



Sally Smart—P.A.R.A.D.E.

A Geelong Gallery exhibition
19 March to 3 July 2022



Sally Smart
The Artist's Ballet 2021
installation view, Museum of Contemporary Art,
Sydney
Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Scout Presents,
Melbourne
Photographer: Felicity Jenkins
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On Saturday 19 March 2022, Geelong Gallery presents *P.A.R.A.D.E.* the second work in Sally Smart's trilogy in which she explores and contemporises the historical avant-garde performances and designs of the early 20th century Ballets Russes, widely regarded as the most influential ballet company of the twentieth century. Programmed to coincide with Geelong Design Week, Smart creates an experiential and immersive environment, comprising textiles (costumes and curtains), sculptural components and performance (video & sound) inspired by the sets and costumes designed by Pablo Picasso for the Ballets Russes' *Parade* in 1917.

Melbourne-based Sally Smart is one of Australia's most highly regarded contemporary artists. The act of cutting, splicing, pinning, layering and manipulating multiple fragments across spaces is central to her multi-disciplinary practice. Her use of painted and printed textile elements aligns with a long-standing interest in the domestic and feminine, and a desire to fracture or rupture societal expectations of gendered roles. The structural device of the curtain or backdrop—a main component of this exhibition— functions as a conceptual framework, along with costumes freestanding in space (suspended or on supports) as figures of performance in costume. Smart's performance assemblages, inspired by choreography, point to the body's capacity to express collective and individual anxiety.

The Ballets Russes was founded in Paris in 1909 by Russian ballet impresario Sergei Diaghilev. The company's reputation was, in large part, forged on its ground-breaking collaborations across creative fields, including projects with visual artists Pablo Picasso, Sonia Delaunay, Natalia Goncharova and Henri Matisse. *Parade*—on which Smart's installation is based—was a ballet choreographed by Leonide Massine, with music by Erik Satie and a one-act scenario by Jean Cocteau. It was composed in 1916–17 for Ballets Russes and premiered on May 18, 1917, at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, with costumes and sets designed by Pablo Picasso (in his first ballet commission). An integral component of Picasso's set design was the backdrop which simulated the exterior of a theatre, in front of which a troupe of carnival performers attempt to lure passers-by to their show through a 'parade' or procession of impromptu acts. In its focus on everyday carnival performers (and street performance), *Parade* has been noted for its democratisation of the ballet genre.

Geelong Gallery's presentation of Smart's *P.A.R.A.D.E.* follows *The Violet Ballet*, the first in the artist's trilogy of works, exhibited at Ace Open for the 2019 Adelaide Festival. *P.A.R.A.D.E.* will invite critical and public engagement in the impulses of early modernist avant-garde artists whose experiments were brutally disrupted by war, totalitarianism and displacement. Smart posits a contemporary resonance with today's geo-political climate and the worldwide disruption caused by COVID 19.



Media Release

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Sally Smart
Yellow Chout, 2017, (detail)
The Choreography of Cutting, PostmastersRoma
Gallery,
Rome, Italy
Credit: DGTMB Art Embroidery
Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Scout Presents,
Melbourne

The Ballets Russes distinct mixing of modernity and Orientalism also parallels with another key element of Smart’s practice: her ongoing engagement with traditional Indonesian shadow puppet performances, which for Smart, open trans-national ideas about identity politics and the relationships between the body, thought and cultural histories.

This exhibition celebrates the City of Greater Geelong’s designation as a UNESCO City of Design and Sally Smart’s contribution to art and design.

Programmed to coincide with Geelong Design Week

Geelong Gallery Director & CEO, Jason Smith says ‘We are delighted to present the work of one of Australia’s most critically acclaimed artists, and to present a new installation that aligns strongly with Geelong’s designation as a UNESCO City of Design. In *P.A.R.A.D.E.* we will see the presentation of new works augmenting a reconfiguration of some pre-existing components in a site-specific installation. The design and delivery of a performance work will be integral to the audiences’ experience.’

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Exhibition partners

Anonymous donor

Ruth Fagg Foundation



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