

MPRG

Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery

Masters of Emotion:

Exploring the emotions from the old masters to the present

An MPRG exhibition, curated by Irena Zdanowicz

20 April - 24 June 2007



In April Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery will launch what might be considered their most ambitious project to date. Bringing together over 100 works of art from the old masters such as Dürer, Rembrandt, Goya, Blake and Munch, through to contemporary artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Tracey Moffatt, Jenny Holzer and Bill Henson, the exhibition is ambitious not only for the art works assembled but also for the nature of its theme.

Curator Irena Zdanowicz commented, 'I wonder if I might be criticised for embarking on the impossible; attempting to consider something so complex, and so fundamental to human nature and to art history.'

In this comment, Irena did not refer to the enormous undertaking of gathering together some of the key works from State and private collections throughout the country, including bringing together over fifty old master works from the National Gallery of Victoria. (This task must have seemed simpler than the theme).

Irena credits MPRG Director Andrea Churcher for initiating what she has described as a 'bold and ambitious vision' in commissioning such a project. 'This is a significant and important endeavour', commented Irena. 'Works of this calibre, including many rare and significant pieces, are rarely seen outside a State gallery, and this subject has, until now, not been considered in such historical depth in Australia.'

The portrayal of emotions has provided a challenge for artists since the time of classical antiquity and, especially, since the Renaissance; it was then that Leon Battista Alberti first described the 'movements of the soul' and how they were conveyed in painting. Leonardo da Vinci shared his belief that painting should reveal 'man and the intentions of his mind'.

Featuring outstanding works by the old masters through to contemporary Australian artists, this exhibition explores some of the chief ways in which Western artists have represented human emotions, showing how certain attitudes and traditions of representation have persisted while others have undergone radical change. This remarkable exhibition is wide ranging, encompassing European, Australian and American art from the 15th to the 21st centuries, and featuring drawings, prints, photographs and books, as well as some paintings and sculpture.

Among the artists included are Albrecht Dürer, Francisco Goya, William Blake, Honoré Daumier, Max Klinger, Edvard Munch, Käthe Kollwitz, Louise Bourgeois, Bea Maddock, Joy Hester and Bill Henson.

The exhibition can be enjoyed on a number of levels. Structured partly chronologically and, partly thematically, it will be tightly organised into five distinct sections, each looking at the phenomenon from different points of view. The aim is to provide a range of differing perspectives that will invite the viewer to reflect on the subject and on the general role of emotion in art.

Themes will include:

Theories and insights - will provide a historical survey of attitudes toward the depiction of emotion from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. It will include such artist as Marcantonio Raimondi, Pietro Testa, Rembrandt, Poussin, Greuze, Duchenne de Boulogne, and Joy Hester .

Emotions Depicted – will focus on the direct depiction of specific emotions, both positive and negative. 'Love' will focus on the motifs of the embrace and the kiss, while 'Sorrow' will deal with melancholy and despair. Artists represented here will include Dürer, Goya, Blake, Munch, Bea Maddock, Joy Hester and Bill Henson.

Emotions Evoked – will consider vicarious portrayals of the emotions showing how non-human subject matter such as animals, landscape, architectural spaces and inanimate objects have been used as a vehicle for the expression of emotion. Artists represented here will include Goya, Stubbs, Turner, Schenck, Dulac, Picasso, Warhol, Peter Booth and Rick Amor.

Visual Languages – will explore the emotional qualities of colour, line, style and composition. Expressionist art will be represented here and the section will include Blake, Picasso, Motherwell, Boyd, Olsen, Albert Tucker, Robert Jacks, Mike Parr and others

Words and Ciphers – will include images where words and signs play an intrinsic role in conveying emotion or drawing attention to emotional states, for example in pictures by Blake, Colin McCahon, Louise Bourgeois, Jenny Holzer, Jim Dine, Juan Davila, Linda Marrinon, Bea Maddock and Grayson Perry.

The exhibition has been curated by Irena Zdanowicz, former Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery of Victoria. Works from the exhibition are drawn from public and private collections including National Gallery of Victoria, National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of South Australia, State Library of Victoria and the MCA, Sydney.

FOR FURTHER MEDIA INFORMATION

Pan & Bacchanalia (03) 9417 4665 or 0419 508 619

MORNINGTON PENINSULA REGIONAL GALLERY

Location: Civic Reserve, Dunns Road, MORNINGTON
Gallery Hours: Tuesday–Sunday 11am–5pm.
Exhibition admission fees: \$4 adults / \$2 concession
General information: 03 5975 4395 www.mprg.mornpen.vic.gov.au

Caption: J. Mynde *After James Parsons*

Philosophical transactions for the year 1746, XLIV, part 1; State Library of Victoria