

2023 Melbourne Winter Masterpieces® Exhibition – *Pierre Bonnard: Designed by India Mahdavi*

NGV International | 9 June – 8 October 2023 | Admission fees apply



27 February 2023: The National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) in partnership with the Musée d'Orsay presents the major world-premiere exhibition *Pierre Bonnard: Designed by India Mahdavi*.

Opening in June 2023, the blockbuster Melbourne Winter Masterpieces® exhibition will feature more than 100 works by Pierre Bonnard – a leading 20th century French painter celebrated for his iridescent palette – presented within a contemporary scenography by award-winning architect and designer, India Mahdavi.

The paintings of Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) depict intimate domestic interiors, natural landscapes and urban scenes with subtlety, wit and a sensuous approach to colour and light. Renowned for his use of colour to convey emotions, Bonnard was declared by his close friend Henri Matisse as 'a great painter, for today and definitely also for the future'.

Curated by Paris's Musée d'Orsay in partnership with the NGV, the exhibition brings late 19th and early 20th century France to life through paintings, drawings, prints, photographs and decorative objects by Pierre Bonnard, shown alongside early cinema by the Lumiere brothers, and artworks by Maurice Denis, Félix Vallotton and Édouard Vuillard, Bonnard's early contemporaries.

To create the exhibition's scenography, the NGV has commissioned the celebrated Paris-based architect and designer India Mahdavi. Described by *The New Yorker* as a 'virtuoso of colour' and 'possessor of perfect chromatic pitch', and winner of Designer of the Year at the 2023 Wallpaper* Design Awards, Mahdavi will envelop Pierre Bonnard's works in an environment that complements Bonnard's distinct use of colour and texture, and evokes the wistful domestic intimacy for which his paintings are renowned.

A design icon, Mahdavi has appeared multiple times on the *Architectural Digest* list of the 100 most influential architects and designers. Her approach to colour, structure and texture has resulted in several acclaimed architectural projects, including collaborations with contemporary British artist David Shrigley and British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare for The Gallery at sketch in London. Mahdavi's interest in the domestic interior has also resulted in ranges of furniture and design objects for the home.

The exhibition features loans from the Musée d'Orsay, which holds the world's largest collection of Bonnard's work, along with significant loans from other museums and private collections in France as well as elsewhere in Europe, the UK, the USA and Australia. International lenders include Tate, London; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; Minneapolis Institute of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the Art Institute of Chicago.

These loans will be presented alongside important works from the NGV's own collection, including Bonnard's early masterpiece, *La Siesta (Siesta)*, 1900, previously in the collection of Gertrude Stein and acquired by the NGV in 1949. The exhibition also features a work recently acquired by Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family for the NGV: an intimate domestic scene by Bonnard's friend and contemporary in the Nabi circle, Édouard Vuillard. The exhibition will

also feature and contextualise Vuillard's painting of Bonnard's wife, *Marthe Bonnard with a dog*, 1907, acquired by the NGV in 1955.

Minister for Creative Industries Steve Dimopoulos said: 'The Melbourne Winter Masterpieces series delivers must-see exhibitions every year, attracting tourists from around the world and boosting our economy. *Pierre Bonnard: Designed by India Mahdavi* has been years in the making and it's going to be a hot ticket this winter.'

Christophe Leribault, President, Musée d'Orsay, said: 'The Musée d'Orsay is delighted to relaunch its programme of international exhibitions and share our rich collection of masterpieces by the great Pierre Bonnard for the Australian public to discover and enjoy.'

Isabelle Cahn, emeritus Senior Curator of Paintings, Musée d'Orsay, and lead exhibition curator, said: 'Bonnard's universal vision of space and time, his luminous and nuanced palette, his vibrant touch, his complex compositions revealing invisible worlds, make the artist a major figure in French painting at the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. The power of his talent is expressed through intimate subjects which are accessible to all, a tribute to his timeless genius.'

Of the exhibition, **designer India Mahdavi said:** 'Monsieur Bonnard and I share the same passion for colour — the way he invites us in his home and intimacy is sublimated by his very own sense of colour — for this exhibition, we dived into Pierre Bonnard's paintings and extracted some of his patterns and colours to recreate backdrops to his paintings, offering an immersive experience of a home to the visitor.'

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said: 'Pierre Bonnard is one of the most captivating artists of the post-Impressionist movement. This exhibition offers a rare opportunity to experience his work within a vivid scenography designed by India Mahdavi, one of the world's leading designers working today. Both the artist and the designer are celebrated for their ingenious use of colour, which made them a natural and authentic pairing for this NGV-exclusive exhibition.'

Tracing the Pierre Bonnard's emerging artistic practice in the 1890s, the exhibition starts with the artist's paintings and prints recording Parisian street life, which contain rich and often satirical observations of what Bonnard called the 'theatre of the everyday'. The exhibition then follows the artist's career in the first decades of the 20th century, when his perspective shifted to a more domestic vision of the life he shared with his life-companion, Marthe Bonnard.

The landscape became a primary subject for Bonnard from around 1910 onwards. Bonnard's passion for the landscape was influenced by his friendship with the painter Claude Monet, a near neighbour in the Normandy countryside until Monet's death in 1926. For Bonnard, landscape painting was a hybrid genre and often included glimpses of interiors and still lifes.

Bonnard's life shifted largely to the south of France from the 1920s onwards, leading to the preponderance of highly coloured, iridescent landscapes capturing the light and life of the South. It is these last paintings for which Bonnard is most celebrated and the exhibition features iconic examples from international collections including MoMA, New York, Minneapolis Institute of Art and Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Pierre Bonnard: Designed by India Mahdavi is on display from 9 June – 8 October 2023 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Tickets and information are available via the NGV website: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibitions/pierre-bonnard/)

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Images: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/kj2pwhtamt8oe3f7o3smt/h?dl=0&rlkey=13c16h7msbpxyuc7voes5caio>

Image credit:

Pierre Bonnard

French 1867–1947

The dining room in the country 1913

oil on canvas

126.8 x 135.3 cm

Minneapolis Institute of Arts

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