



Grace Crowley, *Abstract painting*, 1953, Sydney, oil on hardboard, 53.0 x 91.7 cm. Bequest of Grace Crowley 1981. Art Gallery South Australia, Adelaide.

# Grace Crowley Being Modern

Art Gallery of South Australia

27 July –28 October 2007

Grace Crowley (1890-1979) was one of the great 'modern Australian women' whose pioneering paintings of the 1920s and 30s revitalised art in this country. Now, nearly thirty years after her death, the national travelling exhibition *Grace Crowley: Being Modern* offers a fresh look at Crowley's art, from her renowned modernist and cubist pictures, to her bold geometric abstracts. Bursting with vibrant colour, this important exhibition introduces a new generation to this sophisticated, experimental artist who worked at the cutting-edge of modern art in Australia, and will be on show at the Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide from 27 July to 28 October.

In what is only the second retrospective of Grace Crowley's work, *Being Modern* features fifty-five paintings, drawings and ephemera from the artist's forty-year career. It presents some of Crowley's best-loved modernist portraits and landscapes, alongside her lesser-known but more adventurous geometric paintings from the 1940s to 60s. Works have been drawn from public and private collections around the country and some have not previously been on public display.

Curator of the exhibition, Elena Taylor, the Curator of Australian Paintings & Sculpture at the National Gallery of Australia hopes the exhibition will reveal the full extent of Grace Crowley's contribution to Australian art and cultural life. "Grace Crowley was one of the most adventurous

Australian artists of the mid twentieth century and played a central part in introducing modern art to Australia” says Taylor, “her art was amongst the most radical of its time”. Taylor is also author of the accompanying exhibition book, which is the first monograph to be published on the artist.

Grace Crowley’s art was greatly influenced by her relationships with a number of artists of the modernist era including Anne Dangar, Rah Fizelle, and most significantly, Ralph Balson, with whom she collaborated in the 1940s to introduce the first truly abstract art to Australia. These late abstract works are now considered to be among Crowley’s most outstanding and avant-garde: “they place her at the very edge of modern art in Australia and as one of Australia’s most important abstractionists” says Elena Taylor.

After spending four years studying in Paris in the late 1920s, Crowley was forced to abandon her life amongst Europe’s most progressive artists and return to country NSW to care for her ailing mother. Rebecca Andrews, the Gallery’s Associate Curator of Australian Art and coordinator of the exhibition in Adelaide claims, “had Crowley stayed on in France, she could quite possibly have risen to international prominence.”

Included in the exhibition are three of the most admired works from the Art Gallery of South Australia’s own modern Australian collection: the striking cubist *Portrait of Gwen Ridley* 1930, the French provincial landscape *Mirmande* 1928, and *Abstract painting*, 1953 (pictured above).

Christopher Menz, the Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia says “Grace Crowley’s modernist pictures were highlights of our own hugely popular *Modern Australian Women* national travelling exhibition of 2000. *Being Modern* continues Crowley’s story and we are delighted now to host this important retrospective which showcases the full oeuvre of this exceptional artist.”

The Emeritus Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Daniel Thomas AM, who curated the first and only other Grace Crowley retrospective in 1975 at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, will officially open the exhibition in Adelaide.

*Grace Crowley: Being Modern* is a National Gallery of Australia Travelling Exhibition. The Adelaide season at the Art Gallery of South Australia is on show from 27 July to 28 October and is proudly sponsored by Cinzano.

## **GRACE CROWLEY: BEING MODERN**

<b>On View:</b>	Art Gallery of South Australia, North Terrace Adelaide 27 July to 28 October 2007 Daily 10 am to 5 pm (last admissions 4.30 pm)
<b>Admission:</b>	Adults \$10 / Concession \$8 / Members & Students \$6 / U16 Free Purchase tickets online at <a href="http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au">www.artgallery.sa.gov.au</a>
<b>Members’ Season Ticket:</b>	\$10 for unlimited entry. Available only to AGSA Members.
<b>Guided Tours:</b>	Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays at 2pm. Free with exhibition entry.
<b>Public Information:</b>	Tel: 08 8207 7000 or visit <a href="http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au">www.artgallery.sa.gov.au</a>

**MEDIA CONTACT for information and interviews with Elena Taylor, Rebecca Andrews, Christopher Menz or Daniel Thomas: MIRANDA STARKE 08 8207 7032 or 0409919510**

**IMAGES:** A selection of high-resolution images is available for media to download from:  
<http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/MediaCentreGraceCrowley/mediaimagesGrCrBeModernindex.html>