

## Cats & Dogs: ‘paw-some’ exhibition shares our love of furry friends

The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia | 1 November 2024 to 20 July 2025 | Ticketed



**28 June 2024:** From cattle dogs to lap dogs, divine felines to the black cats of superstition, **Cats & Dogs**, a new exhibition at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia opening November 2024, explores humanity’s deep connection to cats and dogs through more than 250 works of art and design.

Drawn from the NGV Collection and spanning all periods and media, this cross-cultural and transhistorical examination of cats and dogs in art and design reveals how our domesticated companions have long been a rich source of visual imagery in art and mark-making – from ancient history to the present day.

The exhibition features works by contemporary and historical artists including Rembrandt van Rijn, Francisco de Goya, Albrecht Dürer, Pierre Bonnard, Eileen Mayo, David Hockney, Jeff Koons, Hulda Guzmán and more alongside celebrated Australian artists, including Claudia Moodoonuthi, Trevor Turbo Brown, Atong Atem, Charles Blackman, Grace Cossington Smith and Nora Heysen.

Presented thematically, with dogs on one side and cats on the other, the exhibition unpacks particular behaviours, cultural symbolism and art-historical motifs. These include: working dogs and cats; mythology and the occult; religion and spirituality; and cats and dogs in popular culture.

Highlighting the surprising diversity of images and objects representing cats and dogs, the exhibition traverses painting, prints, drawings, textiles, photography, decorative arts and fashion. Revealing the global appeal of these animals across borders and cultures, the exhibition includes a breadth of works from Australia, Europe, Asia and North America.

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Highlights include the recently acquired ‘Poster for the Company of the Black cat’, better known as the ‘Chat

Noir' art nouveau poster by Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, created in 1896. A radical and inventive designer, Steinlen was at the heart of bohemian Paris at its height during the late nineteenth century and had a long association with the Black Cat Café, the pioneering cabaret venue. His designs for the café, especially for advertisements and posters, captured the spirit of this exotic night club. His stylised black cat became its signature motif and an icon for the era.

Also on display is Thomas Gainsborough's large-scale oil painting *Richard St George Mansergh-St George* c. 1776-80, which depicts the officer and his faithful hound. Spanning over 2 metres high and 1.5 metres wide, this work serves as a testament to the complex and emotional relationships which can be forged between humans and dogs.

Contemporary artist Atong Atem's self-portrait *Maria of Mars*, 2022, continues and adapts the long tradition of depicting women with lapdogs. While the sixteenth century tradition used lapdogs as means of depicting wealth and status, Atem resituates the narrative to discuss migrant stories and cultural identities within the Australian context.

A further group of works explore stories related to cats and dogs by Australian First Nations artists. Featuring a display of Ku' sculptures, wooden carvings of 'camp dogs', by a number of Aurukun artists from Far North Queensland. These works of varying colour, size and shape bridge the divide between physical companions and manifestations of Ancestral beings.

The exhibition also features an exciting selection of fashion featuring cats and dogs. Ranging from depictions of the dog as an accessory during the eighteenth century to contemporary fashions, the display features designs by Alexander McQueen, Di\$count Univer\$e, Romance was Born and more.

Major Partners MY DOG® and DINE®, will celebrate cats and dogs throughout the exhibition season with activities including an interactive activation enabling visitors to share images of their beloved pets, and other fun experiences yet to be announced. NGV and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) will present an exciting selection of cat and dog moments from film. Also included will be ephemera from the enduringly popular kids' television program *Felix the Cat*, created by Australian illustrator Pat Sullivan.

**Parliamentary Secretary for Creative Industries, Katie Hall said:** 'Beloved family pets, working companions and pop culture icons, the history of cats and dogs will be on display at this wonderful new NGV exhibition. Cats & Dogs will be a treat for animal and art lovers of all ages.'

**Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV said:** 'People have shared domestic life with cats and dogs for thousands of years. Through more than 200 works from the NGV Collection, this exhibition explores our close-knit relationships with these animals with both critical rigour and a sense of humour. Whether a self-proclaimed dog person or cat lover, there is something for visitors of all inclinations to appreciate and enjoy.'

**Craig Sargeant, General Manager, Mars Petcare Australia said:** 'With more than two thirds of Australian households owning a pet, we know the deep connection Australians have with their furry companions. Mars Petcare and our brands MY DOG and DINE are proud to be supporting this exhibition which celebrates the role of cats and dogs in making our lives better every day.'

**Cats & Dogs is on display from 1 November 2024 to 20 July 2025 at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Fed Square. Admission fees apply. For further information and tickets, please visit the NGV website: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.melbourne)**

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**IMAGES:** <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/puwfsod54snbv9s515ynp/AGtg-Q4SkziMHFUdMBVuo9E?rlkey=7nfws7fq9u4c2wyugpowtu56o&dl=0>

**OVERVIEW VIDEO:** <https://vimeo.com/970266183?share=copy>

**Image credit:** Atong Atem, *Maria of Mars* 2022, © Atong Atem; Christine Godden, *Joan and her dog* 1975, printed 1976, © Christine Godden; Jeff Koons, *Balloon dog (Red)* 1995, © Jeff Koons; Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, *Poster for the Company of the Black Cat (Prochainement la très illustre Compagnie du Chat Noir)* 1896; Venkat Raman Singh Shyam, *The world of the Gonds* 2017, © Venkat Shyam, courtesy of

Minhazz Majumdar; **Marguerite Mahood** *Feline design* 1930s © MTH Mahood; **Elad Lassry**, *Russian blue* 2012, © Elad Lassry and 303 Gallery, New York; National Gallery of Victoria.

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