

Ken Whisson was born in Lilydale, Victoria, in 1927. After beginning a degree at Swinburne Technical College, in 1945 one of Whisson's portraits was spotted by the artist Danila Vassilieff. The Russian émigré painter invited the budding artist to study at the Koornong School at Warrandyte, a progressive school. Vassilieff taught Whisson to work intuitively and immediately and honed Whisson's style of painterly abstraction, as well as introducing him to the circle of Melbourne expressionists such as Sydney Nolan, Albert Tucker and Joy Hester.

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, Whisson travelled widely, producing a range of landscapes, still life's, figure work and portraits. These works show the beginnings of the style he is recognised for – simplified details, distorted forms and the manipulation of perspective and the relationship between figures or objects and ground. Whisson's blurring of the line between figuration and abstraction was unique in Australian art at the time and inspired a number of young artists.

In 1977 Whisson moved to Perugia, Italy, and he switched from painting on board to canvas, for ease of travel. He also reconsidered his use of space- linear landscapes with a high horizon line made way for multi-perspectival treatment of space. As such, Whisson's career is often defined as pre and post-Perugia.

Over the past six decades Whisson has regularly exhibited throughout Australia, and in 2012 his influence on Australian art was celebrated in the retrospective exhibition 'As If' which showed at Heide Museum of Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia.