

Pierre Bonnard, Designed by India Mahdavi: surprising appeal to international students

"Pierre Bonnard, Designed by India Mahdavi" is open with the concept of color and happiness particularly attracting international students at the National Gallery of Victoria from June 2023.

Pierre Bonnard is a renowned 20th-century French painter, famous for conveying delicate emotions through his vibrant use of colors. Each of his works is a summons to the past and a reflection of emotions. Mahdavi's scene design is also renowned for its bold use of colors.

Data from [Little Red Book](#), a well-known Chinese social platform with youth as an important user characteristic, shows that the hashtag # Melbourne NGV has reached 2.669 million views after the opening of the exhibition " Pierre Bonnard, Designed by India Mahdavi " at the NGV. (Figure 1)

Harry Wang from China has already visited this exhibition for the second time. She said every young person who participated in the exhibition was dressed up and showed a strong personal style, some couples held hands while admiring the paintings, or sat on the yellow sofa in the gallery as if they were in their own living room.

"This enchanting exhibition with its candy-colored hues seems to create a dreamlike scene from life, "said Miss Wang, when commenting on the colorful layout design within the exhibition hall.

"Whether it's the painting technique or the application of colors, they exude Bonnard's delicate feelings towards life and his inner world. Pierre Bonnard's style has completely captivated me," said Yutong Mou, another international student from MONASH's design department, when talking about the feeling conveyed in Bonnard's painting.

The popular exhibition is a collaborative effort between Paris's Musée d'Orsay and NGV, showcasing Pierre Bonnard's paintings, drawings, photographs, and decorative pieces. The exhibition takes place within a modern setting designed by renowned architect and designer India Mahdavi.

Unlike other art exhibitions, Bonnard's works, combined with Mahdavi's set design, create a "domestic-scale exhibition".

Bonnard infused his life into his artworks, incorporating elements such as cats, outdoor scenery, and his wife who repeatedly appears in his works. All of these aspects showcase Mahdavi's observation: "[Bonnard invites you into his home.](#)"(Figure 2)

In order to convey the "impression of the home", Mahdavi used elements like flowers and polka dots as well as brightly colored wallpapers in the spatial arrangement. This effectively enlarged the limited space visually, creating a resonance with Bonnard's works. (Figure 3)

The interior was furnished in an informal manner with oversized tables, chairs, sofas, and other furniture, all conveying a sense of happiness through a cartoon-style aesthetic, Mahdavi said in a [conversation](#) with NGV curator Dr Miranda Wallace. (Figure 4)

At the same time, Pierre Bonnard habitually uses [windows](#) to frame landscapes and is captivated by the sensuality and warmth of life. In this exhibition, Mahdavi also incorporated window designs, allowing visitors to experience Bonnard's colorful world, and become part of the exhibition, even part of the art itself. This immerses the audience in the concept of "home". (Figure 5)

The NGV will continue to exhibit "Pierre Bonnard, Designed by India Mahdavi" until October 2023.