

# Barbara Brash—Holding Form

Featuring prints from the early 1950s to the 1980s, *Barbara Brash—Holding Form* surveys three decades of Melbourne artist Barbara Brash's prolific and exploratory output. Bringing together works from Geelong Gallery's collection and the Colin Holden Charitable Trust (on long-term loan to Geelong Gallery), the exhibition celebrates the significance of Brash's contribution to Australian printmaking.

Throughout her 50-year career, Barbara Brash (1925–1998) consistently experimented with and tested the limits of the printed medium. A pivotal artist in Melbourne's post-WWII printmaking revival, Brash's etchings, linocuts, lithographs and screenprints are recognised—as they were at the time of their creation—for their dynamism, visual harmony and celebratory use of colour. The works on display trace the development of her stylistic expression throughout the mid to late 20th century, providing new insights into her artistic achievements and remarkable legacy.

Brash was introduced to printmaking in 1947 when she started etching lessons at the Melbourne Technical College (now RMIT), supplementing the foundational training she concurrently received in painting and drawing at the National Gallery School. Brash was an avid student, taking additional classes at the influential and progressive George Bell School, where her work began to reflect the ideas and practices of modern art including the principle of dynamic symmetry.

Continuing to create work at the Melbourne Technical College throughout the 1950s and '60s, Brash translated her own contemporary experiences and aesthetic interests into powerful syntheses of elemental forms and stimulating colour palettes. A renewed interest in printmaking was felt throughout the city's galleries and art schools during this time, with both local and émigré artists teaching new developments in the medium to eager local practitioners.

The diversity of Brash's practice, which often saw her combine or modify existing techniques and materials, demonstrates her proficiency across numerous technical printmaking processes and her enduring belief in the potency of the printed image. She began working with screenprints in the mid-1960s, with the medium allowing her to employ colour to full effect. Her abstract compositions and depictions of the natural world showcase her intimate understanding of structure and masterful ability to capture the inner essence of her subjects.

Though the works in this exhibition conclude with those produced in the 1980s, Brash would continue to produce work into the mid-1990s, her explorations in the burgeoning field of digital printmaking technologies filled with as much enthusiasm and vitality as her earlier work. The breadth and persistence of Brash's explorations into the formal possibilities of printmaking continues to inspire, with her exceptional commitment to pushing the boundaries of printed imagery marking an important chapter in Australian printmaking history.

## Exhibition partner

The William  
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