

We are the Dead Men: Albert Tucker's War

15 March to 7 September 2014
Albert & Barbara Tucker Gallery
Curator: Kendrah Morgan

HEIDE
MUSEUM
OF MODERN
ART



Albert Tucker
We are the Dead Men 1940
oil on cardboard
47 x 51.5 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of the artist 1993

When the Japanese bombed Darwin on 19 February 1942 Australians had to face the arrival of World War II on their doorstep. Life in Melbourne changed almost overnight, with 'brownout' conditions, restrictions on daily activities, the influx of 30,000 American troops, and army conscription for all able-bodied young men—including Albert Tucker and most of the artists supported by John and Sunday Reed at Heide.

These artists, like many of the intellectual left, were strongly opposed Australia's involvement in the war. With the hardships of the Depression still keenly felt, the Heide circle regarded war's violence and suffering as futile, proof of the degradation of humanist values in modern society. They projected their beliefs in potent images that record personal experiences of wartime Australia and offer a more universal response to the uncertain climate engendered by conflict. Their works signalled a new era in Australian art, shifting the focus away from the landscape tradition to the urban environment and to the idea of psychological unrest as a legitimate subject for creative expression. This exhibition, which presents

a sampling of their efforts, takes its title from Tucker's painting *We are the Dead Men*—inspired by T. S. Eliot's bleak post-World War I poem 'The Hollow Men.'

Several paintings in the exhibition point to the negative impact of army life on the mental state of sensitised individuals. Others imagine the mayhem of war-torn Europe, from the plight of refugees and starving children to the atrocities of the concentration camps. In these works and in a range of surrealist-inflected, allegorical visions the deformed body becomes a metaphor for the diseased state of humanity.

We are the Dead Men also includes depictions of wartime Melbourne's night-life, with its lively entertainment venues and dark underbelly—a destabilising world of brawling, prostitution and crime. Dispersed throughout is a selection of Albert Tucker's compelling photographs of places, events and people in 1940s Melbourne, which provide a fascinating snapshot of a transformative period that forever changed the culture of the city and the lives of its inhabitants.

List of works

This catalogue is arranged alphabetically by artist then chronologically. Measurements are height before width before depth.

Yosl Bergner

born 1920 Vienna;
arrived 1937 Australia;
Israel from 1950; died 2017 Tel Aviv



The Village on Fire 1940
oil on composition board
52.8 x 71 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of
Victoria by Mr Yosl Bergner, Founder
Benefactor 1985



Father and Sons 1941
oil on composition board
48.1 x 39.3 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of
Victoria by Mr Yosl Bergner, Founder
Benefactor 1985

Arthur Boyd

born 1920 Melbourne;
died 1999 Melbourne



Progression 1941
oil on composition board
91.2 x 56 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Purchased from John and Sunday Reed
1980



Butterfly Man 1943
oil on muslin on cardboard
55.3 x 75.3 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Bequest of John and Sunday Reed 1982



The Cripples 1943
oil on muslin on cardboard
53 x 69 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of the Trustees of the Museum of
Modern Art and Design of Australia, to
the National Gallery of Victoria 1981.
Transferred to Heide Museum of Modern
Art by the Council of Trustees of the
National Gallery of Victoria 2005.



Prostrate Figure, Dog and Flying Figures
c.1943
pen and ink on paper
36.4 x 25.8 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Bequest of John and Sunday Reed 1982

Arthur Boyd

born 1920 Melbourne;
died 1999 Melbourne



The Kite 1943
oil on muslin on cardboard
55.4 x 68.7 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Purchased from John and Sunday Reed
1980



The Organist 1943
reed pen and ink on paper
25.8 x 36.3 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Bequest of John and Sunday Reed 1982



Dog Devouring Cripple 1943-44
reed pen and ink, watercolour and
gouache on paper
38.7 x 26.5 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Bequest of John and Sunday Reed 1982

Heide Museum of Modern Art
We are Dead Men: Albert Tucker's War

Joy Hester

born 1920 Melbourne;
died 1960 Melbourne



Death Will Find Me c.1944
brush and ink, watercolour, pencil and
coloured pencil on card
22.8 x 22.8 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
On long-term loan from the Albert &
Barbara Tucker Foundation



Amor Vincet Omnia (Love Conquers All)
c.1945
brush and ink, watercolour and pencil
on card
22.8 x 21 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of the Albert & Barbara Tucker
Foundation 2019



Lamentation Over the Dead Christ c.1945
brush and ink and pastel on paper
20.2 x 31.6 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
On long-term loan from the Albert &
Barbara Tucker Foundation



Mother and Child c.1945
brush and ink on paper
29.6 x 24 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2007

Sidney Nolan

born 1917 Melbourne;
died 1992 London, United Kingdom



Head of a soldier 1942
enamel paint on cardboard
75.8 x 63.3 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1976

John Perceval

born 1923 Bruce Rock, Western
Australia; died 2000 Melbourne



Exodus From a Bombed City 1942
oil on composition board
82.6 x 109.2 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation
of Victoria with the assistance of Dinah
and Henry Krongold, Founder
Benefactors, 1987 Benefactors, 1987



Figure Carrying a Sack II c.1942
brush and ink on paper
50.5 x 40.5 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Bequest of John and Sunday Reed 1982



Survival 1942
oil on composition board
125.5 x 92 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation
of Victoria with the assistance of Amcor
Limited, Fellow 1982



Soul Singer at Luna Park 1942-43
oil on composition board
124 x 90 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through The Art Foundation of
Victoria by Mr John Perceval, Founder
Benefactor 1986



Suburban Roofs at Night 1944
oil on muslin on cardboard
63.4 x 75.5 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Purchased from John and Sunday Reed
1980

Albert Tucker

born 1914 Melbourne;
died 1999 Melbourne



Study for Children of Athens c.1940
gouache on paper
9.5 x 10.5 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Purchased from the Estate of Sweeney
Reed 1985



A Parade Organised by the Australia-Soviet Friendship League, Queen Street, Melbourne c.1941
gelatin silver photograph
30.5 x 40.5 cm
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2001



May Day, Melbourne c.1943, 2009
exhibition print
archival pigment print on paper
29.7 x 42 cm
Albert Tucker Photographic Collection,
Heide Museum of Modern Art and State
Library of Victoria, Melbourne Gift of
Barbara Tucker, 2008



May Day, Melbourne c.1943, 2009
exhibition print
archival pigment print on paper
29.7 x 42 cm
Albert Tucker Photographic Collection,
Heide Museum of Modern Art and State
Library of Victoria, Melbourne Gift of
Barbara Tucker, 2008



Children of Athens 1940
oil on cardboard
47 x 29.9 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Purchased from John and Sunday Reed
1980



We are the Dead Men 1940
oil on cardboard
47 x 51.5 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of the artist 1993



(Little Luna Park, St Kilda, at night)
c.1945, 2009 exhibition print
archival pigment print on paper
29.7 x 42 cm
Albert Tucker Archive Heide Museum of
Modern Art



(Luna Park, St Kilda, at night) c.1945,
2009
exhibition print
laser print on paper
21 x 29.7 cm
Albert Tucker Photographic Collection,
Heide Museum of Modern Art and State
Library of Victoria, Melbourne Gift of
Barbara Tucker, 2008

Albert Tucker

born 1914 Melbourne;
died 1999 Melbourne



(Melbourne New Theatre production 'I'd Rather Be Left' (1941), 2009 exhibition print
archival pigment print on paper
29.7 x 42 cm
Albert Tucker Photographic Collection,
Heide Museum of Modern Art and State
Library of Victoria, Melbourne Gift of
Barbara Tucker, 2008



Army Barracks 1942
enamel paint on plywood
20.5 x 30.3 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation
of Victoria with the assistance of the
Westpac Banking Corporation, Founder
Benefactor, 1992



Army Breakfast 1942
enamel paint on plywood
21.7 x 30.5 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation
of Victoria with the assistance of the
Westpac Banking Corporation, Founder
Benefactor, 1992



Spring in Fitzroy 1942
watercolour, gouache, brush and ink on
paper 12.2 x 17.2 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2008



Emaciated Head (Untitled Head) 1943
pastel on paper
13.5 x 17.6 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
On long-term loan from the Albert &
Barbara Tucker Foundation



Memory of Leonski (Spring in Fitzroy)
1943
oil on composition board
61 x 78.6 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through the Art Foundation of
Victoria with the assistance of The Shell
Company of Australia Limited, Founder
Benefactor, 1995



Victory Girls 1943
oil on cardboard
64.6 x 58.7 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1971



City 1944
oil on plywood
61 x 76 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2005



*Melbourne Street Scene
(Untitled Night Image)* 1944
watercolour, pencil and brush and ink
on paper
sight 18 x 24 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
On long-term loan from the Albert &
Barbara Tucker Foundation

Albert Tucker

born 1914 Melbourne;
died 1999 Melbourne



Luna Park 1945
oil on composition board
53 x 81 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2005



Peace: Joy Hester Holding Sweeney 1945
gelatin silver photograph
40.1 x 30.6 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2001



Tivoli Clown 1945
oil on composition board
61 x 45.5 cm
Heide Museum of Modern Art
Gift of Barbara Tucker 2005
