



Grace Crowley

BEING MODERN

A National Gallery of Australia Travelling Exhibition

ON THE TRAIL OF SHAPE, LINE AND COLOUR

This trail is intended as a guide for young children as they enjoy the travelling exhibition *Grace Crowley: being modern*. The activities will encourage children to discover shape, line and colour in Crowley's work. Additional information is included for accompanying adults and there is a space to make your own abstract work of art together. **Written by Annette Tapp.**



Ena, Grace's niece, is feeding the turkeys. As Grace Crowley worked on this painting the gobbler (the big male turkey) kept rushing at her.

How would you describe the shape of the big gobbler turkey?

Grace Crowley drew and painted scenes from life on her family's properties. Her early works are characteristic of art popular at the time.

What shape is Gwen Ridley's chair?

Can you find more circular shapes in this picture?

After visiting France, Crowley's style became more geometric and the composition more austere. The portrait is of Crowley's cousin Gwen Ridley who was also an artist.



Look carefully at Mary and the baby. How can you tell which bits of Mary and the baby are shaded from the sun? Look at the shape of the umbrella. Have you seen a turkey that shape recently?

Even before she studied cubism in France, Grace Crowley had a growing fascination with design; in Mary and the baby 1925 geometric shapes are a dominant element in the composition.



Mary and the baby 1925 oil on canvas private collection

Portrait of Gwen Ridley 1930 oil on canvas on board
Art Gallery of South Australia Purchased 1995
South Australian Government Grant

Grace Crowley was interested in paintings that were created using shapes, lines and colours. They are called abstract paintings.

Look at the black line in the painting. How many colours does it cross over? Which one of these colours is the brightest?

The 1940s and 1950s were the most productive period of Crowley's life; however, she was rarely able to sell her work.



Are the shapes in this picture different from the shapes in the portrait of Gwen Ridley?

What shapes can you see in this picture?

Can you see the person in these shapes?

What colours can you see in this painting?

Frustrated by the conservative attitude to art in Australia, Grace Crowley launched her own art school in 1932. Artist and his model 1938 (cover image) shows Crowley's friend Ralph Balson painting in Crowley's studio.

Abstract painting 1947 oil on cardboard
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Purchased 1959

Portrait c. 1939 oil on canvas on cardboard National Gallery of Victoria Bequest of Grace Crowley 1979

Do these shapes look like they are floating?

Which shapes appear closest to you and which shapes appear furthest away?



Painting 1950 oil on composition board
National Gallery of Victoria Purchased 1967

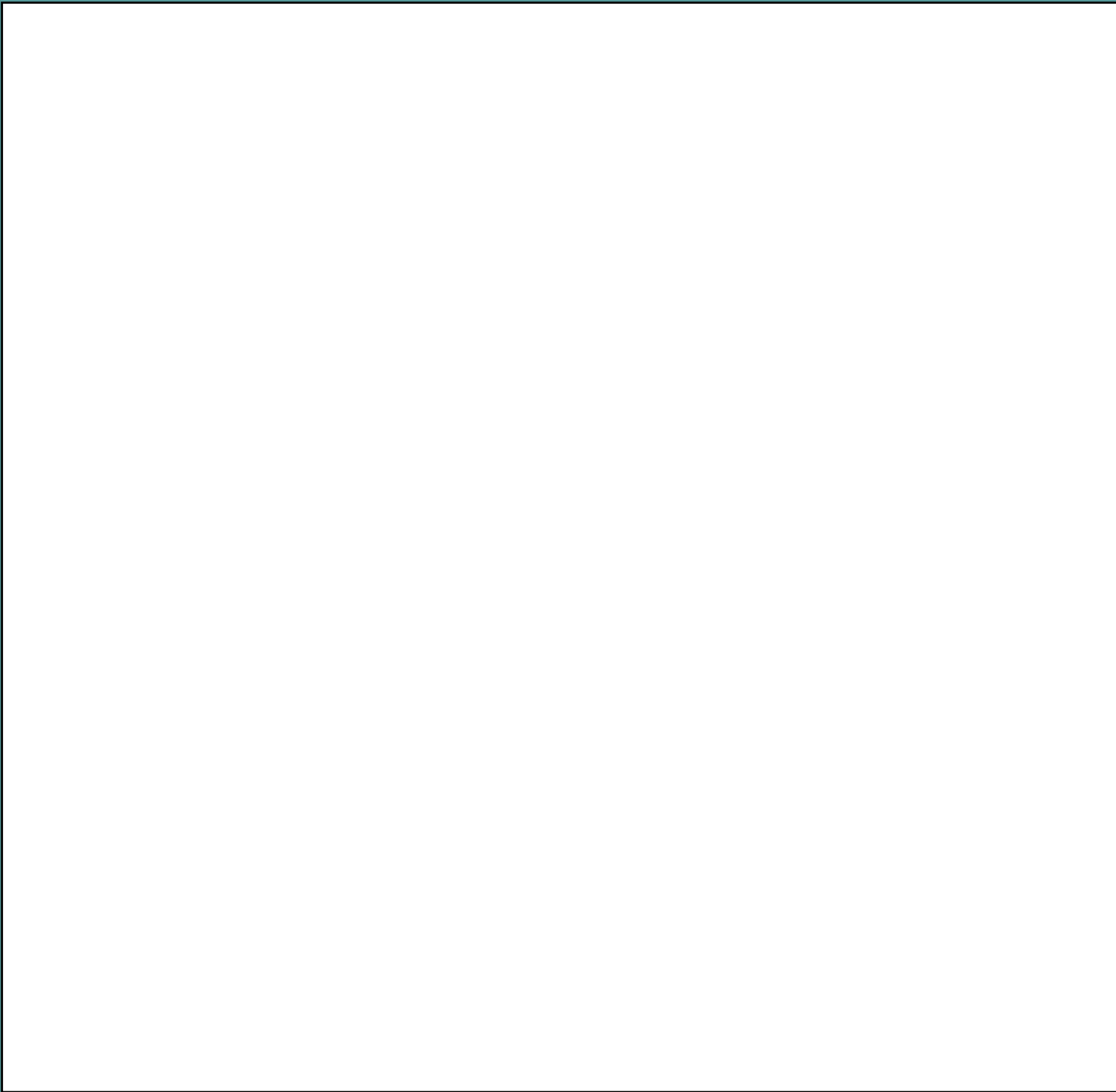
Painting 1951 oil on composition board
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Purchased 1969



Can you see where some of the colours have overlapped and shaded others in the painting?

Can you find two shapes that don't overlap?

Crowley prepared her abstract paintings by arranging a temporary collage of coloured paper and pieces of string or ribbon. Then she painted the design onto composition board or cardboard.



Use the space above to explore shapes,
lines and colour and
create your own abstract picture.

Try cutting or tearing coloured tissue paper or cellophane.
Arrange the pieces here with overlaps.
Maybe wiggle some coloured string or wool across the picture.
Stick shapes and string carefully.
Have fun and make another.



Keep looking ...

Can you find the rectangle here?

Grace Crowley

Grace Crowley was born in 1890 into a wealthy family of graziers in north-west New South Wales. She remembered that from a very young age she felt a compulsion to draw; this led her to study and then teach art in Sydney. Curious about art traditions and modern movements overseas, Crowley studied art in France for four years. There she discovered radical and exciting new theories in modern art which changed her life. Crowley died in Manly in 1979. Her pioneering commitment to cubism and abstraction, 'being modern', had laid a foundation stone for the modern art movement in Australia.

Abstract painting 1953 oil on hardboard Art Gallery of South Australia Bequest of Grace Crowley 1979

Cover image: The artist and his model 1938 oil on hardboard Art Gallery of New South Wales Gift of Grace Crowley 1975

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