

Abstract Arp: 24 works by 20th century sculptor Hans Arp make NGV debut

NGV International | On display | FREE



16 July 2024: Twenty-four sculptures by influential German-French artist Hans Arp (1886-1966), including twenty-one plasters and three bronzes are now on display at NGV International. This inaugural display celebrates the generous gift of works to the NGV by the artist's estate, Stiftung Arp e.V., in 2023.

From the 1930s, Hans Arp became a pioneer of 'biomorphic' abstraction, a revolutionary artistic style which moved away from the human figure and echoed the organic and fluid forms occurring in nature. Arp's sculptures can be rotated in various positions and viewed from different angles, creating multiple unique images and perspectives from a single sculptural form. Arp's biomorphic forms had a major influence on the trajectory of twentieth century visual culture and modern design.

Hans Arp's plaster sculptures were mostly conceived as models for later production in stone, marble or bronze and are integral to understanding the artist's work. His intensive use of plaster allowed Arp to make and remake his work, testing experimental modelling and sculpting techniques to produce abstract forms never-before-seen in the medium at the time. Arp would sometimes fuse separate sculptures, sawing them apart and joining them back together in completely new configurations. Plaster could also be carved away, or added on in liquid form to extend shapes, to create endless hybrids of a single idea.

The important plaster and bronze works on display at NGV International, spanning the early 1930s until the artist's death in 1966, provide insights into Arp's polymorphic sculptures and offer local audiences an invaluable glimpse into the creative process of this major figure of abstract art.

Hans Arp was a dynamic figure of early twentieth century art who made important contributions to various disciplines, including sculpture, literature and design. He was one of the founders of the Dada art movement, which challenged traditional ideas of art by producing work that did not conform to aesthetic sensibilities, embraced chance and used 'readymade' objects. He was also a key figure in the Surrealist movement, having participated in the first group exhibition of Surrealist art, *L'exposition Surréaliste*, in 1925. The display of these works also coincides with the 100th anniversary of the Surrealism, marked by the publication of André Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto* in 1924.

With this gift, the NGV houses the most significant holdings of sculptures by Hans Arp in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2023, the NGV was one of 10 museums worldwide to be gifted a selection of plasters and bronzes produced by the artist between 1933 and 1966 by the Stiftung Arp e.V..

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Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said: ‘Through his contributions to Dadaism, Surrealism and abstract art, Hans Arp had an indelible impact on the trajectory of sculpture in the early twentieth century. Thanks to the transformative gift of plaster and bronze sculptures from The Stiftung Arp e.V, the NGV houses the leading collection of Arp’s work in the Asia Pacific region, enabling us to share with Australian audiences his important contribution to art history and his continuing influence on contemporary culture.’

Celebrating the display, Associate Professor Ken Wach, a world-leading expert in Dada and Surrealism, will present an illustrated talk on *Surrealism and the Art of Hans Arp* as part of NGV’s Scholars Series on Wednesday 25 September. Audiences can also learn more about Hans Arp and his relationship to Surrealism by enrolling in the self-guided online course *Surrealism – 1920s to Now*.

Hans Arp’s works are now on display at NGV International. Entry is FREE. For further information, please visit the NGV website: NGV.MELBOURNE

The *Scholars Series: Surrealism and the Art of Hans Arp* takes place on Wednesday 25 September in person at NGV International and virtually via live stream. Information and tickets are available on the NGV website: NGV.MELBOURNE

The next *Surrealism – 1920s to Now* online course will launch in October. Register your interest in the course on the NGV website: NGV.MELBOURNE

ABOUT HANS ARP

Hans Peter Wilhelm Arp (1886-1966), also known as Jean Arp, was born on September 16, 1886, in Strasbourg to German-Alsatian parents. He co-founded the Dada movement in Zurich with Hugo Ball, Richard Huelsenbeck, and Tristan Tzara. In 1925, he exhibited alongside Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, Paul Klee, Andre Masson, Joan Miró and Pablo Picasso at the first exhibition of the surrealists at the Paris Galerie Pierre, followed by his first solo exhibition at the Galerie Surréaliste in Paris in 1927. He was part of two major exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, including his first US retrospective in 1958. Arp exhibited his large-scale monumental sculptures internationally, including at the Cloud Shepherd for the University of Caracas in Venezuela, the Harvard Graduate Center in Cambridge, and the Venice Biennial (1954), where he was awarded the Grand Prize for Sculpture.

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IMAGES:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/jyd6hiz5vo7pc8eI9c636/AHMIr8gUT5B9erzWweNZ7QE?rlkey=rdt40mp0bfbdown0xkcgs4po1f&dl=0>

Image caption: Installation views of Hans Arp works, generously gifted by the artist’s estate Stiftung Arp e.V., on display at NGV International, Photos: Garry Sommerfeld.

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