

The background of the image is a reproduction of a painting by J.M.W. Turner, titled 'Rain, Steam, and Great Bridge'. It depicts a bridge over a river, with flowers in the foreground. The painting is characterized by its soft, atmospheric quality and visible brushstrokes. The colors are muted and blended, creating a sense of light and moisture. The text 'MONET TO MATISSE' is overlaid on the left side of the image, with 'DEFYING TRADITION' in a larger, bold font below it.

**MONET
TO
MATISSE
DEFYING
TRADITION**

cover detail: Claude Monet, France, 1840–1926,
Water Lilies, c.1922, Giverny, France, oil on
canvas; Purchased with funds from the Libbey
Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey
Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

Monet to Matisse: Defying Tradition

In the century spanning the 1870s and 1970s, artists worldwide pioneered radically new forms of representation. *Monet to Matisse: Defying Tradition*, which presents fifty-seven masterworks from the Toledo Museum of Art's world-renowned collection, puts a spotlight on the innovations in painting that emerged during this period. Notably, every one of these fifty-seven canvases was revolutionary – even controversial – at the time of its creation. While the works in the exhibition illustrate the artistic journeys of successive generations of trailblazing painters, they also demonstrate how the styles the artists 'invented' redefined art's trajectory.

In the last decades of nineteenth-century France, state-sponsored institutions dominated the production and reception of works of art, prompting some artists – those later known as Impressionists – to break away and assert

their independence by creating images that celebrated experiences of day-to-day life. While this group initially painted from direct observation – often working outdoors – by the end of the nineteenth century the subject matter favoured by these early rebels had profoundly changed: the younger generation were now more concerned with developing painting styles through which to express their feelings, adopting techniques such as simplified compositions, stark outlines, flattened forms and broad areas of strong colour.

In the twentieth century, artistic revolutions accelerated and multiplied. New styles and theories emerged rapidly and often simultaneously, sometimes in dialogue with one another and sometimes in competition. Initially,

few of these painters dared to present works of pure abstraction, those in which recognisable objects were not discernible. Subsequent generations, emboldened by their predecessors, explored the provocative possibilities offered by this mode of painting.

To complement Toledo Museum of Art's collection and to add depth to this narrative, the exhibition includes a selection of works from AGSA's collection, bringing together two extraordinary collections from opposite sides of the globe.

Gustave Caillebotte

born Paris, France 1848

died Gennevilliers, France 1894

Regatta at Trouville

1884, Trouville, France

oil on canvas

Gift of The Wildenstein Foundation

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1953.69

In a scene almost resembling an uncomposed snapshot, summer villas hug the cliffs above the English Channel at Trouville, France. Beyond, sailboats dot the sea as they race in the Trouville-Deauville regatta, some of them represented by only one or two strokes of paint. The atmospheric effects of sunlight, water and moisture-laden haze, where the sea transitions into the sky, are encapsulated evocatively in this canvas, which was probably painted out of doors in late July or early August of 1884. Although Caillebotte is best known for his Parisian street scenes, in his later works he tended to focus more on regional landscapes.

Born into an upper-class Parisian family, Caillebotte was for some time chiefly remembered for his role as a supporter and patron of his fellow artists, amassing during his lifetime an important collection of Impressionist paintings by his friends Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Camille Pissarro, which he later bequeathed to the French Republic. Caillebotte adopted a more realist approach to his subjects than did his Impressionist colleagues, which may explain why his work was not accorded a solo exhibition until one hundred years after his death.

Everett Longley Warner

born Vinton, Iowa, United States of America 1877

died Vermont, United States of America 1963

Along the River Front, New York

1912, New York

oil on canvas

Museum Purchase

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1914.109

After early success in the United States, Everett Longley Warner, like so many of his contemporaries, moved to Paris to study, where, in 1903, he took classes at the Académie Julian. Over the following years he travelled extensively across Europe, undertaking sketching visits to Italy, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands. In 1909 Warner returned to the United States and joined the Old Lyme Art Colony in Connecticut, which by that time had become one of the key Impressionist groups in the United States.

In *Along the Riverfront, New York*, Warner's approach to the composition and framing of his subject intensifies our experience of the work and draws our attention to the grandeur of the relatively newly built Brooklyn Bridge, an icon of modernity that would soon become an icon of New York City itself. The influence of the French Impressionists is clearly discernible in Warner's work, with its rapid application of paint, use of impasto to create a three-dimensional surface, and colour-rich pigments.

Jean-François Millet

born Gruchy, Gréville-Hague, France 1814

died Barbizon, France 1875

Church at Gréville

(L'Eglise de Gréville)

c.1872, Gréville, France

pen & wash on canvas

Special Picture Fund 1934

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

348D2

James Abbott McNeill Whistler

born Lowell, Massachusetts, United States of
America 1834

died London, England 1903

Thames Police

1859, London

etching, drypoint on paper

David Murray Bequest Fund 1930

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

306G121

James Abbott McNeill

Whistler

born Lowell, Massachusetts, United States of
America 1834

died London, England 1903

Limehouse

from the portfolio *Notes*

1878, printed by Thomas Way & Son; published
1887 by Boussod, Valadon and Co., London
lithotint with scraping and incising on chine
collé on paper

Bequest of Sir Samuel Way 1916

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

165G14

Luther Emerson van Gorder

born Toledo, Ohio 1857

died Warren, Ohio 1931

Flower Market, Paris

c.1895–1905, Paris

oil on canvas

Gift of the artist

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1912.916

Born in Toledo, Ohio, van Gorder studied art in New York City under William Merrit Chase, before moving to Paris in 1894. Late nineteenth-century Paris was recognised as the epicentre of artistic expression and experimentation, and van Gorder, like so many American and Australian artists, was drawn to this vibrant avant-garde community. Following his five-year Parisian sojourn, van Gorder returned to the United States, establishing himself permanently in Toledo, and donating this work to the Toledo Museum in 1912.

In *Flower Market, Paris*, c.1895–1905, the artist has captured what is now regarded as a quintessential image of the city, although this was not the case at the time. In the mid- to late nineteenth century, Paris's streetscapes were dramatically altered with the widening of the narrow streets and the wholesale destruction of old and run-down houses, creating the grand boulevards and beaux-arts buildings we know so well today. While van Gorder's paintwork undeniably represents the Impressionist style in its application, the artist often used a more subdued colour palette than many of his contemporaries. In this work the sombre grey buildings and sky are relieved only by the luminous pastel-pink and yellow of the bunches of flowers.

George Hitchcock

born Providence, Rhode Island, United States
of America 1850

died Aalsmeer, Netherlands 1913

Flower Field near Leiden

c.1895–1905, Leiden, Netherlands
oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs George Hitchcock

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1917.724

Maurice Brazil Prendergast

born Newfoundland, Canada 1858

died New York, United States of America 1924

The Flying Horses

c.1902–06

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Florence Scott
Libbey Bequest in Memory of her Father,
Maurice A. Scott

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1957.22

A brightly coloured carousel and the well-dressed figures who ride it or watch from the sidelines presented Maurice Prendergast with a vivid, dynamic subject for a painting. He liked to venture out to Nahant, a coastal resort and amusement park near Boston, Massachusetts, and sketch the ever-changing array of activities. He transformed his drawings into innovative paintings, in which broad brushstrokes of bright pigments reduced the scene into simplified forms.

Prendergast rejected conventional perspective and modelling – techniques that give paintings the illusion of depth and dimension – and instead called attention to the flatness of the canvas. The artist was familiar with the latest currents in modern art at the turn of the century, as a new generation of painters embraced a more decorative aesthetic, one that emphasised pattern and surface and exaggerated colour.

William Merritt Chase

born Williamsburg, Indiana, United States of
America 1849

died New York City, New York, United States of
America 1916

The Open Air Breakfast

c.1888, New York City

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Florence Scott
Libbey Bequest in Memory of her Father,
Maurice A. Scott

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1953.136

The Open Air Breakfast presents a scene of leisure and luxury. The artist has painted his own wife, Alice Gerson Chase (wearing a Chinese cap), seated at the table beside their infant daughter and facing her sister Virginia, who reclines in a woven hammock against a patterned pillow. The artist's sister, Hattie, wears a seventeenth-century Dutch-style hat and holds a racket for playing a game of battledore (a precursor to badminton). To the left, a dog dozes peacefully on the grass.

William Merritt Chase emphasised not only the ease at which his family spent their mornings but also their lavish surroundings. He demonstrates his own sophisticated taste, and that of his relatives, through the profusion of imported decorative objects.

The Japanese folding screen, headwear, textiles, blue-and-white china, and potted tropical plant all reinforce perceptions of his family's culture and refinement.

Painting en plein air

The Impressionists opted to paint *en plein air* (outdoors) and sought to depict the fleeting moments of colour and light in the natural and built environments. Unlike their predecessors, they conceptualised and created their paintings ‘in the open air’ rather than returning to the studio, perhaps with a sketch, to make a highly finished piece. Characterised by the rapid application of paint, their paintings impart a liveliness and dynamism not previously seen in artistic depictions of outdoor scenes.

Gone were the sombre colour palettes of the early nineteenth century: rather than preparing their canvasses with a dark ground, the Impressionists choose to paint on a lightly primed or even raw canvas to allow the rich and vivid colours, made possible through the scientific and manufacturing advances integral to industrialisation, to be seen to their greatest advantage. The bright synthetic pigments were now pre-mixed in easily transportable tubes –

ideal for painting outside. The jewel-like colours and bold juxtapositions in tone utilised by these early outdoor painters have become the hallmarks of this art movement.

Painting outdoors often meant that artists travelled together to the countryside to paint, with Impressionism becoming something of a communal movement. These country excursions eventually led to extended sojourns in the country and the establishment of artists' colonies across rural and coastal France. The egalitarian and welcoming nature of 'the movement' attracted artists from across the world, including from North America and Australia.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir

born Limoges, France 1841

died Cagnes-sur-Mer, France 1919

Road at Wargemont

1879, Wargemont, France

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey
Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey
Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1957.33

One of the founding members of the French Impressionists, Pierre-Auguste Renoir exhibited alongside Claude Monet in the now-renowned 1874 exhibition held in the Paris studio of the celebrated photographer Nadar. Renoir had a long and successful career and is perhaps best known for his portraits and paintings of women at leisure, some of which can be seen in the room adjacent to the exhibition.

Celebrated for his luminous jewel-like colours, Renoir perfected his aesthetic of a blurred focus by painting pigment onto wet ground, a technique that allowed the various colours to subtly blend. The atmospheric effect imparted by this approach is illustrated in this work, which depicts the gentle incline of the hill and winding path, affording the viewer a sense of quiet movement. Here, Renoir has used thin washes of pigment scraped and dragged across the surface to infuse the scene with a sense of spontaneity – as if he had decided on impulse to capture the landscape before the storm clouds rolled in.

William Merritt Chase

born Williamsburg, Indiana, United States of
America 1849

died New York City, New York, United States of
America 1916

Near the Beach, Shinnecock

c.1895, Long Island, United States of America
oil on canvas

Gift of Arthur J. Secor

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1924.58

In 1891 William Merritt Chase left Manhattan to live in Shinnecock Hills on Long Island, New York. While the locals scorned this desolate stretch of land, Chase saw beauty in the terrain. Through his mastery of colour and brushstrokes, he transformed the barren seashore into a lively landscape.

In the foreground, the painter loosely applied touches of greens, yellows and tans to suggest a wildflower-dotted field, through which an elegantly dressed woman and her children stroll. The bright whites and reds of their clothing enliven the earth tones surrounding them. Above, delicate clouds streak across the azure sky. The vivid colours and sketch-like brushstrokes attest to Chase's process of painting from life outdoors, in nature. Although he made many variations of this same landscape, he imbued each one with a sense of spontaneity, as if capturing a fleeting moment.

Camille PISSARRO

born Charlotte Amalie, U.S. Virgin Islands 1830
died Paris 1903

Prairie à Éragny

1886, Éragny, France
oil on canvas

Gift of the Gwinnett Family, James and Diana
Ramsay Foundation, Marjory Edwards Bequest
Fund, Margaret Olley Art Trust, Helen Bowden,
Frank and Mary Choate, Peter and Pamela
McKee, Emeritus Professor Anne Edwards AO,
David and Pam McKee, and Members through
the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation
Masterwork Appeal 2014

20138P31

Prairie à Éragny is an iconic Impressionist painting. It is distinctive for the shimmering luminosity Pissarro renders through the freshness of his palette and control of his brushwork. Dots and dashes of contrasting colours jostle side by side, blending optically into more unified patches of colour when viewed at a distance. Pissarro captures the transparency of light and air through his careful chromatic analysis.

Prairie à Éragny is also remarkable for its lingering impression of calm and pictorial idealism. These qualities distinguish his practice from those of other Impressionists, such as Claude Monet. Pissarro believed the search for unity was the goal to which an artist should aspire. In an exhibition of Japanese art in 1883, he witnessed the harmony and grandeur for which he aimed.

The clarity and simplicity of *Prairie à Éragny* is progressively modern. The composition is geometrically ordered by horizontal bands, reflecting Pissarro's discussions with Paul Cézanne. Pissarro also experiments with a new technique – that of Neo-Impressionism.

Robert Henri

born Cincinnati, Ohio, United States of America
1865

died New York City, New York, United States of
America 1929

Cathedral Woods, Monhegan Island

1911, Monhegan Island, Maine, United States of
America

oil on canvas

Frederick B. and Kate L. Shoemaker Fund

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1919.47

Figures of modern life

While the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw artists radically transform the techniques and approaches used in their painting, their choice of subject matter was also an area for profound reconsideration.

Across the history of Western art, portraiture had traditionally been the realm of the wealthy elite and those viewed as important members of society. With the evolving social dynamics of the nineteenth century, however, a new reality was emerging. Artists were expanding the themes and subjects for their work to include everyday people, those engaged in manual labour, working in the fields or at rest. These 'portraits' can be viewed as representing the breakdown of the traditional framework of portraiture: they are not portraits of refined or notable figures but scenes of quotidian life, populated by everyday people.

This new, more inclusive, approach to subject matter signifies the artists' increasing preoccupation with the prevailing social conditions. Their focus on the humble and everyday, while highlighting social inequality, also served as a tool to democratise artistic expression: the works in this gallery, for example, depict people of different genders and social classes. Some figures are deliberately posing; others seem to have been caught unawares. Their settings, their clothing, and the objects that surround them provide further insights into their lives. What they all share, however, is a sense of belonging to the period in which the paintings were created. Contemporary audiences would have recognised their own world in these canvases.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir

born Limoges, France 1841

died Cagnes-sur-Mer, France 1919

The Green Jardinière

1882, Paris

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art

1933.174

Frederick Frary Fursman

born El Paso, Illinois, United States of America
1874

died Saugatuck, Michigan, United States of
America 1943

In the Garden

1909, Chicago, Illinois
oil on canvas

Gift of Cora Baird Lacey, in memory of
Henry Allen Lacey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1913.80

Like so many of his fellow American artists, Frederick Fursman studied initially at home in Chicago before travelling to Paris to study at the Académie Grande Chaumier and Académie Julian. As a representative of the generation immediately following the first Impressionists, he adhered to many of the ideals of the movement, with his output illustrating their influence. Perhaps taking inspiration from Renoir's celebrated portrait of women at leisure, the unusual composition of this work serves to emphasise the scene rather than the sitter. With her back to the viewer, the sitter is wholly engrossed in her tea setting and the other figures in the garden, prompting the viewers to ponder the human interactions and relationships.

Berthe Morisot

born Bourges, France 1841

died Paris, France 1895

In the Garden at Maurecourt

1884, Maurecourt, France

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1930.9

Berthe Morisot was the only woman to exhibit under her own name at the Impressionists' first independent exhibition in 1874 at Nadar's Paris studio. At a time when women were excluded from the national art school (École des Beaux-Arts), she successfully forged a professional career. Morisot, one of three daughters, grew up in an affluent bourgeois family in the city of Bourges, south of Paris, although when she was eleven years old her family relocated to the French capital. Morisot and her sisters, in line with most girls of her social status, undertook art education. She initially had private art

lessons with Joseph Guichard, who introduced her to the Louvre, where, by copying works by the Great Masters, she learned to paint. It was at the Louvre that Morisot met and worked alongside many of the artists who would become founding members of the Impressionists, including Édouard Manet (whose brother she would later marry) and Claude Monet.

Morisot's output offers a unique perspective on Impressionism. While she certainly created work in a style similar to the male Impressionists – rich colours, loose and expressive brushwork and painting *en plein air* – her choice of subject differs, in that she offers an alternative version of society. Morisot presents a decidedly feminine perspective, illuminating the lives of the women in her social circle, those at their toilette, mothers and babies and young women in society.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir

born Limoges, France 1841

died Cagnes-sur-Mer, France 1919

Hat secured with a pin (first plate)

1897, printed by Auguste Clot; published by
Ambroise Vollard, Paris

lithograph printed in green ink on paper

South Australian Government Grant 1972

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

7210G35

Pierre-Auguste Renoir

born Limoges, France 1841

died Cagnes-sur-Mer, France 1919

Coco (The artist's youngest son, Claude)

c.1905, Essoyes, France

oil on canvas

Bequest of Lady Ursula Hayward 1983

Art Galley of South Australia, Adelaide

8315P20

Known in the family as Coco, Claude was the youngest of Auguste Renoir's three sons. This intimate portrait displays the relaxed technique and open brushwork characteristic of the French Impressionist artist's later years. The soft light and warm colours impart a mood of domestic tenderness appropriate to the subject.

Renoir was enjoying great success by this stage in his career, and this painting reflects the contentment he derived from his comfortable family life in Essoyes, southeast of Paris. According to late nineteenth-century custom, boys' hair was not cut before they reached the age of six. Coco's hair was vividly red, and Renoir painted it frequently during this period.

James Abbott McNeill

Whistler

born Lowell, Massachusetts, United States of
America 1834

died London, England 1903

The sisters

1894–95, Paris

printed by Thomas Way & Son, London

lithograph on paper

Gift of Shane Le Plastrier, Peter and Pamela
McKee, and Tom Pearce through the Art Gallery
of South Australia Foundation Annual Collectors
Club 2021

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20218G141

Édouard Vuillard

born Cuiseaux, France 1868

died La Baule, France 1940

***Les bras croisés* (Seated woman with arms crossed)**

c.1912, Paris

pencil on paper

Gift of Dee Jones 2008

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20084D12

Jean-François Millet

born Gruchy, Gréville-Hague, France 1814

died Barbizon, France 1875

The Quarriers

1846–47, Barbizon, France

oil on canvas

Gift of Arthur J. Secor

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1922.45

Jean-François Millet was a leading figure in the French Realist movement, a movement whose artists sought to portray contemporary people and the realities of their lives. He was also a founding member of the Barbizon School, based in the town of the same name just outside the forests of Fontainebleau; the Barbizon School similarly championed realism in art. While the tenets of the Realist movement might seem antithetical to

Impressionism, this was not the case, with artists from both camps equally attuned to the social conditions of the day, resulting in beliefs and modes of working shared across the movements.

Millet was particularly respected for his bold depictions of labourers and farm workers and his ability to capture the hardship of their labour. In *The Quarriers*, 1846–47, Millet asks the viewer to consider the costs of progress: the physical strain on the bodies of these men is evidenced by the angles at which they are depicted, as they muster strength to prise out the boulders. The men's faces are roughly finished, suggesting an everyman figure rather than a particular subject; these men are the unseen workers clearing the land to make way for the railroads.

Jules Breton

born Courrières, France 1827

died Paris, France 1906

The Shepherd's Star

1887, Courrières, France

oil on canvas

Gift of Arthur J. Secor

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1922.41

Jules Breton was one of the leaders of Realism, a movement that began in late eighteenth-century France, in which the refinement and precision of traditional or academic painting was combined with an interest in rural subjects. At the same time, many of the Realists embraced the softness and bright colours of the parallel movement, Impressionism. During his lifetime, Breton's work was particularly highly regarded by American collectors and many of his works now reside in public collections in the United States. Notably, in 1934 the then First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, named *The Song of the Lark*, 1884, as the most loved work of art in America.

In this large canvas Jules Breton infuses a sense of monumentality and timelessness into his female subject, presenting her as a humble but nevertheless heroic figure. Compared with the less sentimental and more down-to-earth depictions of labourers by artists such as Jean-François Millet, Breton's works romanticised and idealised the figure of the peasant at his or her work, creating images that did not reflect their lived reality. Behind the shoulder of the woman is Capella (meaning 'little goat' in Latin), or the Shepherd Star, the sixth brightest star in the night sky, which forms part of the Auriga constellation.

Camille Pissarro

born Charlotte Amalie, St Thomas,

Danish Virgin Islands 1830

died Paris, France 1903

Peasants Resting

1881, Pontoise, France

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1935.6

Camille Pissarro was a leading figure in the development of Impressionism. As a young artist, he found early inspiration in the painting and theories of Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), one of the leaders of the French Realism of the nineteenth century, whose disavowal of conventional academic painting in favour of depicting directly what he saw, helped to shape Pissarro's vision and practice. He was the only artist from the Impressionist circle who participated in all eight Impressionist exhibitions, presented in Paris between 1874 and 1886.

From 1879 and throughout the 1880s, Pissarro made numerous paintings of figures in the open air – woodcutters, washerwomen, peasant folk. In this work a trio – two women and a child – are at rest on the verges of a pathway in the dappled light of a park. A fourth figure, approaching from the distance, adds compositional balance to Pissarro's refined image. Pissarro's interest in the labours of workers, and the realities of their exhaustion and their unselfconsciously relaxed poses, recalls the influence of Courbet's realism but with an Impressionist's eye for fleeting light, colour and pictorial harmony.

Edgar Degas

born Paris, France 1834

died Paris, France 1917

Victoria Dubourg

c.1868–69

oil on canvas

Gift of Mr and Mrs William E. Levis

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1963.45

The portrait by Edgar Degas of fellow artist Victoria Dubourg (1840–1926) conveys the friendship between the two, a feeling communicated through Dubourg's pose and direct gaze. In the work, which is painted in a well-lit interior, Dubourg leans forward in her chair, as though in conversation. Degas's composition emphasises the painter's hands, which are prominent against the dark-brown material of her simple dress. As a reference to Dubourg's practice as a painter of floral still life paintings, Degas has included a vase with a bouquet of flowers on the dresser next to her. At the time the portrait was

created, Dubourg was in her late twenties and had recently received a commission to paint a replica of an Italian Renaissance painting held in the Louvre as part of a French government scheme to share the collection.

Having been unable to train at the École des Beaux-Arts, which did not accept female students until 1897, Dubourg had learnt painting privately and had copied from Old Masters in the Louvre's collection. She met her future husband, Henri Fantin-Latour, while both were copying the same painting. Degas's portrait of Dubourg likely came as a result of his friendship with Fantin-Latour, the two having known one another since the mid-1850s.

Édouard Manet

born Paris France 1832

died Paris, France 1883

Lola de Valence

from the series *Modern Etchings*

1863, published by Cadart & Luquet, Paris

etching, aquatint on paper

South Australian Government Grant 1972

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

725G13

Édouard Vuillard

born Cuiseaux, France 1868

died La Baule, France 1940

On the Pont de l'Europe

from the portfolio *Landscapes and interiors*

1899, Paris, printed at Auguste Clot's workshop;

published by Ambroise Vollard

colour lithograph on paper

David Murray Bequest Fund 1939

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

393G37

Jean-François Millet

born Gruchy, Gréville-Hague, France 1814
died Barbizon, France 1875

The large shepherdess (*La grande bergère*)

1862, Paris

etching on paper

David Murray Bequest Fund 1922

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

226G101

Jean-François Millet

born Gruchy, Gréville-Hague, France 1814

died Barbizon, France 1875

Peasant returning from the manure heap (*Le paysan rentrant du fumier*)

1855–56, Paris

etching on paper

David Murray Bequest Fund 1949

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

4910G157

Jean-François Millet

born Gruchy, Gréville-Hague, France 1814
died Barbizon, France 1875

The sower (*Le semeur*)

1851, Paris

lithograph on paper

A.R. Ragless Bequest Fund 1975

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

759G74

Édouard Manet

born Paris France 1832

died Paris, France 1883

Antonin Proust

1880, Paris

oil on canvas

Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1925.108

Manet's work is neither Realist nor Impressionist; however, in it, the two disparate movements coalesce. That said, his early masterworks – *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, 1863, and *Olympia*, 1865 – can perhaps be considered precursors to the pinnacle of Impressionism, in the mid-1870s.

Avant-garde in his approach to composition and the application of paint, Manet nonetheless had a deep and abiding respect for the Old Masters, and many of his works can be seen to borrow from them. His friend Antonin Proust is depicted in the centuries-old tradition of a three-quarter-length pose with a

sombre and dignified demeanour, as befits a man of his stature – a politician, journalist and the Minister of Fine Arts between 1881 and 1882. The work bears Manet's distinctive air of casualness and immediacy, an effect the artist achieved after much trial and error, as evidenced by his considerable reworking of particular areas of the painting, including the hat.

Re-envisioning the world

As the global art world continued to expand, approaches to, and modes of, art expression began to evolve and mutate at pace, a myriad of new movements and styles having made their dramatic entry by the final decades of the nineteenth century. By the late 1880s, the original group of Impressionists had begun to drift apart, while the younger artists who had adopted the tenets of Impressionism pushed these into new areas. The broad term 'Post-Impressionist' is applied to these emerging artistic movements, despite it being, by no means, a singular, cohesive style. Under the umbrella of Post-Impressionism sit Neo-Impressionism, Cloisonnism, Synthetism, Symbolism, Les Nabis, Fauvism and the Pont-Aven School. A period marked by significant experimentation, Post-Impressionism saw rapid developments in technique and style and a further disintegration of the rules and expectations of the established art world.

By this time, artists had begun to eschew objectivity and no longer sought to capture the inherent 'truth' of observation in their art. Artists now turned inwards to represent their own subjectivity; that is, to depict the world as they saw it. Desiring to be free from the perceived limitations of Impressionism, and in particular the commitment to rendering the effects of light and shade, they sought to create their 'view' of the world. The Post-Impressionists envisioned a new artistic order, one unconstrained by the rules governing the representation of colour and form in the natural environment. These artists played with vivid (unnatural) colours and utilised impasto to create three-dimensional surfaces. They used their work as a conduit for the expression of emotion and concepts beyond what could be seen through immediate visual inspection, their works becoming the realisation of deeper concepts and sensations. As artists edged further away from Impressionism and continued to subjugate objectivity and realism in their art, the transition to abstraction became explicit.

Paul Signac

born Paris, France 1863

died Paris, France 1935

Entrance to the Grand Canal, Venice

1905, Venice, Italy

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1952.78

Paul Signac belonged to a group of artists known as the Neo-Impressionists, some of whom desired a more scientific process to underpin the creation of their works of art. Borrowing from the fields of optics and colour theory, which addressed questions of how the human eye perceives hue, they embraced a technique of applying paint to canvas in small dots of pure pigment, which, from a distance, merge to become a coherent image. Today this technique is known as ‘pointillism’ or ‘divisionism’. Signac, however, rather than applying small dots of colour, painted rectangles of bright, pure pigment in unexpectedly vibrant hues. From a distance the divisionist technique produces a shimmering effect across the surface of the painting, providing a sense of the vitality of the scene.

In *Entrance to the Grand Canal, Venice*, 1905, the divisionist approach emulates the rippling water and the boats bobbing around in front of St Mark’s Cathedral, with closer inspection indeed revealing the small abstract rectangles of coloured paint.

Pierre Bonnard

born Fontenay-aux-Roses, France 1867

died Le Cannet, France 1947

The Abduction of Europa

1919, Paris

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1930.215

With his fellow artists from the Académie Julian, Bonnard became a founding member of the Nabis. A movement marking the transition from Impressionism to Post-Impressionism, the Nabis saw themselves as prophets of modernism. The work of the Nabis in many respects synthesised the divergent streams of Post-Impressionism, uniting Impressionism, Symbolism, Cloisonism and Abstraction. Despite assigning themselves a specific name, the group was unusual in that they possessed no distinguishing cohesive style.

Like the history painters of earlier centuries, Bonnard has taken inspiration from ancient mythology, in *The Abduction of Europa* depicting a scene from ancient Greek mythology, when the god Zeus, infatuated with the princess Europa, transforms himself into a white bull and abducts her across the sea. The blues and oranges of the iridescent palette Bonnard employed to capture a luminous sunset on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea complement one another and actively shimmer on the canvas. Too sumptuous to be real, the radiant colours infuse the scene with a dreamlike quality.

Vincent van Gogh

born Zundert, Netherlands 1853

died Auvers-sur-Oise, France 1890

Wheat Fields with Reaper, Auvers

1890, Auvers, France

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1935.4

On 20 May 1890 Vincent van Gogh moved to the small country town of Auvers on the Oise River, twenty-seven kilometres north of Paris. It was here he spent the last two months of his life, in a state of intensified psychological tumult and physical decline, prior to his death on 29 July 1890.

In that brief period, however, van Gogh's output was prolific. He painted a recorded seventy-four works, some of them unfinished and many of them

of the wheatfields in the surrounding countryside, focusing also on the associated activity of the summer harvest. In some of the last of van Gogh's written correspondence with his brother Theo, the artist conveyed his deep satisfaction with both the unadulterated beauty of a picturesque landscape and the quintessentially rural character and culture of Auvers.

Colour and painterly texture were central to conveying the optical and climatic sensations van Gogh received from his immersion in the countryside of Auvers. He used colour intuitively and sometimes experimentally rather than simply representationally to proclaim his feelings about a place or subject.

James Abbott McNeill Whistler

born Lowell, Massachusetts, United States 1834
died London 1903

Crepuscule in Opal, Trouville

1865, Trouville, France

oil on canvas

Gift of Florence Scott Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1923.20

The radical abstraction of James McNeil Whistler's paintings challenged the expectations of his time. Active between the 1850s and 1900, Whistler forged a singular path, one that often put him in conflict with the more conservative figures of his day. Born in the United States of America, he worked between London and Paris for most of his professional life, absorbing the influences of French and British

artists, in particular his contemporaries Edgar Degas, Claude Monet and Édouard Manet. With his peers he shared an appreciation of Japanese prints, integrating the compositional hallmarks of *ukiyo-e* woodcuts – asymmetrical compositions, flatness of the picture plane, aerial perspective – into his canvases and prints.

Whistler's bold approach is encapsulated in his sparse and distilled painting of the coast in north-western France, *Crepuscle in Opal, Trouville*, 1865. The word *crepuscule* in the title of the work is the French word for 'twilight', and the artist likens his choice of colour to opal, with its brilliant shards of blue, violet, orange and pink. Whistler's interest in creating a work of harmony is evident in the overall soft-grey palette of the canvas, the colours delicately introduced to just barely describe the seashore, cloud formation and horizon line.

James Abbott McNeill

Whistler

born Lowell, Massachusetts, United States of
America 1834

died London, England 1903

The Thames

1896, London, printed by Thomas Way & Son,
London

lithotint on paper

Gift of Shane Le Plastrier, Peter and Pamela
McKee, and Tom Pearce through the Art Gallery
of South Australia Foundation Annual Collectors
Club 2021

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20218G142

Whistler's prints were more reliant on line than were his paintings: in the late 1850s he created a suite of etchings detailing various activities taking place on the River Thames in London, describing the working life of the river, as well as its moments of quietness. As he rowed on it at night, he observed with great interest the industrial landscape on its banks and the smoke rising from chimneys, details which found their way into his etchings. Some two decades later, Whistler returned to the subject, in this instance employing the lithographic medium. Working closely with his printer, Thomas Way, he achieved delicate atmospheric effects, as seen in *Nocturne: the river at Battersea*, 1878.

James Abbott McNeill Whistler

born Lowell, Massachusetts, United States of
America 1834

died London, England 1903

Nocturne: the river at Battersea

from the portfolio *Notes*

1878, printed by Thomas Way & Son; published
1887 by Boussod, Valadon and Co., London
lithotint with scraping, printed in grey ink on
blue

Bequest of Sir Samuel Way 1916

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

165G15

James Abbott McNeill Whistler

born Lowell, Massachusetts, United States of
America 1834

died London, England 1903

Black Lion Wharf

1859, London

etching, drypoint on paper

Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund 1962

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

627G49

James Abbott McNeill

Whistler

born Lowell, Massachusetts, United States of America 1834

died London, England 1903

The Riva, no. 2

from *A set of twenty-six etchings*

1879–80, Venice, Italy; printed London
etching on paper

V.B.F. Young Bequest Fund 2005

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20057G84

Paul Cézanne

born Aix-en-Provence, France 1839

died Aix-en-Provence, France 1906

Avenue at Chantilly

1888, Chantilly, France

oil on canvas

Gift of Mr and Mrs William E. Levis

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1959.13

Although Cézanne exhibited as a member of the Impressionists in the 1870s, he had sought a new, more analytical approach to painting by the 1880s. He began envisioning his subjects in terms of simplified geometric shapes, which he described as 'nature by means of the cylinder, the sphere and the cone'. Less interested in an illusionistic view of nature, he created multifaceted compositions while simultaneously emphasising the canvas surface.

In *Avenue at Chantilly*, a house with a blue-grey roof sits at the end of a long, tree-lined alley. Cézanne established a fluctuating tension between the receding depth and the sense of flatness in his purposeful repetitions of shapes and colours. The trees parallel the sloping gables of the roofs; the fence posts at the end of the path echo the rectangles of the windows. He also duplicated the blues of the roof in the shadows in the foreground, while the earth tones of the ground reappear in the house's closed shutters.

Paul Gauguin

born Paris, France 1848

died Atuona, Marquesas Islands, French
Polynesia 1903

Street in Tahiti

1891, Tahiti, French Polynesia

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1939.82

Gauguin first journeyed to Tahiti in 1891 in pursuit of a style removed from the conventions of Western art history. However, he was dismayed to find that a century of colonisation had eroded much of the island's Indigenous culture. The works he created there are not accurate representations of Tahiti at the time but a window into his fantasies of how the island might have been like before the arrival of Western influences, although his own interactions with Pacific Islanders were largely exploitative and even abusive.

Street in Tahiti was among the first paintings Gauguin produced on the island. He translated the landscape into bold, curving contours and simplified forms, and painted with electric shades of green, purple, pink, blue and yellow. In the foreground, a brooding figure – who reappears in several of his works – imparts an undertone of melancholy to the scene.

Paul Gauguin

born Paris, France 1848

died Atuona, Marquesas Islands, French
Polynesia 1903

Fragrant scent (*Noa Noa*)

from the suite *Fragrant scent (Noa Noa)*

1893–94; printed 1921, Paris; printed by

Pola Gauguin Co., Copenhagen

woodcut with wood engraving on paper

Women at the river (*Auti te pape*)

from the suite *Fragrant scent (Noa Noa)*

1893–94; printed 1921, Paris; printed by

Pola Gauguin Co., Copenhagen

woodcut on paper

South Australian Government Grant 1984

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

841G3, 841G2

Upon his return to Paris in 1893, Gauguin began a writing project designed to acquaint French art audiences with life in Polynesia – and thus his new body of work. While the publication was never realised, various impressions of the woodblock prints intended to accompany it were printed during his lifetime and posthumously. *Fragrant scent* (*Noa Noa*, 1893–94, printed 1921) and *Women at the River* (*Auti te pape*, 1893–94, printed 1921) demonstrate Gauguin's innovative approach to printmaking.

Paul Cézanne

born Aix-en-Provence, France 1839

died Aix-en-Provence, France 1906

The bathers, large plate

(Les baigneurs, grand planche)

1896–97, printed by Auguste Clot,

published by Ambroise Vollard, Paris

colour lithograph on paper

V.B.F. Young Bequest Fund 1983

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

833G26

Paul Signac

born Paris, France 1863

died Paris, France 1935

Saint Tropez: the port

1897–98, Paris

printed by Auguste Clot, published by
Ambroise Vollard

colour lithograph on paper

South Australian Government Grant 1980

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

807G91

Claude Monet

born Giverny, France 1840

died Giverny, France 1926

Water Lilies

c.1922, Giverny, France

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1981.54

Standing in front of this monumental canvas, it is easy to feel completely immersed in the picture. In this painting of his beloved water lily pond at his home in Giverny, France, Claude Monet collapses all sense of space, until water, plants and sky merge into a unified surface. While the lack of a horizon line creates a dizzying flatness, the overall effect is one of absorbing tranquility.

The artist conveyed the sense of still water, reflected light and floating lily pads and blossoms with calligraphic brushstrokes that suggest rather than delineate natural forms. Monet employed a cool palette – mostly hues of blue, green, and purple – but a close look at the flowers reveals a more complex array of colours. Various shades mix without truly blending, as if the artist loaded his brush with different pigments and swirled them directly onto the canvas, leaving thick dollops of paint that blur together when viewed at a distance.

Max Beckmann

born Leipzig, Germany 1884

died New York, United States of America 1950

The Trapeze

1923, Leipzig, Germany

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1983.20

Seven acrobats jumble together in contorted positions within the narrow span of this vertical canvas. Each performer seems to be in the middle of a stunt, yet the compressed space, their proximity to the floor and the other bodies inhibit any possible performance. Max Beckmann's figures are portrayed with closed eyes, masked faces and forlorn gazes, all of which evoke a sense of disconnect, even loneliness. The cartoonish simplification of their features and the acidic colour palette heighten the sense of unease. The acrobat hanging upside down at the upper left is likely a hidden self-portrait, under a layer of clown paint; this figure is the only one to gaze out at the viewer.

Beckmann often depicted performers from circuses and cabarets to probe the insincerity of modern society. This pessimistic outlook on life was a consequence of his traumatic experiences as a combat medical orderly during World War I (1914–18).

Marie Laurencin

born Paris, France 1883

died Paris, France 1956

Young girl (*Jeune fille*)

c.1935, Paris

oil on canvas

A.R. Ragless Bequest Fund 1964

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

0.2032

Marie Laurencin was prominent among the creative avant-garde in Paris in the early years of the twentieth century. She was a rare female painter in the dazzling coterie centred on the Cubists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, although her work was never truly Cubist. By the 1920s she had developed an elegant, individualistic style, one that defied categorisation in any major art movement. For several decades she enjoyed financial success, influential patronage and a thriving reputation, particularly in the United States, where she was regarded as a pioneer of modernist painting.

Jeune fille is an appealing example of Laurencin's painting at its peak. It has a childlike freshness, bordering on naivety, a quality that the artist retained in her work even though her practice was well established. Characteristically, the work captures her lifelong fascination with femininity: pastel colours, chic dresses and ribbons feature in the art of Laurencin, an only child who idolised her elegant seamstress mother.

Édouard Vuillard

born Cuiseaux, France 1868

died La Baule, France 1940

Le Salle Clarac

(The Clarac Gallery)

1922, Paris

oil with distemper

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art Ohio

1999.2

Édouard Vuillard's *La Salle Clarac* is a painting of people looking at art in a museum – the crowded display of the Louvre's Greek and Roman galleries. The artist was commissioned by a Swiss collector to make four paintings for their home. Vuillard inserts us into an interior where every surface is filled with detail. Indeed, his composition positions the cabinet of antiquities as an invitation to the viewer to participate in the visual feast. By cropping a figure on the left edge, Vuillard emphasises the claustrophobic, sensorially rich interior of the

gallery. This decision allows him to bring Paris to his patrons, creating a dialogue between two rooms in two countries.

Vuillard made his reputation on representations of interiors. Beginning from the late 1880s with paintings of the Paris apartment he shared with his mother and sister, he created small, intimate scenes depicting domestic moments. His paintings captured the taste and conventions of interiors belonging to his class, with the patterned wallpaper and furniture representing the bourgeois preference for decoration.

Robert Delaunay

born Paris, France 1885

died Montpellier, France 1941

The City of Paris

c.1911, Paris

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art Ohio

1955.38

Robert Delaunay began his career just as Cubism was emerging, experimenting with this mode of representation before developing his own version, which emphasised prismatic colour. Along with his wife Sonia Delaunay, he produced a unique style, which they termed 'Cubic Orphism'.

Depicting a well-known Paris icon, the Eiffel Tower, Delaunay borrowed the poses of the Three Graces from a Roman fresco uncovered in Pompeii. Importing Classicism into twentieth-century artistic expression, Delaunay's painting becomes a celebration of modernity and all that Paris has to offer.

Giorgio de Chirico

born Volos, Greece 1888

died Rome, Italy 1978

Self-Portrait

c.1922, Rome

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art Ohio

1930.204

Italian square (*Piazza d'Italia*)

1951, Rome

oil on canvas

James and Diana Ramsay Fund 2022

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

The Greek-born Italian artist Giorgio de Chirico commenced his artistic study in 1900 at the Athens Polytechnic. In 1909 De Chirico moved to Milan, where he began to develop a new visual language in his practice, utilising a flatter, more abstracted, pictorial plane. Arriving in Paris in 1911, he immersed

himself in the Parisian avant-garde, establishing connections with the Cubists and later the Surrealist artists.

During a period of dynamic output and experimentation in Paris, de Chirico developed his theory of Metaphysical Art (*Pittura Metafisica*). His works in this style depict bold Italian architecture, often devoid of people but with disquieting and unexpected juxtapositions of various objects and forms, suggesting that the compositions are intended to express a meaning beyond their literal subjects. These works create an imagined world of known objects presented in disjunctive associations beyond the realms of reality.

In his double self-portrait, De Chirico depicts himself simultaneously as a human being, who gazes boldly out of the canvas, and as a marble bust, which appears to stare blankly at the flesh-and-blood artist. On the other hand, *Italian square*, a later work in the artist's oeuvre but one that re-embraces themes prominent in his early work, shows a cityscape in which the real and surreal are juxtaposed, with the raking light adding to the uncanny sense of the work.

Pablo Picasso

born Malaga, Spain 1881

died Mougins, France 1973

Head of a woman, in profile

(Tête de femme, de profil)

plate 6 from the series *Les Saltimbanques*

1905; printed 1913, Paris, published by

Ambroise Vollard

drypoint on Japan paper

Gift of the Art Gallery of South Australia

Foundation 2011

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20118G41

Picasso's willingness – even playfulness – to change his visual vocabulary is evident in the selection of prints in the exhibition. Two drypoints from his earliest series of prints were made soon after the artist moved to Paris and before his experiments with Cubism. Instructed in printmaking techniques by his friend Eugène Delâtre, Picasso created a suite of drypoints between 1904 and 1906, which were later published by his dealer Ambroise

Vollard. Picasso's imagery was influenced by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's frank depictions of circus performers, dancers and harlequins. Picasso saw these figures as outsiders in society, a position with which he, as an artist, perhaps also identified. The forms in *Tête de femme, de profil* and *Salome* are rendered in line rather than tone using the drypoint technique, whereby the delicate outlines are scratched onto a zinc plate with a sharp instrument.

Picasso took up lithography at the end of the Second World War in the workshop of Fernand Mourlot, a master printer, after a break of fifteen years. His renewed interest in the medium coincided with a new love, Françoise Gilot, whom he had met in 1943 and with whom he had two children, Paloma and Claude, before separating in 1953. *Figure composée II*, a wash drawing with gouache and crayon on lithographic paper, which was then transferred to stone for printing, was created in March 1949. The large portrait depicts Françoise Gilot's face in profile, and from the front. It was made during a period of intensive involvement with lithography, Picasso completing as many as three portraits of her in one day.

Pablo Picasso

born Malaga, Spain 1881

died Mougins, France 1973

Woman in a Black Hat

1909, Paris

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey
Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey,
and with funds from the Florence Scott Libbey
Bequest in Memory of her Father,
Maurice A. Scott

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1984.15

Picasso's rejection of realistic representation in painting in around 1908 led him to experiment with a radical new approach. Working closely with fellow artist Georges Braque, he developed a style which came to be known as 'analytic Cubism'. As the name suggests, the artists approached the subject of the painting, whether portrait, still life or landscape, as a problem to

be analysed. The subject was depicted in the work as a series of shapes and planes, as though viewed simultaneously in the round. Working in a restricted palette of dark tones, the artists created a new pictorial structure, one that collapsed the distinction between figure and ground.

Woman in a Black Hat, 1909, belongs to a series of paintings and sculptures Picasso made of his companion and fellow artist, Fernande Olivier (Amélie Lang). Picasso depicted her in this new vocabulary, making small adjustments as he explored unfamiliar representational territory.

Pablo Picasso

born Malaga, Spain 1881

died Mougins, France 1973

Salome

plate 14 from the series *Les Saltimbanques*

1905; printed 1913, Paris, published by

Ambroise Vollard

drypoint on old Japan paper

Roy and Marjory Edwards Bequest Fund 2011

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20118G42

Composed figure II

(*Figure composée II*)

1949, Paris; printed by Fernand Mourlot;

published by Galerie Simon, Paris

lithograph on paper

V.B.F. Young Bequest Fund with assistance from

Mark and Jill Awerbuch 2009

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20097G108

Large head of Jacqueline wearing a hat

1962, Mougins, France; printed by Hildago
Arnéra, Vallauris, France
colour linocut on paper

V.B.F. Young Bequest Fund 2000

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20001G10

Henri Matisse

born Le Cateau-Cambrésis, France 1869

died Nice, France 1954

Standing dancer

from the portfolio *Ten dancers*

1927, published by Galerie d'Art Contemporain
de Paris, Paris

lithograph on paper

South Australian Government Grant 1979

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

7913G59

Resting model

1922, Nice, France

lithograph on paper

South Australian Government Grant 1971

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

717G34

Henri Matisse

born Le Cateau-Cambrésis, France 1869

died Nice, France 1954

The nightmare of the white elephant (*Le cauchemar de l'éléphant blanc*)

from the portfolio *Jazz*

1947, Nice, France; or Vence, France; published
by Tériade Éditeur, Paris

colour pochoir (stencil) on paper

Gift of Justice Bruce Debelle, the late Brian
Fricker, Randal McGregor and Dick Whittington
QC, through the Art Gallery of South Australia
Foundation Collectors Club 2003

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20038G78

Henri Matisse

born Le Cateau-Cambrésis, France 1869

died Nice, France 1954

Dancer Resting

1940, Paris

oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. C. Lockhart McKelvy

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1947.54

Henri Matisse, despite being a contemporary, rival and friend of Pablo Picasso, developed his own painting style. A huge contrast to Cubism, Matisse's approach, rather than the faceted forms and neutral palettes of early Cubism, accentuated flatness, bold lines and colours so shockingly vivid that they earned the artist and his circle the label of 'Fauves' (wild beasts). In *Dancer Resting*, he depicts one of his favorite models, Lydia Delectorskaya, in a moment of uninhibited repose as she lounges on a chair.

Several clues reveal the setting to be Matisse's studio: the painting table at lower right, the easel with a canvas in progress at upper right, the houseplants and the patterned wallpaper. The model's black-and-white blouse echoes the decorative elements of the background, while high slits in her green skirt reveal her bare legs. Matisse rendered her body and the elements of the room in clearly defined areas of nearly solid colour with minimal shading, negating any illusion of dimension.

Amedeo Modigliani

born Livorno, Italy 1884

died Paris, France 1920

Paul Guillaume

1915, Paris

oil on wood panel

Purchased with funds given by

Mrs C. Lockhart McKelvy

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1951.382

In Amedeo Modigliani's portrait of the art dealer and writer Paul Guillaume at home, he simplified forms, limited the range of colours and flattened space. The glass-fronted bookcase and upright piano in the background attest to the subject's interests. Guillaume was a champion of contemporary European painting and traditional African art and he amassed an important collection of sculptures and masks. Here, Modigliani reduced the sitter's facial features – brows, eyes, nose, mouth and moustache – to their bare essentials.

The flattened face and dark eyes echo the qualities of African masks found in Guillaume's collection. In the early twentieth century, African art and cultural objects were highly prized by many artists in Europe and North America. For the painters who sought to break away from the traditions of Western art history, the art of other cultures offered crucial models and inspiration, even though modern artists often had little understanding of or interest in their significance in those cultures.

New perspectives on the human figure

The study of the human figure was central to a formal nineteenth-century art education, whereby anatomical exactitude and lifelike dimensions were emphasised. The foundational modes of study at the celebrated art academies (for example, the Royal Academy, London) were, first, learning by drawing from casts, followed by drawing from life. These were considered the skills through which all artists honed their craft. By the early twentieth century, new artistic currents and the ever-proliferating experiments in abstraction pushed the boundaries of how bodies and faces might be represented. While the previous generation had often looked to new subjects to enhance the modernity of their work, many artists in this second wave of artistic experimentation turned to figurative artistic traditions – portraits, self-portraits and nude or minimally dressed models – which they subverted and transformed with radically innovative painting styles.

A groundbreaking and profoundly influential movement of the early twentieth century was Cubism, conceived by Spanish-born Pablo Picasso and the French artist Georges Braque, both of whom departed from single-point perspective to depict the human figure as dynamically multifaceted – as if the subject could be seen from multiple sides simultaneously. This departure from the established tradition, while broadly viewed as radical and shocking, inspired other artists to adopt this approach of dissolving the borders of human figures, some as a way to express their own complicated connection to the emerging modern world; others seeking to depict not merely the exterior world of their subject but rather to expose their subject's psyche and inner world through outward expression on canvas.

Max Beckmann

born Leipzig, Germany 1884

died New York, United States of America 1950

The beggars (*Die Bettler*)

plate 7 from the series *Trip to Berlin*
(*Berliner Reise*)

1922, Berlin; printed by C. Naumann's Drukerei,
Frankfurt

lithograph on paper

V.B.F. Young Bequest Fund 2011

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20116G127

Max Beckmann

born Leipzig, Germany 1884

died New York, United States of America 1950

Self portrait

1918, Munich, Germany

drypoint on paper

South Australian Government Grant 1986

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

863G11

Stanton Macdonald-Wright

born Virginia, United States of America 1890

died California, United States of America 1973

Synchromy, Blue-Green

1916, New York City

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1996.19

In 1913, drawing on Cubism and theories of colour, Stanton Macdonald-Wright and a fellow artist Morgan Russell began to push the boundaries of abstract painting, abandoning real-world subjects and recognisable motifs to arrive at an expression of ideas purely through colour. Synchromy (meaning ‘with colour’), as they called their style, was one of the first abstract art movements established by US artists. As Macdonald-Wright explained in 1916, the year he made *Synchromy, Blue-Green*, ‘I strive to divest my art of all anecdote and illustrations and to purify it so that the emotions of the spectator can become entirely “aesthetic”, as in listening to music’.

This painting is a quintessential expression of these ideas on art. Representing only vivid colours, the composition is nevertheless dynamic and captivating. The cluster of warm reds and oranges near the upper-left corner seems to radiate energy against the irregular shapes in cool tones that take up most of the surface.

Helen Frankenthaler

born New York, United States of America 1928

died Connecticut, United States of America 2011

Blue Jay

1963, New York City

oil on canvas

Gift of The Woodward Foundation

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1977.52

A major figure in the Abstract Expressionist movement, Helen Frankenthaler produced compositions that emphasised how paint was applied, developing a technique she termed 'soak staining' to create a watercolour effect with oil paints. After positioning raw canvas, which is more absorbent unprimed, on the floor, she poured turpentine-diluted paint across the surface, using a coffee can with a hole cut in it. This process created large puddles of colour, which she sometimes left to dry or spread over more of the picture plane with brushes or rollers. As the oil soaked into the canvas, the pigment and surface fused together. The excess oil dispersed further, creating a halo-like effect around the vibrant hues. Through chance and her manipulation of the materials, Frankenthaler created compositions that echo natural forms without truly depicting them.

Pure abstraction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Paris was the uncontested centre of the artistic world, with artists flocking from across the globe to study in its ateliers and mix with like-minded individuals. Although the city had witnessed the emergence and evolution of many of the most radical of the new art movements, by the early decades of the twentieth century, Paris's dominance as the centre of artistic experimentation had begun to wane, with other locations across Europe increasingly rising to prominence. By way of example, Germany gave birth to the Expressionist movement, which looked to non-Western art and folk-art media traditions as a means of exploring intense emotional states, while the Swiss Dada movement, emerging at the height of the First World War, embraced the absurd to mock and deride contemporary society, using collage, assemblage and found objects to actively highlight the absurdity of war.

The influence of Russian Abstraction began to be felt across Europe and in the United States in the wake of the mass waves of migration preceding the Second World War. This new abstraction was austere, politically engaged and motivated by the desire to reflect the modern industrialised world. German and Dutch avant-garde groups with a strong focus on design – such as Bauhaus and de Stijl – quickly adopted and adapted the Russian aesthetic and when members of these groups emigrated to the United States they cemented the role of abstraction in contemporary teaching practices. The émigré artists undoubtedly influenced the speed with which abstraction was adopted across the United States, although around this time a new local group was establishing its own directions. The American Abstract Artists Cooperative was founded in 1937 and counted Ilya Bolotowsky, Gertrude Glass Greene and Irene Pereira among its earliest members.

Ilya Bolotowsky

born St Petersburg, Russia 1907

died New York, United States of America 1981

Untitled

1936–37, New York City

oil on canvas

Gift of the Woodward Foundation, by exchange

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

2005.102

Ben Nicholson

born Denham, England 1894

died London, England 1982

1954, July 30 (Signal)

1954, St Ives, England

pencil & watercolour on paper

A.R. Ragless Bequest Fund 1967

Art Gallery of South Australia Adelaide

6710D9

Ben Nicholson

born Denham, England 1894

died London, England 1982

Ides of March

1952, St Ives, England

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1952.90

Nicholson developed the reductivism for which he is famous in a sustained decade of work between what he regarded as his first wholly abstract painting, in 1923, and the minimally coloured – many simply white – low-relief constructivist works from the early 1930s. In the latter he sought harmonious balance between carefully arranged circles, squares and rectangles.

Nicholson was committed to the belief that every aspect of human life was conditioned by form and colour and that abstraction could be understood as having unlimited potential to speak a commonly understood language. He cited the fundamental

influence of abstraction in daily life, integral to forms as diverse as contemporary architecture, typography and the industrial design of household items.

Nicholson's aesthetic interests oscillated between the purity and mathematical beauty of geometry and subtle allusions to the visible world.

A late work, *Ides of March* is compositionally sophisticated, embodying a tension between abstraction and figuration. The title refers to the date of Julius Caesar's assassination by stabbing in 44 BCE. The dynamic, thrusting and arcing lines of this painting, along with its limited palette of fleshy tones, hint at a fragmenting, post-cubist body – or bodies – in dramatic motion.

Irene Rice Pereira

born Massachusetts, United States of America
1902

died Marbella, Spain 1971

Projecting Planes

1947, New York City

oil on canvas

Museum Purchase

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1948.71

Irene Rice Pereira's studies in New York and travels throughout Europe exposed her to the aesthetics of Cubism, Constructivism and the Bauhaus School, each of which utilised geometric forms and non-traditional materials in distinct ways. On her return to New York, she developed her own style and founded a school for industrial arts, the Design Laboratory. One of the core principles of the program was 'truth to the materials', an embrace of the natural qualities of artistic media without attempting to disguise them.

Projecting Planes demonstrates Pereira's geometric aesthetic and her engagement with the potential of her materials. For her canvas she chose a lightweight, woven linen, which she coated with a thin commercial primer to leave the fabric's texture exposed. She then applied a succession of paint layers of various consistencies, including one with a paste-like thickness spread on the canvas in horizontal bands with a palette knife (shaped like a small trowel) to add texture. Some areas, like the coral-coloured vertical rectangle near the bottom-right corner, have a pebbled surface. In contrast, the area of smooth black lines is created by enamel paint.

Hans Hofmann

born Weißenburg, Bavaria 1880

died New York, United States of America 1966

Night Spell

1965, New York City

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1970.50

In *Night Spell* fields of colour seem to burst forward, out of the picture plane and into the viewer's space. Hans Hofmann contrasted areas of thickly applied, dimensional paint with thinner washes, as well as zones of bright colour against more neutral ground to animate the surface. He referred to this sensation as 'push and pull' – the ability of tone and shape to create an illusion of depth and movement in an abstract painting.

Four large rectangles dominate the composition: the fiery hues of two red forms are balanced by the cool purple rectangle to the left and the green shape near the bottom. The colours evoke an urban environment at night, with the glow of neon signs and traffic lights radiating in the darkness, although Hofmann's abstract aesthetics invite the viewer to make their own associations.

Morris Louis

born Baltimore, Maryland, United States of
America 1912

died Washington DC, United States of
America 1962

Dalet Tet

1959, Washington, DC

acrylic resin (Magna) on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey
Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey
Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

2005.32

Louis was an early adopter of the colour field movement, whereby artists painted great swathes of solid colour across a surface, creating the illusion of an exceedingly flat picture plane. A subcategory of the more broadly defined Abstract Expressionism, the colour field movement elevated colour above all other elements in their expressionist works.

To achieve his 'flat' effects, Louis utilised the relatively new synthetic polymer paints, thinned to a low viscosity to allow their easy flow across the canvas. His use of an unprimed surface meant that the pigment bled into the cloth like a dye rather than remain on the surface, as did paint. He produced his paintings in thematic series, never assigning them titles, which posed a significant problem at his death. Presented with four hundred or more untitled works, the artist's estate named the works from this particular series – the *Veil* series – using letters from the Hebrew alphabet, in this instance 'dalet' and 'tet' being the fourth and ninth letters.

Gertrude Glass Greene

born New York, United States of America 1904

died New York, United States of America 1956

Composition

1940, New York City

oil on wood panel

Gift of the Woodward Foundation, by exchange

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

2005.104

A founding member of the American Abstract Artists (AAA), Gertrude Glass Greene began experimenting in 1935 with abstract relief constructions, creating hybrid works between painting and sculpture. Often considered the first to do so, she synthesised the diverse aesthetics of Cubism, Russian Constructivism and Neoplasticism in her avant-garde work. The dimensionality of *Composition* engages the viewer differently from a flat canvas, encouraging a dynamic experience, that of viewing the work from different angles.

Small details, like the unexpected red edges of the grey shapes, invest the work with a playful spirit, the shapes themselves recalling children's wooden building blocks. Greene cut out pieces of Masonite, plywood and other timber, gluing them to a Masonite support. She mixed hard lines and sharp angles with the single curving form that anchors the composition. Although she rejected representation, she did offer one intelligible element here: an arrow, which directs the eye around the work.

László Moholy-Nagy

born Bácsborsód, Bács Kiskun, Hungary 1895

died Chicago, United States of America 1946

Am2

1925, Berlin

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1996.20

Like many of the artists of his generation, Moholy-Nagy believed society needed a new art, one that could rebuild and serve a better future. His utopian ideals sought to integrate contemporary technology into all aspects of art and design. He claimed that ‘The new world needs Constructivism because it needs fundamentals that are without deceit’. This belief led Moholy-Nagy to innovate by incorporating industrial materials and technologies into his abstract art, in 1923 even outsourcing the making of his paintings to an industrial manufacturer.

In 1920 Moholy-Nagy abandoned representational art to pursue non-objective abstraction in a wide-ranging body of work that included painting, photography, film, sculpture, advertising, product design and theatre sets. His aim was to unify art, industry and technology, using a mix of traditional and synthetic materials in his geometric constructions.

The painting *Am2* belongs to this particularly fertile period. Employing colour, abstraction and transparency, Moholy-Nagy's work depicts a series of complex geometric relationships. It can be argued that these forms bear no relationship to the art made in the past but rather relate to the new world the Bauhaus was seeking to build. Moholy-Nagy was forced to flee Germany when the National Socialists came to power, migrating to America in 1937, where he became the director of the New Bauhaus in Chicago.

Ad Reinhardt

born New York, United States of America 1913

died New York, United States of America 1967

Number 1, 1951

1951, New York City

oil on canvas

Museum Purchase

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1952.99

Josef Albers

born Bottrop, Germany 1888

died Connecticut, United States of America 1976

I S e

1970, New Haven, Connecticut, United States
of America

colour screenprint on paper

South Australian Government Grant 1977

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

7712G34

Josef Albers

born Bottrop, Germany 1888

died Connecticut, United States of America

1976

Homage to the Square:

White Setting

1959, New Haven, Connecticut, United States of America

oil on Masonite

Gift of the Woodward Foundation in memory of Sarah R. Woodward, wife of Stanley Woodward
Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1985.134

Even the simplest subject can provide endless opportunities for artistic experimentation. *Homage to the Square: White Setting* is one of several hundred paintings created by Josef Albers, all of which portray superimposed squares in different colours. Each canvas features three squares – or four, as seen here – in solid hues. Albers carefully selected each colour according to how it would interact with the others in the composition, as he

believed that every tone's unique properties could only be recognised when set in relation to others.

To ensure uniformity across the series, the artist created the works under controlled conditions. He consistently painted the works on the rough side of Masonite panels coated with at least six layers of white primer. He used unmixed oil paint directly from the tube, which he applied to the surface with a palette knife (shaped like a small trowel). He borrowed the habit of working from the inside out, to avoid dripping, from his father, a house painter.

Piet Mondrian

born Amersfoort, Netherlands 1872

died New York City, New York, United States of
America 1944

Composition with Red, Blue, Yellow, Black, and Grey

1922, Weimar, Germany

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1978.44

Piet Mondrian divided the surface of this canvas into a white square and rectangles of various sizes and colours, separated by thick black lines. The only compositional elements are geometric forms, while the only colours are black, white, grey and the primary colours (red, yellow, blue). The black lines stop short of the canvas edges, creating an ambiguous sense of space in which shapes hover between forward projection and backward recession.

This painting epitomises the distinct, radical painting style Mondrian first developed in the 1920s. Having abandoned the representation of recognisable subjects, he instead explored the subtle relationships between line, shape and colour to create a new visual language. Mondrian believed that this style, which he called Neoplasticism, expressed the clarity and unity achieved when opposing forces are set in balance. He hoped his harmonious images would generate a positive social impact.

Sonia Delaunay

born Gradiesk, Russia 1885

died Paris, France 1979

Composition

1970, Paris

etching, aquatint, printed in coloured
inks on paper

David Murray Bequest Fund 1972

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

727G16

Signal

1974, Paris

printed and published by Artcurial, Paris
colour lithograph on paper

Bequest of Stephanie Schrapel 2025

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20256G26

Giorgio Morandi

born Bologna, Italy 1890

died Bologna, Italy 1964

Still Life with a Bottle

c.1951, Bologna, Italy

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1952.142

Both a painter and a printmaker, Giorgio Morandi specialised in creating still lifes, typically of vases, bottles and bowls, which he rearranged like a cast of stock characters. The familiarity and consistency of these objects allowed Morandi to focus his attention on the pictorial elements of shape, colour, light and space. Despite the seeming simplicity of his arrangements, on occasions he spent days setting up a composition in his studio to achieve a delicate harmony.

Still Life with a Bottle demonstrates Morandi's ability to imbue a seemingly humble subject with a sense of timelessness and grandeur. He limited his palette to a narrow range of whites, greys and yellows. The lack of dark shadows and strong contrasts gives these objects a looming presence.

Georges Braque

born Argenteuil-sur-Seine, France 1882

died Paris, France 1963

Still Life with Fish

1941, Paris

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art Ohio

1947.60

With their highly pigmented colours and sketchy application of paint, Braque's earliest works demonstrate the unmistakable influence of Impressionism. By 1905, however, with the proliferation and increasing diversity of artistic movements in the decades following the fading of Impressionism, Braque found himself attracted to the Fauves, a group of artists who were predominantly concerned with representing an emotional response through their artistic expression. Their influence, along with an encounter with Paul Cezanne's work at his retrospective at the Salon d'Automne in 1907, led to a cataclysmic change in Braque's

approach: his exploration of a new geometric form, which ultimately became what is now known as Cubism, whose two core tenets were a keen interest in geometry and the notion of simultaneous perspective. Following the First World War, Braque's approach to Cubism softened, with the emergence of more figurative elements in his work.

Still Life with Fish, 1941, was painted in the midst of the Second World War while Braque was living in occupied Paris. Presenting a humble repast with fish and lemons, the painting becomes a study in pattern, with the artist adeptly flattening the different planes of the image into a single, highly decorated surface of textures and forms.

Victoria Dubourg

born Paris, France 1840

died Buré, Orne, France 1926

Still Life with Flowers and Peaches

1874, Paris

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

2021.12

Camille Pissarro

born Charlotte Amalie, St Thomas,
Danish Virgin Islands 1830
died Paris, France 1903

Still Life

1867, Paris
oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey
Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey
Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1949.6

The oldest work in this section, Camille Pissarro's *Still Life* reveals how experiments with the materiality of paint during the nineteenth century paved the way for twentieth-century abstraction. Although the composition aligns with traditional still life arrangements and objects (a cut of ham in a ceramic bowl, apples, bread, hanging utensils and red wine in a glass carafe), Pissarro's conspicuous application of paint calls attention to the artificiality of the work. He employed a palette knife (similar to a small trowel) to apply large amounts of paint directly to the canvas. Rather than smooth out the material, he left it in thickly textured, almost sculptural layers. Beyond the represented scene, the true subject is the process of the painting's creation.

László Moholy-Nagy

born Bácsborsód, Bács Kiskun, Hungary 1895
died Chicago, United States of America 1946

Untitled

(1925), Berlin
photogram

South Australian Government Grant 1984
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

848PH7

Paul Klee

born Münchenbuchsee, Switzerland 1879

died Locarno, Switzerland 1940

The witch with the comb **(*Die Hexe mit dem Kamm*)**

1922, Leipzig, Germany

lithograph on paper

South Australian Government Grant 1980

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

801G3

Georges Braque

born Argenteuil-sur-Seine, France 1882

died Paris, France 1963

Study of a nude (*Étude de nu*)

1907–08, Paris

printed 1953; published by Maeght Éditeur

etching on buff paper

South Australian Government Grant 1978

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

7813G93

Reimagining the familiar

Modern artists perpetually aspired to originality and innovation, urging themselves and each other forward on their quest for new aesthetics, new methods and new theories. In this context, the Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro stated, ‘Don’t bother trying to look for something new: you won’t find novelty in the subject matter, but in the way you express it’. That is to say, the answer did not necessarily lie in new subjects. Artists largely incorporated the familiar objects and structures of their everyday lives into their work in their efforts to investigate new ideas.

Despite being considered a ‘lesser’ genre in the hierarchies of Western art, by the twentieth century still life painting was still an important site for artists to interrogate new ideas. Mundane objects and settings became a springboard for new approaches to painting:

Georges Braque, one of the founders of Cubism, notably began investigations with colour, form and pattern in a series of still lifes.

In terms of science, technology and culture, the twentieth century represented a period of unprecedented advancement, but it was also marked by catastrophic wars and economic instability, with artists expressing these tumultuous times through their works. For many of them, making work was a means to make sense of the world around them – their own perspective on contemporary life writ large in their work.

Paul Klee

born Münchenbuchsee, Switzerland 1879

died Locarno, Switzerland 1940

Villen für Marionetten **(Villas for Marionettes)**

1922, Weimar, Germany

oil on wood panel

Gift of Thomas T. Solley

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1996.15

Swiss–German artist Paul Klee was an exponent of two of the most dominant movements of the early twentieth century: *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) in the years prior to the First World War; and, later, in the 1920s, as a teacher at the profoundly influential Bauhaus school in Weimar, Germany.

Klee's work is difficult to categorise into a single style or movement, in that it demonstrates an affinity with many styles – Cubism, Fauvism, Orphism, Surrealism and abstraction more generally. Like so many artists working during this period of rapid artistic transformation, Klee was interested in colour theory and the ways in which colour affects a viewer's experience, an interest that is discernible in the varied use of colour in his work – from intensely saturated, to barely visible hues. Despite his deep intellect, Klee introduced whimsy and curiosity into his work, even crafting a series of around fifty marionettes (hand puppets) for his young son between 1916 and 1925. These puppets were made from materials he had found in his home and studio and illustrate his joy in creating amusements for his son. It is not implausible to suggest that *Villas for Marionettes* of 1922 offers miniature homes for Klee's hand-made puppets.

Helen Frankenthaler

born New York, United States of America 1928

died Connecticut, United States of America 2011

Madame Butterfly

2000, published by Tyler Graphics Ltd, Mount Kisco, New York

Yasuyuki Shibata, woodblock carver and printer
coloured woodcut from forty-six woodblocks on three sheets of paper

Gift of Colin and Robyn Cowan, James Darling AM, Lesley Forwood, Dr Michael and Janet Hayes, Kate Jordan-Moore, Gosia Kudra Schild, Shane Le Plastrier, Joan Lyons, David and Pam McKee, Diana McLaurin, Jan Murphy and Peter Walker through the Helen Frankenthaler Appeal
2017

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

20172G1

Madame Butterfly, an abstract and suggestive composition on three abutted sheets of paper, was made some forty years after *Blue Jay*. Although the work appears at first glance to be a watercolour, it is in fact a colour woodcut, created after a period of intensive experimentation with the master printer Kenneth Tyler. Frankenthaler sought to translate the appearance of her paintings on wood into the woodcut medium.

Working with the Japanese printer Yasuyuki Shibata and the paper-maker Tom Strianese, she laboured through an arduous proofing process in order to achieve the desired effect of weightlessness. The final work, which is recognised as one of the artist's finest achievements, is composed of over one hundred colour woodcuts from forty-six wood blocks and is printed on handmade paper simulated to resemble wood.

Yves Tanguy

born Paris, France 1900

died Connecticut, United States of America
1955

Passage of a Smile

1935, Paris

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey
Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey
Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1938.84

Pierre première (First Stone)

1947, Paris

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey
Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey
Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1996.22

A committed member of the Surrealists, Yves Tanguy produced compositions that evoke strange, barren and seemingly primordial landscapes. Although these works do not depict any recognisable place or subject, the shapes, colours and spatial arrangements suggest a dreamlike world, one that echoes reality. Tanguy generally incorporated a low horizon line into his paintings, which heightens the tension between the instinct to make sense of an image and the elements that subvert these efforts.

With the looming presence of these strange figures – *Passage of a Smile*, 1935, and *Pierre première* from 1947 embody Tanguy's idiosyncratic visual language and his sustained mining of the deep recesses of the unconscious mind. The light cast over his landscapes is invariably bleak, cold and otherworldly, serving to emphasise that the viewer is being absorbed into spaces untethered to conventional reality.

Charles Sheeler

born Philadelphia, United States of America
1883

died New York, United States of America 1965

Variations in Red

1949, Philadelphia or New York City, United
States of America
oil on canvas

Museum Purchase

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio
1949.107

Charles Sheeler was a leading proponent of Precisionism, an American style characterised by sharply delineated, flattened views of industrial subjects such as factories, skyscrapers and trains. He worked as both a photographer and a painter.

Variations in Red, possibly based on his own photos, is one of several views Sheeler painted of an abandoned mill in Ballardvale, near Andover, Massachusetts. He translated this structure into simplified geometric forms. Shades of red – from coral to orange to burgundy – define the brick walls of the building in sunlight and shadow. Areas of blue suggest reflections of the sky or the adjacent river, and a green rectangle may represent moss clinging to the bricks. Although the architectural elements are discernible, the title implies that Sheeler was more interested in exploring the nuances of hue.

Fernand Léger

born Argentan, France 1881

died Gif-sur-Yvette, France 1955

***Esquisse pour 'La Ville'* (Sketch for 'The City')**

1919, Paris

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey

Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

2000.9

After serving in the French army during the First World War, Fernand Léger focused on stylised, abstract impressions of Paris. Inspired by Cubist fragmentation, he combined urban components such as scaffolding, smokestacks, street signs and advertisements into a kaleidoscopic evocation of modern urban life.

This canvas was a study for a larger version of *La Ville (The City)*, now in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art in the United States. Léger said about this project:

I composed a picture exclusively with pure, flat colours ... The pure tones of the blues, reds, and yellows break away from this picture and invade posters, shop windows, roadside signs, and traffic lights. Colour had become free. It was a reality in its own right.

With his bright palette and abstract composition, Léger evoked the fractured, dynamic and hyper-stimulating experience of the industrialised metropolis.

Robert Rauschenberg

born Texas, United States of America 1925

died Florida, United States of America 2008

Round Sum

1964, New York City

oil and silkscreen ink on canvas

Gift of the Woodward Foundation

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1976.33

Robert Rauschenberg worked in a wide range of media, including painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography and performance. In the 1950s he began to make what he termed 'combine paintings', in which he collaged a painted surface with applied images, text and occasionally objects. In *Round Sum*, he juxtaposed silkscreened photographs taken from mass media with broad applications of oil paint and printing inks in primary colours (red, yellow, blue). His chosen imagery – the Statue of Liberty, an army helicopter, a construction site and a sailboat – evoke an urban environment, perhaps alluding to the social and political issues of the day. By the time he created this work, in 1964, the United States was escalating its military engagement in Vietnam.

A pioneering figure in modern art, Rauschenberg challenged the dominance of Abstract Expressionism. His interest in incorporating everyday items and imagery into his works contrasted with the non-representational paintings of his contemporaries.

Richard Diebenkorn

born Portland, Oregon, United States
of America 1922

died Berkeley, California, United States
of America 1993

Ocean Park No. 32

1970, Santa Monica, California, United States
of America

oil on canvas

Gift of David K. and Georgia E. Welles

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

2025.9

With Paris no longer the centre of artistic excellence and experimentation following the Second World War, it was the United States, particularly New York City, that emerged as a global artistic superpower and it was into this environment that Diebenkorn entered as an artist. Growing up on the west coast of the continent, Diebenkorn served in the US Army during the war and was stationed in New York, where he was able to view some of America's most significant art collections. As he was starting out as an artist, he was associated with the Abstract

Expressionists, working in bold geometric forms and exploring light and colour across the surface of his canvas. However, by the 1950s he had returned to a figurative style and became a leader in the Bay Area Figurative Movement, which combined the emotional expressiveness of Abstract Expressionism with a more pictorial approach.

Between 1967 and 1988, Richard Diebenkorn produced more than one hundred paintings in a series titled *Ocean Park*, named for the neighbourhood in Santa Monica, California, where he worked. The inspiration for these abstract canvases was the view of the beachfront and buildings from his studio window – although the artist admitted that he was less interested in capturing the scenery but more in its overall look and feel. As he commented about his work: ‘All paintings start out of a mood, out of a relationship with things or people, out of a complete visual impression’.

Grace Hartigan

born New Jersey, United States of America 1922
died Maryland, United States of America 2008

Harvester

1966, Baltimore, Maryland, United States of
America
oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Libbey
Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey
Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

2022.23

A key member of the Abstract Expressionist circle in the mid-twentieth century, Grace Hartigan nevertheless continued to find inspiration in the observable world. In the 1960s she embarked on new stylistic explorations, with one critic describing her emerging aesthetic, 'In the newest paintings, the forms are wider, more overtly figurative. Large, organic shapes surrounded by thick, black outlines constantly appear through the paint.'

Harvester is a transitional canvas from this period of Hartigan's career. In it, she maintained Abstract Expressionism's broad, gestural application of paint while turning toward figuration. She carefully layered washes of oil paint, beginning with greens and purples, before adding thick black outlines and overlays of opaque yellows and oranges. This palette conjures associations with the autumn harvest season.

Lyonel Feininger

born New York, United States of America 1871

died New York, United States of America 1956

Baltic, A Recollection

1947, New York City

oil on canvas

Museum Purchase

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1948.69

Lyonel Feininger spent the first sixteen years of his life in New York before moving to Germany, where he ultimately became one of the leading practitioners of German Expressionism and the avant-garde style promoted by the Bauhaus design school. With the rise of Nazism, Feineiger was forced to flee Germany in 1936, eventually settling in New York.

Having been exposed to Cubist art during its height in Paris, Feininger's work bore the mark of that movement, notably in his organisation of space by planes. But his work was also frequently infused with an air of mystery and wonder that was all his own. He remarked, 'That which is seen has to go through a process of transformation and crystallisation to become a picture'.

Ralston Crawford

born Ontario, Canada 1906

died Texas, United States of America 1978

Mountain Bird Maru

1947–49

oil on canvas

Museum Purchase Fund

Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio

1950.265

Figuration and abstraction

The ten decades of creative development between the Impressionists of the nineteenth century and the abstract painters of the twentieth century represented more than a mere aesthetic evolution; rather, this period constituted an incremental rejection of the limitations imposed on artists across art-historical time. The rise of pure abstraction gave painters the freedom to pursue their own aesthetic goals without the need for an identifiable, representational subject. That said, even as a growing number of them endorsed and celebrated abstraction, figuration never entirely disappeared. Some artists adhered to pure abstraction; others found inspiration in the world around them and translated their observations into imagery, while many blended the two concepts to create innovative forms.

Abstraction offered painters a wider visual vocabulary with which to express themselves; figuration provided them with an opportunity to reflect on history, current events or their own lives.

This century of creative developments, combined with the vast social changes of the period, established the foundation for a new model of art community. The various components of this new artistic community were connected more than ever before to become a global art network, whereby artists collaborated and shared ideas across continents and where a multiplicity of art movements co-existed. With such significant cultural exchange, differing art styles freely proliferated, making it almost impossible for art to be readily identified with movements in the way of the past and establishing the art world as we know it today.