

# Scenic Victoria—Land, sea, city

The Geelong Gallery collection of Australian paintings and works on paper is one of exceptional quality. One of the collection's distinguishing features is the array of rich and varied images that can reveal aspects of the history of Geelong and our wider region and state. From panoramic vistas to street life, *Scenic Victoria* celebrates the geography, landmarks, coasts, ports, and urban fabric that characterise and document Geelong and beyond. The restrictions placed on our movements throughout 2020 re-focussed our attention on, and appreciation for, our homes and local landscapes.

Numerous important works in the collection remind us that Geelong Gallery is located on the unceded lands of the Wadawurrung People of the Kulin Nation. The work of proud Wadawurrung artist Kait James introduces this exhibition: the touristic, souvenir tea towels that she alters offer a link with the title of the exhibition, which intentionally recalls travel posters of the early 20th century promoting local sights and tourism (such as James Northfield's *Geelong, Victoria, Australia*).

Wadawurrung ancestors are depicted in early colonial paintings by newly arrived artists such as Eugene von Guérard and William Duke who worked in the area known to the Traditional Owners as Djilang, meaning a 'Tongue of Land'. Painted within a few years of their arrival from Europe, von Guérard and Duke depict a land that has been occupied for tens of thousands of years by the oldest living culture on earth.

In works that extend beyond the Geelong region, Henry Burn depicts the view towards Sandridge (or Port Melbourne as it is now known) from the Point Ormond Lagoon. Von Guérard's extensive travels throughout the State are represented in his view of the Grampians. Swiss-born artist Louis Buvelot travelled through the Western Districts to record the property Terrinallum and on the other side of the State, the landscape at the foot of the Great Dividing Range, and Charles Douglas Richardson depicts the pastoral landscape of Bacchus Marsh.

For Australian-born artists like Arthur Streeton and Fred Williams, extended periods overseas saw them return to their homeland with a renewed enthusiasm to engage with the local landscape. Streeton embarked on an in-depth series of paintings of the Grampians on the invitation of Dunkeld property owner Harold Armytage. Williams's art was transformed by his immersion in, and observation of the You Yangs, and his work here belongs to that period in which he developed a highly original painterly language and pictorial interpretation of the Australian landscape.

Frederick McCubbin and Walter Withers captured early 20th century Melbourne and its waterways. Danila Vassilieff recorded the architecture and energy of the populated streets of Collingwood, and Max Dupain the enigmatic symmetry of Geelong's Art Deco waterfront. More recent images of suburban life by Robert Rooney, Jenny Watson and Howard Arkley, range across the streetscapes, factories, and domestic exteriors in which the Gallery's current solo exhibitor, Rone, commenced his career.