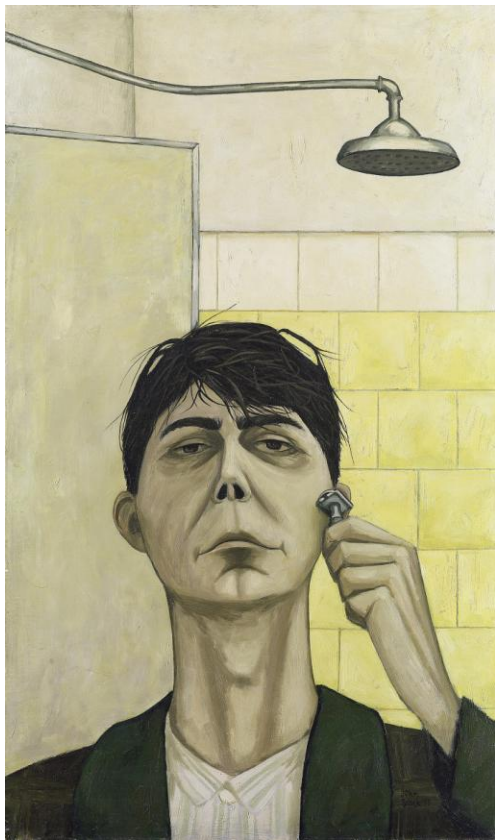


6 April 2009

JOHN BRACK

The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Federation Square
24 April – 9 August 2009

“What I paint most is what interests me most, that is, people; the Human Condition, in particular the effect on appearance of environment and behavior... A large part of the motive is the desire to understand, and if possible, to illuminate” John Reed, *New Painting 1952-62*, Longmans, Melbourne, 1963, p. 19.



Opening 24 April, the National Gallery of Victoria will present a major retrospective of the work of John Brack, the first in more than twenty years.

This exhibition will survey John Brack's complete career, incorporating over 150 works from all of his major series.

John Brack will bring together a significant body of the artist's paintings and works on paper, including pictures that have developed an iconic status and others that have rarely, if ever, been seen publicly since they were first exhibited.

Kirsty Grant, Senior Curator Australian Art, NGV said that more than any other artist of his generation, John Brack was a painter of modern Australian life.

“John Brack painted images which explored the social rituals and realities of everyday life. Long considered the quintessential Melbourne artist, Brack's images of urban and suburban Melbourne painted during the 1950s drew attention for their novelty of subject and instantly recognisable references.

“His work is much broader however and in this exhibition we will see the continuity throughout his career of his fundamental interest in people, human nature and the human condition,” said Ms Grant.

Frances Lindsay, NGV Deputy Director said John Brack was widely considered one of Australia's greatest twentieth century artists.

“The NGV has enjoyed a long association with John Brack: he worked as an assistant frame maker at the gallery in 1949, became head of the National Gallery School in 1962, and the NGV was also the first public institution to purchase one of his works. Brack's iconic works are certainly the highlight for many visitors to the Gallery.

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“We are thrilled to be continuing this special relationship by presenting this important and timely retrospective.”

The exhibition will be displayed chronologically, beginning with some rare early student works. Each phase of Brack’s practice will be explored, from his well-known urban scenes of the 1950s to the highly symbolic paintings from the 1970s.

Many of Brack’s most familiar paintings will be included in the exhibition such as *Collins St, 5p.m.*, *The bar* and *The Old Time*.

Brack produced compelling pictures which captured the essential characteristics of his subjects involved in everyday activities and, in some of his most engaging series, he depicted the characters of the racecourse, children at school and professional ballroom dancers.

Throughout his career Brack also painted the nude, still life subjects and portraits, both of family and friends - including artists Fred Williams and John Perceval - as well as commissioned subjects, such as Barry Humphries as his alter-ego Edna Everage.

During the 1970s Brack replaced the human figure with an assortment of everyday implements including cutlery, pens and pencils which he used as metaphors for the complexities of human behaviour and relationships.

A comprehensive audio and visual guide has been produced for this exhibition along with an extensive Education and Public Programs schedule. For more details visit ngv.vic.gov.au or call (03) 8620 2222. The exhibition will also be accompanied by a significant catalogue.

John Brack will be on display at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia from 24 April until 9 August 2009. Admission Fees Apply. Adult \$15.00 / Concession \$12.00 / Family \$42.00 / Member \$7.50.

John Brack is a National Gallery of Victoria Touring Exhibition and will travel to the Art Gallery of South Australia from 2 October 2009 until 31 January 2010.

Indemnification for this exhibition is provided by the Victorian Government.

Support Sponsors: Qantas, The Age, Sofitel Melbourne on Collins, Dulux Australia, JCDecaux, Melbourne Airport, Connex

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IMAGE CREDIT: John Brack, Australia 1920–1999, *Self-portrait* 1955, oil on canvas 81.5 x 48.3 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Purchased with the assistance of the National Gallery Women’s Association, 2000 © Courtesy Helen Brack


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