

MEDIA RELEASE

23 AUGUST 2022



Heide Museum presents first major Australian survey of pioneering modernist British sculptor Barbara Hepworth

Melbourne, Australia: Heide Museum of Modern Art today announced the first major survey in Australia of the celebrated British artist **Dame Barbara Hepworth DBE (1903–1975)**. A leading figure of modernist sculpture in Britain in the 20th century, Hepworth is best known for her abstract sculptures and pioneering method of ‘piercing’ the form. Presented at Heide from **5 November 2022 to 13 March 2023**, the exhibition **Barbara Hepworth: In Equilibrium** brings together more than forty works from significant international and national collections, introducing Australian audiences to Hepworth’s enduring oeuvre and remarkable story.

Presented throughout Heide’s main galleries, the exhibition charts the trajectory of Hepworth’s artistic career. From early figurative marble carvings through to large-scale purely abstract forms, the exhibition will feature works on loan from the collections of **Tate Britain, Hepworth Wakefield** and the **British Council**, as well as prominent Australian and New Zealand public collections including the **National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of South Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, and Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand.**

Heide Museum of Modern Art Director Lesley Harding said: *“It is with great pleasure that Heide brings together works by one of the most important artists of the 20th century, many never-before-seen here in Australia. The exhibition reflects our commitment to foregrounding modernist women artists, and is the result of extensive research and support from national and international organisations and the Hepworth Estate.”*

A key figure of the abstract art movement in Britain, Hepworth’s pioneering practice enriched the language of modern sculpture. While the artist’s early works featured figurative and naturalistic forms, her sculptures would become

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increasingly simplified and abstract. Highlighted in the exhibition is Hepworth's significant exploration of the tension between mass and negative space, with sculptures that are 'pierced' by large holes. This technique of piercing the form exemplifies Hepworth's revolutionary contribution to the development of new sculptural vocabularies that influenced not only her contemporaries, but future generations of sculptors.

Heide Museum of Modern Art Head Curator Kendrah Morgan said: *"A true pioneer, Barbara Hepworth's contribution to the evolution of modern art cannot be underestimated. Hepworth's combination of modernist reductive form and timeless materials produces its own particular magic."*

Heide has enlisted award-winning Melbourne-based architecture practice **Studio Bright** to design the exhibition, with a focus on connecting the museum's inside galleries to the surrounding landscape. Central to Hepworth's practice was the influence of nature, with the artist inspired by the coastal landscape of St Ives in Cornwall, where she lived and worked for much of her career. From the movement of tides to the ancient standing stones of west Cornwall, the artist's later sculptures are grounded in references to patterns and forms found in nature.

Barbara Hepworth: In Equilibrium brings together more than forty artworks by British artist Barbara Hepworth, in what is a rare chance for Australian audiences to experience a major survey of one of the world's greatest woman sculptors.

Ends

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IMAGE CAPTIONS (L - R): Barbara Hepworth, *Two Figures (Menhirs)*, 1964, slate on wooden base, 82.5 x 63.8 x 32 cm, Photograph credit © Tate, Barbara Hepworth © Bowness; Barbara Hepworth, *Sculpture with Colour and Strings*, 1939/1961, Barbara Hepworth © Bowness; Barbara Hepworth, *Mother and Child*, 1934, Pink Ancaster stone, 31 x 26 x 22 cm, Image courtesy The Hepworth Wakefield, Barbara Hepworth © Bowness, Photograph credit: Jerry Hardman-Jones.

IMAGES available to download [HERE](#)

EXHIBITION DETAILS:

Barbara Hepworth: In Equilibrium

5 November 2022 to 13 March 2023

Heide Museum of Modern Art, 7 Templestowe Road, Bulleen Victoria 3105

heide.com.au

ABOUT BARBARA HEPWORTH:

The doyenne of modernist sculpture, Barbara Hepworth (born 1903 Wakefield, Yorkshire, died 1975 St Ives, Cornwall) was one of the leading British artists of her generation and the first woman sculptor to achieve international recognition.

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She worked predominantly in stone, wood, marble and bronze and was an early practitioner of the avant-garde method of direct carving, which dispensed with the tradition of preparatory models or maquettes. Her works were among the earliest abstract sculptures produced in England.

In the 1920s Hepworth studied at the Leeds School of Art where she befriended fellow sculpture student Henry Moore, initiating a lifelong friendship and rivalry which influenced the development of both their careers. Hepworth married twice, first to sculptor John Skeaping, and later to the painter Ben Nicholson, from 1938 to 1951. Hepworth was a central figure in a network of major international abstract artists and closely linked with the School of Paris. From the outbreak of the Second World War she was based in the creative community of St Ives, Cornwall, where she drew much inspiration from the natural environment around her. Though concerned with form and abstraction, Hepworth created work that was predominantly about relationships: between the human figure and the landscape; between forms presented side-by-side; between colour and texture; and between individuals and groups of people.

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.