

JOY HESTER: REMEMBER ME

*A major exhibition celebrating pioneering Australian artist
Joy Hester and the centenary of her birth*

21 March – 14 June 2020



Melbourne, Australia: From 21 March – 14 June 2020, Heide Museum of Modern Art will celebrate the centenary of Australian modernist artist **Joy Hester** (1920-1960) with a major survey of her distinctive oeuvre. *Joy Hester: Remember Me* is the first solo exhibition of Hester's art in almost twenty years and brings together more than 140 significant works from public and private collections, including seldom-seen impromptu studies that shed light on Hester's unique style and creative process.

Acknowledged today as one of Australia's most original and compelling artists of her generation, Joy Hester worked almost exclusively in brush and ink, focusing on the expressive potential of the figure and face as metaphors for the human condition. Unconventional and courageous, she freed herself from orthodox methods and brought a powerful female sensibility to subjects considered provocative during her lifetime such as love, sex, birth, and death.

This long-overdue survey traces Hester's artistic trajectory from early naturalistic student drawings to her psychological portraits, her powerful responses to the oppressive climate of war, and later investigations into human intimacy and the theme of childhood. *Joy Hester: Remember Me* includes a number of Hester's defining series—the *Incredible Night Dreams*, *Faces*, *Lovers*, and *Girls*—and reveals her experimentation with remarkably diverse stylistic modes as she found her own voice, using drawing as a vehicle to represent life in all its complexity.

Active during a period of unprecedented vitality, invention and change in Australian art, Hester was an integral figure in the Heide Circle or so-called Angry Penguins group that included her first husband Albert Tucker as well as Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd and Danila Vassilieff. Heide founders John and Sunday Reed were close friends and strong supporters of these artists and Hester, like many of her peers, spent a great deal of time with the couple and created key works at their semi-rural property in Melbourne's outer east.

Heide Artistic Director Lesley Harding said, *“One of the most striking aspects of Joy Hester’s relatively short but productive career is the way she managed to remain true to her own vision and interests and undeterred by the lack of recognition, sales and critical attention she experienced. She was avant-garde in the most literal sense of the term: experimental, unorthodox and original. Joy Hester: Remember Me takes place in the centenary year of Hester’s birth and presents a timely opportunity re-evaluate the work of this unconventional and courageous artist and review her unique contribution to Australian art.”*

Heide Senior Curator Kendrah Morgan commented, *“Hester’s distinctive personal vision and often haunting imagery continues to resonate strongly with contemporary audiences. Her remarkably affective and emotionally intense work penetrates the human psyche and effortlessly captures, in the words of her friend, the poet Barrett Reid, ‘the mysterious forces which prompt our lives’.”*

The Heide circle shook up the entrenched Australian cultural establishment of the 1940s. Although Hester shared the group’s vision and philosophies, she produced work that was distinct from that of her close (predominantly male) peers from the outset due to her preference for drawing. By the end of the 1940s she had taken an alternative, more personal path that focused on making manifest individual, and often specifically female, bodily and emotional experiences. Her sustained emphasis on the body, and in particular the face—with the leitmotif of the ‘haptic’ eye—as a vehicle for probing the depths of the psyche, set her apart from her generation.

The exhibition is complemented by a series of public programs including:

Art Talk | Joy Hester: Remember Me

Saturday 21 March, 2pm

Join Heide Senior Curator Kendrah Morgan as she discusses the compelling work of Joy Hester, a unique figure in twentieth century Australian art. Working almost exclusively in brush and ink or watercolour, Hester created potent expressions of the human figure and face, using drawing as a vehicle to grasp life in all its complexity.

Included in museum admission

Art Talk | Joy Hester’s Vision

Saturday 4 April, 2pm

In 1981 Dr Janine Burke curated the first scholarly retrospective of Joy Hester at the National Gallery of Victoria. Join Dr Burke as she discusses Hester’s radical representation of the human body, sometimes sensual, sometimes agonised, sometimes torn and fractured.

Included in museum admission

Workshop | Performance Portraiture: Gosia Wlodarczak

Sunday 5 April, 1 to 4pm

Gosia Wlodarczak’s practice extends from drawing into performance, interactive situations and installations. Participants in this workshop will be encouraged to connect with one another and create portrait drawings over a conversation inside the exhibition *Joy Hester: Remember Me*. All skill levels welcome.

Adult \$140—Concession \$130—Member \$120

Museum admission, workshop, materials and a glass of wine are included

Workshop | Life Drawing in the Gallery: Dual Models

Friday 27 March, 5.45 to 8.30pm

Saturday 4 April, 5.45 to 8.30pm

Friday 1 May, 5.45 to 8.30pm

Sketch from two life models in this intimate workshop catering to all skill levels with exclusive, after-hours access to *Joy Hester: Remember Me*. Our models will respond to Hester's drawings and paintings with tutors available for guidance.

Start your evening with a glass of wine at 5:45pm, class runs from 6pm to 8.30pm.

Adult \$55—Concession \$50—Member \$45

Museum admission, workshop, materials and a glass of wine are included

JOY: A performance

Saturday 2 May, 5.30 to 7.30pm

Saturday 9 May, 5.30 to 7.30pm

Saturday 16 May, 5.30 to 7.30pm

JOY is an intimate theatrical exploration of Joy Hester's fascinating life by Melbourne playwright Christine Croyden. Performed by actor Claire Larisse Nicholls and directed by Sara Grenfell, the play takes the audience through a series of poignant and revelatory moments and Hester's encounters with characters such as Sunday Reed, Albert Tucker, and Gray Smith. Poltergeists and dreams break through the piece theatrically and in a haunting soundscape with an original score performed by musician and composer Rosie Westbrook.

Adult \$58—Concession \$55—Member \$50

Museum admission, performance and a glass of wine are included

ENDS

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IMAGES: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/agpi0n05imrv89p/AAAFe7ETIs_bhTuhmiCRya5aa?dl=0

Image Captions (L to R):

1. Joy Hester

Face (with Yellow Background) c.1947

brush and ink and gouache on paper

27.6 x 37.6 cm

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne

Gift of Barrett Reid 1990

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2. Joy Hester

Untitled (From the Love series) 1949

brush and ink and mauve pastel on paper

31.6 x 25.2 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased 1976

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3. Joy Hester

Girl 1957

brush and ink on paper

49.9 x 75.5 cm (image)

49.9 x 75.5 cm (sheet)

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Purchased 1972

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ABOUT HEIDE

Set on sixteen acres of parkland with Yarra River frontage, Heide Museum of Modern Art, or Heide as it is affectionately known, is one of Australia's most important cultural institutions. Once a significant Wurundjeri gathering place, the property was later a dairy farm before becoming known as a hub for Australian modernist art and writing after it was purchased by art patrons John and Sunday Reed in 1934.

The Reeds opened their home to the most progressive artists of their era, including Sidney Nolan, Albert Tucker, Joy Hester, John Perceval, Charles Blackman and Danila Vassilieff. Nolan's famous Ned Kelly series (1946–47) was painted in the dining room of the Heide farmhouse.

Continuing this spirited legacy, today Heide works to inspire creative talent, collaborating with emerging and mid-career artists as well as celebrating those who have made major contributions to Australian and international art.