

# **ROSSLYND PIGGOTT**

## **I SENSE YOU BUT I CANNOT SEE YOU**

### **ARTWORK LABELS**

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Rosslynd Piggott is widely recognised for her refined aesthetic and poetic sensibility, receiving critical acclaim from the earliest stages of her career in Melbourne in the early 1980s. *Rosslynd Piggott: I sense you but I cannot see you* offers a rare opportunity to survey the depth and complexity of the artist's oeuvre, encompassing more than 100 works, including drawings, paintings, sculptures and installations. The exhibition explores dreams and the subconscious realm, the beauty of gardens and the natural world, synaesthesia, sensory perception and the poetics of space and place – recurring themes and concepts that have sustained Piggott's practice for more than four decades.

Piggott's work encourages an appreciation for the unknown or that which is not clearly seen. Glass, mirrors, air, clouds and other atmospheric conditions, all manner of natural phenomena as well as dreams, memories and significant places that have resonance for the artist, such as Japan, Italy and Paris, are recurrent motifs that call all of our senses into play. *Rosslynd Piggott: I sense you but I cannot see you* has emerged from close collaboration between the NGV and the artist, and offers an unprecedented opportunity to consider Piggott's unique contribution to Australian art.

# Glasses of water or A room with four walls of glasses of water

1986

oil on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne

The thing about glass that initially attracted me is that it was previously a liquid but now is a solid, and when it contains water – which is a fluid – it gives it a type of shape. And that fluid also has the potential to be poured out again. In a way, the glass and water are on the edge of being in flux from one state to another. The idea of a room made out of glasses of water seemed particularly mesmerising and seemed to offer the potential of being able to go inside that state of flux. When we look through glass we can look through to other areas. I think that's got something to do with time for me; it allows us to stand in the present and look to the past simultaneously.

ROSSLYND PIGGOTT

# Pomegranate

1990

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

# Point

1988

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

# Tattoo

1986–87

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria

Michell Endowment, 1987

DC7-1987

# Closed lily

1989

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

# Open lily

1989

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist



# Upside-down landscape

1989

oil on canvas

Monash University Collection

Purchased 1990

1990.7

Mysterious objects, plants and occasional figures appear in unpopulated landscapes in many of Piggott's paintings from the late 1980s. They reflect not only her interest in Renaissance painting but also in Symbolism and Surrealism. In the *Australian* newspaper in 1990, artist and critic Robert Rooney remarked on the poetic dream-like qualities of works such as this painting: 'In terms of colour, it is almost as if [Piggott] has followed a prescription suggested by [J. K.] Huysmans, who said of a picture by Puvis de Chavannes: "It is painted in lilac tinged with white and lettucegreen mixed with milk"'.

# Still life / blue

1990

oil on canvas

Collection of Martin Grant, Paris

# Most beautiful plant

1989

oil on canvas

Collection of Janet Holmes à Court, Perth

Piggott's 'most beautiful plant' is an ideal but botanically impossible specimen reflecting her fascination with the idea of perfected nature. Writing in *Tension* magazine in 1990, she linked this idea with the pleasure-seeking protagonist des Esseintes in J. K. Huysmans's 1884 novel *À rebours (Against nature)*: 'What interested me most about his book was the creation of an artificial nature ... the untiring and relentless processes to fulfil a vision of a finer, recreated Nature. I have always thought this to be a primary purpose of Art, a striving for a vision, in response to the world, but somehow outside it.'

# Italy

1988

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria

The Joseph Brown Collection. Presented through the NGV Foundation by Dr Joseph Brown AO  
OBE, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2004

2004.207

In 1987–88, Piggott spent four months in Italy, describing the experience as ‘complex, dense and still unfolding’. This painting was made during her residency at Il Paretaio, a Tuscan farmhouse established by Arthur Boyd that became a site for Australia Council studio residencies. It reflects her intimate response to the landscape: ‘I felt as though I were living inside a Renaissance painting. Perhaps those hills over there had not changed since 1450? Everywhere was evidence that this was a full, round place that people had lived in and built over generations and generations without much contradiction or change.’

*During the research for this exhibition I came across a text I had written (by typewriter) in 1988 called Incomplete notes on Italy. Although the voice of a younger artist, thirty-one years later, the sentiments are still so eerily valid. Here is an excerpt:*

*'Here I am recalling mild experiences of fainting due to an aesthetic and beauty overload ... These 'art fits', as I called them, reoccurred again and again during my stay in Italy. Before the Giotto, Madonna in Trono in the Uffizi, the Annunciation by Simone Martini and the soft, fleshy Virgin Enthroned of Pietro Lorenzetti in the same room. A beautiful courtyard in the Palazzo Vecchio. A chapel in the cloisters of Santa Maria Novella by Andrea da Firenze. My discovery of the Officina Profumo - Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella, an eighteenth-century room filled with simple crystal pharmaceutical bottles and the air thick with the smell of their combined contents. More tremors on a pilgrimage devoted to Piero della Francesca and the painters of Siena. I stood not more than twelve inches away (on a scaffolding) from the Queen of Sheba [Adoration of the Holy Wood and the meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba] – in the Church of San Francesco di Arezzo. And then, even amidst the restorations at the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, the perfect landscapes of Ambrogio Lorenzetti. And again in Milano, where in the Brera, for me, there is only one picture to look at, Piero della Francesca's The Madonna and Child, Angels, Saints and The Duke Federico da Montefeltro (Holy Conversation). And in Venice, a strange feeling of knowing my way around, even though I had only ever been there once before.'*

ROSSLYND PIGGOTT

# Nature morte – eggs

1990–91

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Shell Australia Limited,

Honorary Life Benefactor, 2002

2002.274

# Nature morte – eggs 2

1990–91

oil and gold leaf on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne

# The lovely hermaphrodite

1989–90

oil on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne



# 100 glasses

1991–92

handblown and engraved glasses, painted wood and wall  
glassblower: Michael Hook  
engraver: Perry Fletcher

Collection of the artist

Handblown glass vessels etched with single nouns, including place names, botanical species and the names of historical artistic and literary figures, appear in this installation which can be understood as a linear spatial poem. Writing at the time that it was first made, the art historian Chris McAuliffe observed: 'With their enigmatic titles engraved upon them, the glasses become vessels; bearers of memories, sensations, and mood. They cease to be merely one thing – a glass – and open on to the possibility of being anything. Language and object here combine ... as an open-ended poetic resonance'.

# Two solar systems (with new companion planet to pulsar PSR1829-10)

1992

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

# For kids

This painting is one of a number made by Rosslynd Piggott about the existence of other worlds. She was inspired to make it after reading about the discovery of a new planet by astronomers.

How many planets, solar systems and even universes do you imagine exist but haven't been discovered yet?

# Ellipse tilted to show compression

1991

oil on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne

# Two blue worlds

1992

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

# Dark sun

1991–92

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

# Arranged meeting – breath of two men

1999

handblown and engraved glass, found window  
glassblowers: Richard Morrell and Iestyn Davies

Collection of the artist, courtesy of Sutton Gallery

Piggott first exhibited this work in the 1999 Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art. Originally sited in a Georgian building, it consists of two glass forms, one of which was handblown by a master glassblower in Melbourne, the other in Liverpool. Through the process of glassblowing, the breath of the two artisans has been captured and preserved within the glass. Each time the work is displayed, the traces of these two men are 'reunited', brought together in this 'meeting' arranged by the artist.

# Pour slowly into me

1996

oil on canvas, handblown glass, painted wood

The Banyule Art Collection



# I don't know, do you?

1996–97

oil on canvas, handblown and engraved glass,  
painted wood

glassblower: Michael Hook

engraver: Perry Fletcher

Private Collection, Melbourne

# Suspended breath

1996

oil and silver leaf on linen, glass, painted wood, metal

glassblower: Richard Morell

shelf maker: David Poulton

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, 1999

1999.44.a-f

# Double breath contained

1996

oil on canvas, glass, painted wood

glassblower: Richard Morrell

shelf maker: David Poulton

Private collection, Sydney

# Rosslynd Piggott

Australia born 1958

# Gregory Pryor

Australia born 1958

## Love letter

1995

glass, wood, pain de sucre, watercolour on paper and photocopy, engraving, sugar flowers, mirror, Chinese stand

Collection of Rosslynd Piggott

# Cartes postales en verre (Fever, Waiting, Shadow, La Porte)

1995

photo-transfer on etched glass

ed. 8/10

Collection of the artist

# Collection of air 2.12.1992 – 28.2.1993

1992–93

air, wood, glass, transparent synthetic polymer resin, satin, cork, sealing wax, cotton, pen and ink on paper  
cabinet maker and co-designer: David Poulton

Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
South Australian Government Grant 1997

975S10

Recalling Marcel Duchamp's 1919 ready-made sculpture *Air de Paris* (a glass ampoule that the French artist filled with some 'Paris air' as a gift for a friend in 1919), in 1992–93, Piggott travelled to Europe and captured the air at various locations to create a 'collected air travel diary'. Her samples range from the generic 'air of Paris', to air collected at specific sites of art historical significance. In an added poetic gesture, Piggott sealed each vial with an 'R' in red wax – not only the first letter of her name but also the sound for the word 'air' in French.

# For kids

Some people take photographs, buy postcards or keep a diary when they travel to remember the places they have visited. The artist Rosslynd Piggott collected air from different places as a way of recording a journey she made from Melbourne to Europe.

See if you can find the names of the places she visited.

# Double breath (contained) of the sitter

1993–94 restaged 2019

sugar, pen and ink on paper, glass, gloves, shoes, chairs, mirrors, colour digital video projection (silent, looped)

Collection of the artist

Originally commissioned in 1993 for the exhibition *Creators and Inventors: Australian Women's Art in the National Gallery of Victoria*, this installation contains items from the Gallery's collection of decorative arts, including Venetian glassware, Viennese and English furniture, and nineteenth-century women's garments. Piggott's intuitive selection and placement of objects, which are brought into dialogue with a model house made from sugar, film footage of a Venus figure and various items from her own collection, suggests a domestic interior rich with possible narratives. Working against museological conventions, Piggott presents an allusive space where unexpected connections occur.



# Evaporated flower

2009

pencil, coloured pencil, envelopes, cards, found postcard

Collection of the artist

# Effets de vagues – particles

2009

pencil, coloured pencil, envelopes and cards,  
found postcard

Collection of the artist

# **Un jour de tempete – concentric circles**

2009

pencil, envelopes and cards, postcard

Collection of the artist

# Effets de vagues – spiralling circles

2009

pencil, coloured pencil, envelopes and cards,  
found postcard

Collection of the artist

# Fall

1993–94

gauze, mirrors, glass, plinth, milk, Super 8 film transferred to video transferred to colour digital video projection

(silent, looped)

film assistance: Michael Williams

glassmaker: Michael Hook

Collection of the artist

Liquids appear in various forms throughout Piggott's work. In this installation, they are seen in glass spheres, mirrored surfaces, a scientific vessel containing milk and footage of a female figure submerged underwater. Together, they allude to a range of associations including sex, life, birth, death and various emotional and dream-like states.

Piggott's mesmerising footage was filmed on Super 8 through an underwater window in the former Olympic swimming pool on Melbourne's Batman Avenue. The installation first appeared in the exhibition *The Aberrant Object: Women, Dada and Surrealism* at the Museum of Modern Art at Heide in 1993.

# Constructing Paris

1996–97

printed leather, synthetic fibre, painted wood

cabinet maker and co-designer: David Poulton

screen printer: Larry Rawlings

glove maker: Antonio Murolo, L'Excelsior Guanti, Naples

Gift of an anonymous donor, 2019

The sartorial nature of this work, combined with its specificity to the city of Paris, calls to mind the nineteenth-century figure of the flâneur made famous by Charles Baudelaire in his celebrated essay 'The Painter of Modern Life' (1863). An elegant dandy who drifts through the city taking in the spectacles of modern urban life, the flâneur was an idea that was later taken up by the Situationists in the twentieth century and again became popular in critical theory in the 1990s at the time when Piggott made this work.

# Conversation

1995

cotton nightdresses, wire coathangers, cotton thread

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of the Moët and Chandon Art Acquisition Fund, Governor, 1996

1996.179.a-c

Made following her residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris in 1993–94, *Conversation* is one of a group of works that relate to the artist's experience of living in Paris. It refers to an imaginary line that she envisaged running from her studio across the river Seine to the former studio of the late nineteenth-century French sculptor Camille Claudel, as well as to her correspondence with her then partner, the artist Gregory Pryor, in Melbourne. Like its companion work, *La Somnambule*, 1996–97, seen nearby, this work articulates ideas about human desire and intimacy, communication and mis-communication.

# Untitled (artist hands) 1–4

1991

pencil on paper

Collection of the artist



# La poupée, Egyptienne, Louvre, Paris

## La poupée, Egyptienne, Louvre, Paris 2

1995

pencil and watercolour on paper

pencil on cut paper

Collection of the artist

During a seven-month residency in Paris in 1994–95, Piggott produced a large number of works on paper in her small studio at the Cité internationale des arts. She made these two drawings following a visit to the Louvre where she discovered a small object that captured her imagination: a fourth-century voodoo doll that was used to cast spells during Roman times. Piggott's delicate rendering of the female form, whose tiny body is punctured by thirteen metal pins, brings sensitivity to an otherwise violent image.

# Belly 1–4, Paris

1995

pencil and watercolour on paper

Collection of the artist

# La Somnambule

1996–97

silk, hooks, coathangers, transparent synthetic polymer  
resin, stainless steel

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Contemporary Collection Benefactors 2003

417.2003.a-c

# High bed

1998

wood, metal, cotton, synthetic fibre, satin, transparent synthetic polymer resin, painted walls

wood construction: David Poulton

pillow construction: Annette Soumilas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Purchased 2000

NGA 2000.231.A-I

Beds are usually associated with intimacy, sleep and safety. In this installation, however, a bed is distorted in such a way as to become a site of anxiety. Connecting this work to the Freudian concept of the uncanny – a term used to describe something that is both familiar and frightening – the curator Juliana Engberg observed, 'Rosslynd Piggott's *High bed* is ... both symbolic of comfort and then deranged through a scale shift to produce the uncanny affects of discomfort. Its height produces a promised affect of vertiginousness; its tall sides offer no protection from the symbolic fall from grace'.

*The idea for this large sculpture was first expressed in a series of watercolours whilst in residency at the Cité internationale des arts, Paris, in 1993–94. I visited an exhibition at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs on the history of the bedroom from the Middle Ages to the 1970s – such a fascinating and somewhat unlikely topic elaborated on in exact detail. The experience was something like time travel via the space and decor of the bedrooms. At the same time, the beds provided for the resident artists at the Cité were small single beds. The sheets were dutifully washed every two weeks, invoking something of a cloister situation. My studio, however, looked out over the Seine towards the rear of Notre Dame. A sparkling Tour Eiffel could just be seen on New Years Eve, and the headlights of evening bateaux mouches produced a passing light show across the studio walls and ceiling featuring the shifting silhouettes of the huge trees bordering the river. A straight line could be drawn from my window across the Seine into a studio previously occupied by Camille Claudel. My head was full of images from days, weeks and months of art viewing in endless corridors of the grand musée.*

*One night, this over abundance of input, needing an outlet, seemed to transfer itself into an object. Perhaps, as I was processing the wonderful bedroom exhibition, wriggling in the Cité cloister bed, bathing in half sleep in the illuminations of the lights of the bateaux mouches, this state of over-stimulation, in an electric flash, produced the image of a swollen bed – an absent sleeper with the weight of a French maison upon her chest. I was able to realise this large object some years later in my studio in Flinders Lane, Melbourne.*

# Pillow

2000

automotive paint on composition board, wood, glass,  
wool, Japanese obi silk

wood construction: David Poulton

glassmaker: David Herbert

fabric assistance: Annette Soumilas

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Gift of the artist 2012. Donated through the Australian Government's  
Cultural Gifts Program

NGA 2012.1792.A-D

# Tremor

1999–2000

automotive paint on composition board, glass, mirror,  
antique Japanese pillowstands, linen thread, metal  
wood construction: David Poulton  
glassmaker: David Herbert

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne  
Gift of Rosclynd Piggott 2012

2012.105

Darkness equates with navigating new emotional terrain and venturing into the unknown in much of the artist's work from this period. As with the *Nature in Black*, 2001, photographs and objects, this sculpture and the related work *Pillow*, 2000, were made in response to a period of personal grief. A related series of works made in 1997, while Piggott was artist in residence in Saitama in regional Japan, similarly represents coming to terms with unknown territory, where she was trying to find a pathway through her experience of being a foreigner in Japan.

# Face in the earth

2000

synthetic hair and palladium on canvas

Collection of Jason Smith



# Nature in black 1–3

2001

type C photographs

photographer: Kenneth Pleban

Collection of the artist

# Nature in black

2001

Japanese obi silk, transparent synthetic polymer resin,  
painted wood

Collection of the artist

In contrast to previous works concerned with light, air and weightlessness, the 2001 *Nature in Black* series 2001 of objects and photographs explores darkness as a metaphor for various emotional states. As with the black lacquered sculptures *Pillow*, 2000, and *Tremor*, 1999–2000, seen nearby, these works explore darker aspects of the human condition. As Piggott noted at the time: 'These works deal with WEIGHT, GRAVITY, EARTH, LOSS, INK, TEARS, PAIN, RETREAT, but stepping forward. VOIDS. Voids that are metaphysical, emotional / psychological, but essentially hopeful.'

# Blossom

2002–03

Japanese obi silk, silver, pearl, silk thread, gloves

jeweller: Marcos Davidson

glove assistance: Diane Nuttney

Collection of the artist

# Block and breathing hole – 117 days in Japan

1997–98

glass, cotton, Japanese shikishi boards

Collection of the artist

In 1997, Piggott spent 117 days as artist in residence in Saitama in regional Japan. These works relate to her experience of being in a foreign place and reference, in particular, the writings of the Japanese author Yukio Mishima. In his 1949 novel *Confessions of a Mask*, Mishima describes a portable shrine (*omikoshi*) being carried through his home as a 'perfect cube of empty night' – a phrase that captured Piggott's imagination. As Yukito Tanaka, former director of the Museum of Modern Art in Saitama, observed, these works call 'upon Mishima's writing in an attempt to plumb the depths of darkness'.

# Block and breathing hole – 117 days in Japan

1997–98

glass, cotton, Japanese shikishi boards

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

Purchased with funds provided by the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales

Contempo Group 1999

63.1999.a-c

# Self and breathing hole – 117 days in Japan

1997–98

type C photograph

photographer: Motoi Okumura

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Purchased with funds provided by the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales

Contempo Group 1999

86.1999

# Self and breathing hole – 117 days in Japan

1997–98

type C photograph

photographer: Kenneth Pleban

Collection of the artist

# Plaits

1995

pencil and watercolour on paper

Collection of the artist



# Angels

1995

pencil and watercolour on paper

Collection of the artist

# Notes for Tattoo 1

1985

conte on paper

Collection of the artist

# Notes for Tattoo 2

1986

conte on paper

Collection of the artist

# Death wish of the last artist in the world (watched over)

c. 1983

pencil on paper

Collection of the artist

# Alfredo and Violetta seen as a particle of air

c. 1983

pencil on paper

Collection of the artist

# Breathless

c. 1984

ink on paper

Collection of the artist

# Do not forget eyelashes

1987

conte on paper

Collection of the artist

# **Do not forget butterfly powder, either**

1987

conte on paper

Collection of the artist



# Notes for The lovely hermaphrodite

1989

pencil on paper

Collection of the artist

# Notes for The lovely hermaphrodite

1989

pencil on paper

Collection of the artist

# Insect collection

1985

charcoal on paper

Collection of the artist

# The nymphomaniac

1986

conte on paper

Collection of the artist

# Girl looking into a well

1983

ink on paper

Collection of the artist

# Why is the action of dipping a beaker into a river and filling it so mysterious?

1983

biro on paper

Collection of the artist

# From one beaker to another

1983

biro on paper

Collection of the artist

# Bugs

1984

ink on paper

Collection of the artist



# Untitled (still life)

c. 1983

pencil on paper

Collection of the artist

# **The eyelash face, the eyelash, so beautiful, so wrong**

1984

charcoal on paper

Collection of the artist

# Love swirls lace top and drapery folds

c. 1984

ink on paper

Collection of the artist

# The embroiderer

c. 1982

oil pastel and pencil on paper

Collection of the artist

# The great dark

1984

pencil on paper

Collection of the artist

# Bubble smashes when it bumps into a house. Physics?

1985

conte on paper

Collection of the artist

# Red cheeks walking down road

c. 1984

biro and watercolour on paper

Collection of the artist

# Aura

c. 1984

biro and watercolour on paper

Collection of the artist



# Pimple

c. 1984

biro and watercolour on paper

Collection of the artist

# Land with bridge

1983

pencil on paper

Collection of the artist

# Beautiful land

1983

pencil on paper

Collection of the artist

# 2 hearts

c. 1983

biro on paper

Collection of the artist

# Looking at each other

c. 1983

biro and watercolour on paper

Collection of the artist

# Huge things and little things

1983

biro on paper

Collection of the artist

# Me looking at pigeon getting a drink from a pipe on a railway track

1983

biro on paper

Collection of the artist

# Two stones and roots

1983

biro and watercolour on paper

Collection of the artist



# Strong arm

1983

biro and watercolour on paper

Collection of the artist

# Slater face, slater mouth

1986

charcoal on paper

Collection of the artist

# Untitled (erotic)

c. 1983

conte on paper

Collection of the artist

# Endless blossom space – Night and day

2002–03

oil on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne

# Mirror – I sense you, but I cannot see you

1997

oil and platinum leaf on canvas

Collection of the artist

*I made this painting during a four-month Sai-no Kuni artist residency in Japan in 1997. I was based in Kitamoto, a small semi-rural town about an hour north of Tokyo in the Saitama prefecture. The chaotic underpainting refers to an unstable landscape and the ever-present possibility for obliteration. An overlaid grid of platinum recalls imposed systems of order in Japanese society. As a guest artist I was very much expected to participate in a public code of etiquette. At the same time, I was reading Yukio Mishima for the first time. His stories of intensely obsessive characters out of step with a perceived polite order of the reconstructive era of postwar Japan conjured a world of deep shadow, turmoil and uncertainty in contrast to the veneer of order to which I was presented. Earth tremors frequently interrupted my night readings, amplifying the very subject matter. Public and private, the seen and unseen, the real and the spectral, are all equally vivid in Japan. Buddhist and Shinto beliefs are blended – prayers are made to both figurative representations and a void. In my struggle to comprehend these elusive and complex spaces and further in a kind of tangled wonderment, one day I simply said to my host, ‘I don’t understand Japan’, and he replied, ‘Nor do I’. Reversed writing bruises the back of a platinum gilt surface appearing like a spectre in a foggy chaotic mirror, like a blindfolded plea for meaning.*

**ROSSLYND PIGGOTT**

# Mirror x 3

2008

oil on canvas, glass, rhodium

jeweller: Marcos Davidson

glassmaker: David Herbert

City of Stonnington Collection, Malvern

# Dividing infinity

2004–05

oil on canvas

TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville

Acquired 2006

2006.001



# For kids

Identified by the symbol  $\infty$ , which looks like a sideways figure eight, infinity is a concept that describes something that is limitless or eternal – in other words, something that goes on forever and doesn't have an ending. The artist Rosslynd Piggott has given this painting the title *Dividing infinity*.

Why do you think she gave it this name?

# Night blossom & double black holes

2007–08

oil, wax and gold leaf on canvas

Collection of Paul and Wendy Bonnici, Melbourne

# Night and mirrors

1999–2000

oil, silver, palladium and pearl on canvas

Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane  
Purchased 2000. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Grant

2000.150a-c

# Shadow

1997

oil on canvas and Japanese peacock feather brush  
technical assistance: Shusaku Nakahara

Private collection, Sydney

# Blush

1997

oil on canvas and Japanese swan down brush  
technical assistance: Shusaku Nakahara

Private collection, Sydney

# Unfolding flower-cloud space no. 2

2005–06

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds from the Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2006 2006.179

Japanese aesthetics and cultural practices have informed many of Piggott's works since the late 1990s. The stylised cloud and blossom motifs seen in this finely nuanced painting allude to the Japanese reverence for nature and rituals such as the cherry blossom festivals celebrated in Japan during spring. 'I'm interested in the blossom because of my interest in Japanese culture where the blossom is ... an important motif', Piggott once remarked. 'It's the appearance of life after a long winter, and a symbol of brief beauty and perfection. It's also the celebration of its ephemeral nature.'

# Air of flower cloud

2002

air collected in Japan, glass, wax, cardboard

edition of 12

glassblower: Edison Osorio Zapato

box maker: Norbert Herold

Collection of the artist

# Black rain

2002–03

oil and palladium on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne



# Extract in 3 parts: An extract from Part 2

2008

palladium on composition board, painted wood shelf,  
glass and rhodium-plated mirror

jeweller: Marcos Davidson

glassmaker: Peter Minson

Private collection, Melbourne

# Extract in 3 parts: Part 1 (Magnolia projection)

2008

two-channel colour digital video projection (looped),  
Victorian glass bell jars, sandblasted glass, glass, mirror,  
painted wood, wood, transparent synthetic polymer resin,  
cardboard, plywood

filmmaker: Sherridan Jane Green

cabinet maker and co-designer: David Poulton

Collection of the artist.

Proposed gift

# Extract in 3 parts: Part 3 (diamond box and sea projection)

2008

diamond, platinum, 18ct white gold, magnifying lens, automotive paint on wood, synthetic polymer paint on composition board, colour digital video projection (silent, looped), electronic components

filmmaker: Sherridan Jane Green

wood construction: David Poulton

jeweller: Marcos Davidson

Collection of the artist.

Proposed gift

*Extract in 3 parts*, first exhibited at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in 2008, presents a series of immersive installations that capture a sense of both the ephemerality and evolution of the natural world. In *Part 1*, sensual magnolia blooms are captured on film, projected through glass and onto the surrounding space, accentuating their transitory nature. In *Part 3*, an illuminated diamond – compressed matter, billions of years old – is contained within a suspended lacquer box. Footage of the ocean, filmed at night on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island), suggests that we are merely one part of a complex continuum.

# **Double – love flower eyes, incomplete (11th Century China)**

2005

oil and gold leaf on canvas

Collection of the artist

# Double – love flower eyes, multiplication

2005–06

oil and gold leaf on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne

# **Double – love flower eyes, shadow**

2005–06

oil on canvas

Collection of Faye Wilner, Perth

# Tea bowl

茶盞

11th century – early 12th century Dingzhou, Hebei province,  
north China, China

porcelain, gold (Ding ware)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Gift of H. W. Kent, 1938

3700-D3

# Ten different cloud types – cloud window and black holes

2010

oil on canvas

Private collecton, Brisbane



# For kids

There are lots of different names for clouds, for example, *cumulus*, *stratus*, *cirrus*, *altocirrus*, *cumulonimbus*. The name of each cloud type refers to its shape or colour or how high or low it appears in the sky. In this painting, the artist has painted ten different types of cloud.

How many can you see and name?

# Yamazakura

2006

air collected in Japan, glass, ink jet print, vintage  
Japanese silk bag, colour digital video (silent, looped)  
glassmaker: Edison Osorio Zapata  
filmmaker: Roberto Giostra

The artist is grateful to Joni Waka A.R.T. Tokyo  
Collection of the artist

This small installation pays homage to the Japanese writer Yukio Mishima who revered old Japan and the way of the samurai. The glass vessel seen here contains air collected by Piggott under a cherry blossom tree in the grounds of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. The photographs depict the scars made on the door of a general's headquarters at the military base in Ichigaya in the physical struggle that took place immediately before Mishima infamously committed *seppuku*. This is rare documentation since the subject of Mishima's suicide is still controversial in Japan today.

# Star – aria di Ninfa

2012–19

air collected in Italy, glass, mirror

glassmakers: Berengo studio and Leonardo Cimolin

glass engraver: Maurizio Vidal

The artist is grateful for the assistance of Lauro Marchetti, Director, Giardino di Ninfa

*Star – aria di Ninfa* is a collection of air captured near white wisteria growing over a crystal clear stream running through the Giardini di Ninfa, south of Rome. Ninfa and much of its population were decimated by battle and disease in medieval times. Recent generations of women of the Caetani family of landowners have converted Ninfa into a sublimely beautiful garden. Piggott sees the Giardini di Ninfa as ‘testimony to the power of regeneration’. Her related video *Star*, 2012, was made as an image of hope for the survivors of the Great Kantō earthquake and tsunami, near Fukushima, in 1923.

# Star

2012

colour digital video (silent, looped)

The artist is grateful for the assistance of Lauro Marchetti, Director, Giardino di Ninfa  
Collection of the artist

# **Pink space – Hovering scent of Jasmine sinensis**

2011

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

# Night – hovering scent of Magnolia Grandiflora (dark)

2011

oil on canvas

Private collection, Melbourne

Piggott has long been interested in the intangible – that which exists beyond the visible world – evident in her fascination with phenomena ranging from distant planets, to air particles and dreams. The paintings assembled in this final room of the exhibition – made in the past decade – arise from the artist's direct observations of flowers and focus in particular on their perfume. As Piggott has noted, the paintings are 'visual recordings that attempt to encompass other overlapping senses, synaesthetically, predominantly through a scent perception. The paintings fuse and evaporate collected information to offer a slow immersion'.

# Frozen wave, Void(ness) and flower sediment

2012–13

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist, courtesy Sutton Gallery, Melbourne

This painting was made by Piggott in response to the devastating earthquake and tsunami that occurred in Japan in 2011. Emerging from the artist's deep respect and reverence for the country and its people, the painting explores, as she has noted, 'the possibility of distilling an image of emptiness'. In this light-suffused and delicately painted composition, Piggott presents an image of stillness that raises fundamental questions about hope and regeneration in the face of human tragedy and the destructive forces of nature.

# Evaporated garden, powdered sky

2014

oil on canvas

Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane The James C. Sourris AM Collection.  
Gift of James C. Sourris AM through the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art  
Foundation 2018. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

2018.118a-c



# **Pink space and blurred prism**

2015

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

# Edge – Cherry blossom and 5 am

2016

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist, courtesy Milani Gallery, Brisbane

# **Mirror shift (Doubled) – Cherry blossom and Magnolia**

2016

engraved glass, mirror, painted wood

glass engraver: Maurizio Vidal

Private collection, Melbourne

# **Everbloom: and an extract of rose**

2017

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

# Rose and white wisteria, window

2017

oil on canvas

Collection of the artist, courtesy Milani Gallery, Brisbane

# Magnolia grandiflora and gardenia – drift

2018

oil on canvas

Private collection, courtesy Milani Gallery, Brisbane

# **Rose, rose and a shadow of violet**

2018

oil on canvas

Private collection, courtesy Milani Gallery, Brisbane

# Garden fracture / Mirror in vapour

2016–17

engraved glass

glass engraver: Maurizio Vidal

glass casting: Leonardo Cimolin

production assistance: Francesca Giubilei and Luca Berta

Collection of the artist

These engraved glass sculptures were made by the artist in Venice in collaboration with master artisans on Murano. Constructed from multiple layers of glass and mirrors, they contain complex botanical images of twisted vines, wisteria petals, magnolias and cherry blossoms superimposed upon one another. The glass matrix plays an important role both optically and conceptually, inviting the viewer to reflect upon their own physical experience and engagement with the work. *Garden fracture / Mirror in vapour* continues the artist's poetic exploration of the natural world and the idea of artificial nature.



*Regular visits to the city of Venice during the winters of 2013–17, and working in close collaboration with specific maestri have resulted in this body of work. The layered structure for these transparencies initially occurred from a fortunate mistake that then continued on its own journey, refining and developing, a process that is still continuing. The multiplied form of the engraved drawings approaches a deconstructed mirror.*

*I have long been drawn to an unclear mirror, as an object and an idea, and hold a sustained fascination for ancient mirrors darkened by the oxygenation of time, holding a vision of the non-self. The city of Venice itself is a series of darkened and indistinct mirrors, more so during the veils and vapours of winter. The privilege of living and working in this city with exceptional artisans whose skills and knowledge have been passed down over centuries of practice, amplified the making process. Daily movement across lagoons, through luminescent fogs, fractured views of Baroque decay – the city and my passage through it almost conjured the works from the inside out.*

*As we peer through refracted and bouncing surfaces, myriad bubbled lenses overlapped with broken wisteria, falling cherry blossom petals, laden peony, the multiplied vision of a garden in collapsed chaos is akin to an unpeeling of self. There is lost time and something found, further fracturing.*

**ROSSLYND PIGGOTT**