

A shining light—recent acquisitions 2019–20

This is an exhibition of acquisitions brought into the collection over the past year. Its title was inspired by the song 'The shining path' from the 1986 album *Big Night Music* by British group Shriekback, the opening lyrics of which resonate in these uncertain times: 'We had lived a blessed time but we knew nothing'.

In times of social, political and environmental crisis, and the anxiety and doubt that those times might bring, artists play an essential role in shining a light on the inner spaces of our emotions and psychological states, and the external forces and situations that shape us, the world we live in, and that focus our eyes. Artists do this by presenting to us images that are ideas-rich alternatives to the mainstream media that so heavily saturates much of our daily visual experience.

Artists can show us a way through the mess and debris of the world to points of calm reflection on its precarious beauty, and on our complex humanity.

This is a disparate group of works unified by nothing but their presence now in the Gallery's permanent collection. But there are dialogues between works—sometimes in the conceptual teasing out of a subject, or in others an unexpectedly shared intention by artists working in vastly different social and cultural contexts. We see here intersecting responses to landscape, to country, to environment, to human frailties, and to the very acts of making and seeing.

Exhibitions promote a journey of some kind—physical, experiential. Each of these works might offer a pause for contemplation along the way. Perhaps it is best to encounter them in the same terms as a 2020 listener's review of the enigmatic album *Big Night Music*: as a 'collection of inventive, subtly shifting rhythms—all infused with an undertow of mystery and wonder.'¹

¹ Steven Krut, 'Shriekback: Big Night Music' [review of *Shriekback: Big Night Music*], *All Music*, 4 January 2020, accessed 31 August 2020 www.allmusic.com/album/big-night-music-mw0000195703/user-reviews

Exhibition partner