

## SHE-OAK AND SUNLIGHT: AUSTRALIAN IMPRESSIONISM

The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia | 2 April to 22 August 2021 | Entry fees apply



**Thursday 1 April:** In 2021, the National Gallery of Victoria will present *She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism*, a large-scale exhibition of 270 artworks drawn from major public and private collections around Australia including the NGV Collection. Featuring some of the most widely recognisable and celebrated works by Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin, Jane Sutherland, Arthur Streeton, Charles Conder, Clara Southern, John Russell and E Phillips Fox, as well as bringing to light works by Iso Rae, May Vale, Jane Price and Ina Gregory, the exhibition will present these works in new and surprising contexts by exploring the impact of personal relationships, international influences and the importance of place on the trajectory of the movement.

Highlights from the exhibition include Tom Roberts' iconic *Shearing the rams*, 1890, which depicts sheep shearers plying their trade in a timber shearing shed, and Clara Southern's *An old bee farm, Warrandyte* c.1900, a

nostalgic vision of the landscape, painted in a soft palette of twilight tones. Following a complex conservation treatment, visitors will also be able to appreciate the newly vivid colours of the Hawkesbury River as depicted in Arthur Streeton's *The purple noon's transparent might*, 1896, which will also be on display.

Also on display will be Frederick McCubbin's *The pioneer*, 1904, which x-ray analysis has revealed was painted over the top of an earlier 1892 work, entitled *Found*, which, until this recent discovery by NGV Conservation, was thought to have been lost. *Found* depicted a bushman holding the limp body of the girl in a heavily vegetated landscape. Visitors to the exhibition will have the opportunity to piece together the multilayered history of this work, the disappearance of which has mystified art historians for more than a century.

Demonstrating the multifaceted nature of this much-loved movement, *She-Oak and Sunlight* will reveal the many forms of Impressionism in Australia, including painting the landscape outdoors *en plein air* ('in the open air') and the rich legacy of the artists camps at Heidelberg. The exhibition will also present more than 50 works from the landmark 1889, *9 by 5 Impression Exhibition*, which takes its name from the dimensions of the cigar box lids upon which many of the works were painted.

*She-Oak and Sunlight* will chart the creative exchanges between leading figures of the movements in Australia by presenting artworks in thought-provoking groups and pairings. In particular, the exhibition will reveal the broader global context, personal relationships and artistic synergies between Australian Impressionists and those working internationally by juxtaposing Australian artworks alongside those by Claude Monet, Alfred Sisley, James Abbott McNeill Whistler and others drawn from the NGV Collection.

The NGV's recent major acquisitions will be on display, including Tom Roberts's *She-oak and sunlight*, 1889, first exhibited in the *9 by 5 Impression Exhibition* and acquired by the NGV in 2019, and the luminous *Young girl, Étapes*, c. 1892, by Iso Rae, acquired in 2020. The exhibition will also introduce audiences to important new works by May Vale, Jane Price and Ina Gregory, whose work has been acquired as a result



## MEDIA RELEASE

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of the NGV's recent and focussed efforts to collect the work of women artists from this period, enabled in part through the generous support of the philanthropic community.

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said: '*She-Oak and Sunlight* draws on the rich legacy established by the NGV's previous Australian Impressionism exhibitions, as well as proffering new research and discoveries that have only recently come to light. The exhibition will address the truly revolutionary nature of the movement, as well as the social and cultural contexts that defined this period of rapid change and transformation in Australian art history.'

*She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism* is guest curated by Dr Anne Gray AM with the NGV Australian Art Department. The exhibition will be made possible by bringing together works from many institutions and private collections around Australia. The NGV is grateful to the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales and Art Gallery of South Australia for the generosity and breadth of their loans.

*She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism* will run 2 April to 22 August 2021 at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Fed Square, Melbourne. Further information is available via the [NGV website](#).

**IMAGES:** <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/3i2tn4hfxwnfrvl/AABlrDib0jdQcn4TLmjLFn9Ra?dl=0>

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### Image caption:

**Tom Roberts**

*She-oak and sunlight* 1889

oil on wood panel

30.4 x 30.1 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Jean Margaret Williams Bequest, K. M. Christensen and A. E. Bond Bequest, Eleanor M. Borrow Bequest, The Thomas Rubie Purcell and Olive Esma Purcell Trust and Warren Clark Bequest, 2019

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