

## MEDIA RELEASE

# Express Yourself: Romance Was Born for Kids

17 October 2014 - 22 March 2015 | NGV International | Free entry

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National  
Gallery of  
Victoria



**17 OCTOBER 2014:** Inspired by childhood memories and commissioned for the NGV's new dedicated children's gallery, *Express Yourself: Romance Was Born for Kids* is an interactive exhibition by renowned Sydney-based fashion house Romance Was Born that threads together tales of a long lost catacomb, billabongs, bush magic and rainbows.

The contemporary project sees designers Luke Sales and Anna Plunkett present a spectacular series of kaleidoscopic and otherworldly installations that invite participation, play and creativity in a blend of fashion, art, music and design. Visitors of all ages are invited to express themselves as they embellish their own Romance Was Born-inspired paper necklace or beard using a rich array of coloured jewels and pom-poms, play in an interactive digital billabong, or draw still life artworks on iPads in Rainbowland – a kaleidoscopic collection of items arranged by colour ranging from NGV artworks and vintage Strawberry Shortcake dolls to Milo tins.

The exhibition features works from Romance Was Born's past and present collections and focuses upon the trademark collaborations and creative themes that

underpin their practice. Sales and Plunkett also reveal garments from their new collection which have been inspired by May Gibbs' fabled stories of Snugglepot and Cuddlepie. In addition to exploring the NGV's permanent collection, Romance Was Born have invited artistic collaborators including Del Kathryn Barton, Kate Rohde, Nell, Benja Harney and Sarah Contos to contribute to their vision especially for this exhibition. Barton presents an extraordinary new 2m painting of a kangaroo and her joey, *We will ride* 2014, informed by Barton's childhood growing up in the Australian bush.

*Express Yourself* further develops Romance Was Born's richly imaginative aesthetic and expands their field of play into the children's arena.

"The immersive spaces encourage visitors and children particularly to engage with art and design in new and surprising ways. We want to encourage visitors to express themselves creatively through the lens of colour, adornment and playful self-expression. Children can break conventions and have creative free reign," said Anna Plunkett of Romance Was Born.

Tony Ellwood, Director, NGV, said, "Expect the unexpected as Romance Was Born present a bold and vivid new space in which visitors can experience their playful, often eccentric and always brilliantly colourful imaginations and designs. Art and fashion come together in a lively, flamboyant setting where visitors of all ages are encouraged to explore themes of fantasy and vibrant imagery."

"*Express Yourself* is central to the gallery's refreshed approach to children's programming, enabling children to engage in the artistic process in innovative ways. It's also about showcasing the very best in contemporary design practice and who better to do this for us than the hugely talented Romance Was Born, who put their inimitable aesthetic touch on our children's gallery," said Mr Ellwood.

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A vibrant children's activity book, *Express Yourself! An Activity Book for Kids by Romance Was Born*, has been released to coincide with the exhibition. Richly illustrated with colourful images of the fashion designers' signature looks, seasonal collections, and spectacular fashion parades, Romance Was Born invite children into their world and encourage kids to discover the creativity in fashion design through drawing and making activities. Available from the NGV Shop for RRP\$14.95.

The artists will sign copies of *Express Yourself!* at a special book signing on Saturday 18 October, 12.30pm, in the NGV Shop at NGV International.

The NGV wishes to acknowledge Tim Fairfax AC and Gina Fairfax for their generous support of the NGVforKIDS 2014/15 summer program. The NGVforKIDS program is supported by a grant from the Truby & Florence Williams Charitable Trust. This grant provides crucial encouragement to the corporate and philanthropic community to support children's programming at NGV.

*Express Yourself: Romance Was Born for Kids* is on display at NGV International from 17 October 2014 to 22 March 2015. Open 10am-5pm, 7 days. Free entry.



### About Romance Was Born

Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales met whilst studying fashion design and launched their Sydney-based label in 2005.

Otherworldly prints form the basis of each collection. The designers take inspiration from artists, often working collaboratively to create a new language for each season. The pair is recognised for exuberant and theatrical runway shows, where unusual dreamscapes are created. Previous collections have included collaborations with artists such as Del Kathryn Barton, Stephen Bush, Nell and Kate Rohde.

Romance Was Born have also collaborated beyond fashion as guest curators in museum and theatre settings, such as when they meticulously rearranged the rooms of Fairhall House Museum for *The Bride, The Ship and The Wardrobe* in 2012. In 2011 the Sydney Theatre Company commissioned them to design costumes for their production of Edward Gant's *Amazing Feats of Loneliness* and, most recently, they have worked with artist Rebecca Baumann on the exhibition *Reflected Glory* at Carriageworks in Sydney.

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### Official Supplier

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**Image captions:** (Previous page) **Del Kathryn Barton**, *We will ride* 2014, acrylic on French linen, 200.0 x 240.0 cm, Collection of the artist, Sydney, © Del Kathryn Barton, courtesy of ARNDT Berlin Singapore and Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery. (This page) Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales, Romance Was Born, 2013. Photo: Daniel Boud