1968

This Day Tonight: Leonard French

28 June 1967

black-and-white film transferred to media player, 5 min.
43 sec., sound (looped)

Produced by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Courtesy of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Bill Tindale

Australia c. 1929–2013

Cover

for *The Sun Arts Centre Supplement*, 20 August 1968
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Esteemed news photographer Bill Tindale captured the life and times of Melbourne in the 1960s and 1970s. Tindale's most widely known photographs are his stylised images of the new National Gallery of Victoria that appeared in *The Sun* newspaper's pictorial supplement on 20 August 1968. The supplement's front cover celebrates the cathedral-like proportions of the Great Hall and kaleidoscopic effect of Leonard French's ceiling. Celebrated on the covers of numerous magazines in 1968, French's Great Hall ceiling remains the world's largest cutglass ceiling.

Bruno Benini

Italy 1925– Australia 2001, arrives Australia 1935

Woman's Day

'First look at a new wonder', 29 August 1968
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Unknown

Australia

Cover

For *Life Australia*, vol. 45, no. 4, 19 August 1968
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Les Gorrie

Australia active 1950s–60s

Cover

for *The Australian Women's Weekly*, vol. 36, no. 14
4 September 1968
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Wolfgang Sievers

Germany 1913– Australia 2007, Australia from 1938

Cover

for *Architecture Today*, vol. 10, no. 11, September 1968
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Wolfgang Sievers

Germany 1913– Australia 2007, Australia from 1938

Cover

for *Aluminium in Use*, no. 33, August 1968

photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Unknown

Australia

Cover

for *Port of Melbourne Quarterly*, no. 33, August 1968
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Unknown

Australia

Cover

for *Qantas Airways Australia*, no. 33, August 1968
photo-offset lithograph

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

Roy Grounds

Australia 1905–81, England, Europe and the United States 1928–32, Asia and the Pacific 1942–45

The Lake and Forecourt

p. 19 in the *Design submission to the Chairman and Members of the NGV Building Committee*

1961

pencil

National Gallery of Victoria
Shaw Research Library

This large-format portfolio was submitted by architect-in-chief Roy Grounds to the Chairman and members of the National Gallery of Victoria's Building Committee on 1 December 1960. The portfolio includes design schematics for the new NGV building and adjacent Victorian Arts Centre. This is the first time the portfolio has been on display at the Gallery. It can also be viewed interactively, in digital format, on the screen in this display.

In 1959 Melbourne architectural firm Grounds, Romberg and Boyd was awarded the contract to design the new National Gallery of Victoria building and adjacent Victorian Arts Centre. Architect-in-chief Roy Grounds designed a building six times larger than the former Swanston Street site, delivering a new type of art gallery for the people of Victoria.

Prioritising visitor experience, Grounds's vision was to create a welcoming space in which the NGV's splendid collection could be viewed comfortably in a spacious, inspiring and modern environment. Grounds's innovative building required furnishings and fittings for exhibition display, workspaces and new gallery areas, including the library, restaurant and bookshop, and he commissioned Melbourne furniture and interior designers Grant and Mary Featherston to plan and design the fit-out. Working in close consultation with Gallery staff, the Featherstons designed cabinets, shelving, tables, chairs and storage for every space of the building, including galleries, offices, service areas and public amenities.

While there are few traces of the original interior today, the Featherstons' designs, along with Grounds's architectural vision, helped transform the NGV into a modern art gallery.

Showplace: The new National Gallery of Victoria

23 August 1968

black-and-white film transferred to media player, 38 min.

6 sec., sound (looped)

produced by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Courtesy of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

This Day Tonight: Victorian Arts Centre opening

20 August 1968

black-and-white film transferred to media player, 34 min.

45 sec., sound (looped)

produced by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Courtesy of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

The NGV's new premises were launched with a gala opening on 20 August 1968. It was a spectacular affair, with the ABC's This Day Tonight hosting a live cross to events, and the official party arriving to a fanfare of trumpets. Premier Sir Henry Bolte declared the building open and presented the NGV with a gift of three grand candelabras, produced between 1839 and 1840, that had been in the collection of Lord Melbourne. The following day, the NGV and its inaugural exhibition, The Field, opened to the public. Over the next month it was estimated that more than one million people came through the doors.

Right to left

**Architectural scale model of the
Gallery, spire and surrounding areas,
St Kilda Road, Melbourne, made in
December 1960 when master plans
were submitted to the Victorian
Government**

1962

photograph: Mark Strizic

**Exterior of the National Gallery
of Victoria**

1968

**Sculpture Courtyard, National Gallery
of Victoria**

1968

photograph: David Moore

**Foyer and Mezzanine, National Gallery
of Victoria**

1968

photograph: David Moore

...continued overleaf

Bamboo Garden, National Gallery of Victoria

1968

photograph: David Moore

Sculpture Courtyard, National Gallery of Victoria

1968

Circular lift, Ground Floor, National Gallery of Victoria

1968

photograph: David Moore

Circular staircase, National Gallery of Victoria

1968

photograph: David Moore

Waterwall, National Gallery of Victoria

1968

photograph: David Moore

**Official Gala Event, National Gallery
of Victoria, St Kilda Road**

20 August 1968

**Official Gala Event, National Gallery
of Victoria, St Kilda Road**

20 August 1968

**Visitors viewing European Gallery,
Second Floor, National Gallery of
Victoria, St Kilda Road**

1968

Installation shot of *The Field*

1968

photograph: George Mehes

Installation shot of *The Field*

1968

photograph: George Mehes

The collaborative partnership of Grant and Mary Featherston is recognised as one of Australia's greatest design stories. Grant Featherston founded Featherston Contract Furniture in Melbourne in 1956 and formed a design partnership with his wife, Mary, in 1965. Together, the Featherstons developed furniture and interiors for public and private clients, including leading Australian architects Robin Boyd and Sir Roy Grounds. They co-designed more than thirty projects, including the interior fit-out and design of the NGV for Grounds between 1966 and 1968.

The appointment of Grant and Mary Featherston reflected a growing awareness of the role of professional interior designers, and their ability to address the complex spatial and functional needs of large modern art galleries and museums. Hand-drawn by Grant Featherston between 1966 and 1968, the sketches in this display provide insight into the Featherstons' process for visualising furniture and fittings in the context of works of art and gallery spaces. *Chairs/desks and tables sheet 1 V2.51*, 1967, is one of many furniture schedules noting the location, type, application and number of chairs required for the project.

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Mary Featherston designer

England 1943, arrived Australia 1953

Wycombe Industries Pty Ltd

manufacturer

Geelong 1950–

Low table

1967–68 Geelong

Victorian mountain ash veneer, chromed steel

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Mary Featherston designer

England 1943, arrived Australia 1953

Aristoc Industries Pty Ltd manufacturer

Glen Waverley, Melbourne 1946–68

Curator's desk

1967–68 Melbourne

Victorian mountain ash veneer, steel

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Prior to designing furnishings for the offices of the NGV executives and curators, Grant and Mary Featherston conducted interviews with Gallery staff to better understand their work activities and patterns. This research helped the Featherstons to develop an integrated all-purpose system of furniture for an expanding organisational structure, featuring chairs, tables, desks and cabinetry. The curators' offices comprised a combination of two desk types, one table, swivel chair with arms, visitor's chair, footrest and desk accessories, including a document tray. The curator's desk featured in this display was in use by the NGV curatorial team for fifty years, and decommissioned in May 2018 for the NGV Collection.

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Aristoc Industries Pty Ltd manufacturer

Glen Waverley, Melbourne 1946–68

Major desk armchair

1964 designed, 1967–68 manufactured, Melbourne
satin chromed steel, vinyl

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Designed in 1964, one year after Grant Featherston's commercially successful *Delma chair*, the *Major desk armchair* is one of four durable business chairs in the *Major* collection granted a Good Design Award from the Industrial Design Council of Australia in the mid 1960s. Founded in 1958 by design and industry professionals, the Industrial Design Council of Australia was pivotal in raising awareness of locally designed goods, and established the first award program of its kind in Australia. Sixty years later, the Good Design Awards continue to recognise design's contribution to business, culture and society through Good Design Australia.

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Mary Featherston designer

England 1943, arrived Australia 1953

Aristoc Industries Pty Ltd manufacturer

Glen Waverley, Melbourne 1946–68

Shoe footstool

1967–68 Melbourne

Victorian mountain ash veneer, wool

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Aristoc Industries Pty Ltd manufacturer

Glen Waverley, Melbourne 1946–68

Delma: Mark 4 chair

1963 designed, 1968 manufactured, Melbourne
chromed steel, plywood, foam, vinyl

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Grant Featherston achieved his goal of mass production in the 1960s with the *Delma* chair – a sturdy, functional and stackable steel-framed chair that furnished classrooms and waiting rooms across Australia.

Originally designed for Monash University, Melbourne, the ubiquitous and familiar design was manufactured by Aristoc Industries in Melbourne. More than 250,000 *Delma* chairs were made, and numerous copies and variations were subsequently produced by other manufacturers.

Featherston specified the *Delma* chair for use across the NGV building in cream, black and brown vinyl.

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Aristoc Industries Pty Ltd manufacturer

Glen Waverley, Melbourne 1946–68

Delma: Mark 4 chair

1963 designed, 1968 manufactured, Melbourne
chromed steel, plywood, foam, vinyl

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Aristoc Industries Pty Ltd manufacturer

Glen Waverley, Melbourne 1946–68

Table

1968 manufactured Melbourne

Victorian mountain ash veneer, steel

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Mary Featherston designer

England 1943, arrived Australia 1953

Aristoc Industries Pty Ltd manufacturer

Glen Waverley, Melbourne 1946–68

21 Series chair

1967–68 Melbourne

aluminium, vinyl, foam

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Designed for the offices of the NGV Director, Deputy Director, Chief Administrator and boardroom, twenty-nine adjustable *21 Series* chairs by Grant and Mary Featherston were produced for the NGV fit-out. A colour-coded system of black, brown and ivory was applied to chairs across the Gallery, with those for executive and curatorial offices specified in black vinyl.

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Mary Featherston designer

England 1943, arrived Australia 1953

Tray

1967–68 Melbourne

Victorian mountain ash

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Mary Featherston designer

England 1943, arrived Australia 1953

Peter Danby cabinetmaker

Australia active 1960s

Solander stacks

1967–68 Melbourne

Victorian mountain ash

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Mary Featherston designer

England 1943, arrived Australia 1953

Module Company & Staff Pty Ltd

manufacturer

Melbourne 1965–92

Decorative arts study storage island case

1967–68 Melbourne

Victorian mountain ash veneer, chipboard, glass

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Works of art not on display in the gallery were made accessible for study, housed in state-of-the-art storage units comprising cases, cabinets, drawers, stands, screens and shelving, all designed by Grant and Mary Featherston. In 1968 the NGV Collection was divided into new categories – European and Australian Painting; Decorative Arts; Prints and Drawings; Oriental Art; and Antiquities – and the Featherstons and NGV staff took these categories into consideration when devising the new Gallery's display and storage needs. The *Decorative arts study storage island case* in this display stored works for fifty years before being decommissioned in June 2018 for accession into the NGV Collection.

Grant Featherston designer

Australia 1922–95

Mary Featherston designer

England 1943, arrived Australia 1953

Module Company & Staff Pty Ltd

manufacturer

Melbourne 1965–92

**Decorative arts study storage
island case**

1967–68 Melbourne

Victorian mountain ash veneer, chipboard, glass

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria

Top to bottom, left to right

Grant Featherston

Australia 1922–95

Victorian Arts Centre curators' offices V2.9

1966

pencil

Grant and Mary Featherston Archive
Collection of Mary Featherston

Grant Featherston

Australia 1922–95

Executive offices and general offices DRG No.V2.8

1966

pencil

Grant and Mary Featherston Archive
Collection of Mary Featherston

Grant Featherston

Australia 1922–95

VAC display cases V2.23

1967

pencil

Grant and Mary Featherston Archive
Collection of Mary Featherston

Grant Featherston

Australia 1922–95

VAC hood cases V2.27

1967

pencil

Grant and Mary Featherston Archive
Collection of Mary Featherston

Grant and Mary Featherston display cases, Oriental Gallery, NGV

1968

photograph: Mark Strizic

...continued overleaf

Grant and Mary Featherston in the Oriental Gallery, NGV

1968

photograph: Mark Strizic

Visitor seating area overlooking the Waterwall, National Gallery of Victoria

1968

photographer: Mark Strizic

Left to right

Senior curator office layout and furnishings, National Gallery of Victoria

1968

photographer: Mark Strizic

Grant Featherston

Australia 1922–95

Chairs/desks and tables sheet 1 V2.51

1967

pencil

Grant and Mary Featherston Archive
Collection of Mary Featherston

Grant Featherston

Australia 1922–95

Tables and desks (allocation) V2 8.2

1968

pencil

Grant and Mary Featherston Archive
Collection of Mary Featherston

Bruce Hyett designer

Australia 1923–2013

Wycombe Industries Pty Ltd

manufacturer

Geelong 1950–

Tarrenlea chairs

1967–68 Geelong

steel, foam, upholstery fabric

Proposed acquisition, 2018

Original to the 1968 fit-out of the National Gallery of Victoria, featuring new upholstery

Complementing the Featherstons' custom-designed furniture for the NGV fit-out, Bruce Hyett's modular *Tarrenlea chairs* were an original feature specified for lounge areas and executive offices. Visitors could recline in the chairs on the first floor mezzanine, overlooking the interior face of the Waterwall. Hyett co-founded Geelong-based furniture manufacturer Wycombe Industries in 1950 and designed and manufactured furniture for more than thirty years. To mark the fiftieth anniversary of the original NGV fit-out, the two *Tarrenlea chairs* in this display were decommissioned from use in June 2018 and reupholstered in brown-gold wool, in the likeness of the 1968 originals.

Magg, Melbourne manufacturer

Australia 1925–1929

Zara Holt designer

Australia 1909–1989

Evening dress

1968

silk, metallic thread, plastic sequins, viscose rayon

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Mrs Patricia Davies, Member, 1988

CT53-1988

This evening dress created by Zara Holt for her fashion label Magg was worn to the gala opening of the NGV's St Kilda Road building. With its dramatic hemline and textured brocade encrusted with rows of plastic sequins, this one-off creation was tailor-made for the celebration. The success of spectacular works such as this depends on its ability to draw attention. This minidress made of fine French silk brocade in cream, orange, pink and yellow is appliquéd with coloured acrylic disks.

Tu, Melbourne fashion house

Australia 1965–1989

Aria Austin designer

Lithuania born 1933, Australia from 1952

Coat and dress

c. 1969 Melbourne

wool, silk, cotton, plastic, metal

Anonymous gift, 1977

D27.a-b-1977

In 1963 Erna Vilks and Aria Austin established the exclusive Tu boutique in South Yarra, specialising in high-quality clothes with exceptional finish. By the mid to late 1960s, short skirts were the height of fashion. Newspapers reported on women being hired and fired depending on the length of their skirts, and women in workplaces were lectured on how to sit and bend to accommodate the new style.

Ernest Marcuse and his wife immigrated to Australia as refugees in 1939 from Germany. Living in Melbourne, Marcuse worked as an illustrator for The Age and The Argus newspapers before serving with the Australian Army as an artist from 1942 to 1945. Following the war, he returned to his commercial artistic career, working freelance as an illustrator and graphic artist.

As a friend of Eric Westbrook, NGV director from 1956 to 1974, Marcuse was invited to sketch the construction and interior fit-out of the Gallery's St Kilda Road premises. This group of energetic, vibrantly coloured architectural drawings convey the excitement surrounding the construction of the new building.

Ernest Marcuse

Germany 1900 – Australia 1985, Australia from 1939

Art Centre

1967

oil pastel, gouache, fibre-tipped pen and ballpoint pen
over pencil

Gift of Dai Forterre through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2018

Top to bottom, left to right

Ernest Marcuse

Germany 1900 – Australia 1985, Australia from 1939

New Art Centre

1968

oil pastel, gouache, fibre-tipped pen and coloured ballpoint pen over pencil

New Art Centre

1968

oil pastel, gouache, fibre-tipped pen and ballpoint pen over pencil with some liquid paper

New Art Centre

1968

oil pastel, gouache, coloured fibre-tipped pens and ballpoint pen over pencil

New Art Centre

1968

oil pastel, gouache, coloured fibre-tipped pens and ballpoint pen over pencil

New Art Centre

1968

oil pastel, fibre-tipped pen and ballpoint pen over pencil
with some liquid paper

National Gallery during finishing

1968

oil pastel, gouache, coloured fibre-tipped pen and
ballpoint pen over pencil

New Art Centre

1968

oil pastel, gouache, fibre-tipped pen and coloured
ballpoint pens over pencil

New Art Centre

1968

oil pastel, fibre-tipped pen and ballpoint pen over pencil

Gift of Dai Forterre through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2018

Henry Talbot

Germany 1920 – Australia 1999, Australia from 1940

No title (Fashion illustration for the Australian Wool Board, location National Gallery of Victoria)

1968

Henry Talbot Fashion Photography Archive,
© Lynette Anne Talbot

German-born fashion photographer Henry Talbot was a leading force in Melbourne's fashion industry during the 1960s. He was known for using 'active' models situated in outdoor and unconventional locations, an approach that had been pioneered in Europe in the early twentieth century. In 1968 and 1969, Talbot used the new National Gallery of Victoria building as a setting for a fashion shoot, employing the distinctive bluestone walls as a dramatic backdrop. He was commissioned by the Australian Wool Board, an organisation Talbot worked for on several occasions during the 1960s, photographing high-end fashion products made with fine Australian merino wool.

Henry Talbot

Germany 1920 – Australia 1999, Australia from 1940

No title (Fashion illustration for the Australian Wool Board, location National Gallery of Victoria)

1968

© Lynette Anne Talbot

Henry Talbot

Germany 1920 – Australia 1999, Australia from 1940

**No title (12 fashion illustrations for
the Australian Wool Board, location
National Gallery of Victoria)**

1968

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