Painting ghosts - Australian women artists in wartime

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Australian artists at that time were more concerned with exploring abstraction, and the war was also unfashionable in the art world. The situation was a very different one in the US where the Vietnam War inspired the ferocious Napalm, 1962, and Assassins (later renamed Vietnam), 1972, series by Leon Golub, James Rosenquist’s gigantic painting F-111, 1965, and Edward Kienholz’s monumental sculpture/installation The portable war memorial, 1968. During the Vietnam War Counihan made the Boy in a helmet series of paintings, drawings and prints in which Australian soldiers are shown either as aggressors or victims or both together. Each image in the series depicts a young soldier wearing a large American-style helmet. In Australia at War Counihan showed his new paintings of Wonthaggi coal miners, where, as an artist, he needed the support of the union to go down the mine in order to depict the previously unrecorded war contributions of workers. The NGV now has in its collection In the 18-inch seam, State Coal Mine, Wonthaggi, 1944 (fig. The Australian Aborigines’ League took a formal protest about Kristallnacht (the pogroms against the German Jews by the Nazis in November 1938) to the German Consulate in Melbourne. Age and Argus, 3 December 1938. 31 B. Smith, ‘Realist art in wartime Australia’, in Angry Penguins and Realist Painting in Melbourne in the 1940s (exh. cat.), Hayward Gallery, London, 1988, p. 55. Back to Edition 45. What’s On.