



Into the Light

Recovering Australia's lost women artists 1870–1960

Into the Light Donor Circle Acquisitions 2021

Into the Light

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ISBN: 978-0-6455621-2-5

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Cover: Ethel Anna Stephens, *Roses on Panel: Marie van Houte* 1893, oil on cedar panel, 61 x 19 cm
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation



Foreword



Arnold Shore, *Studio Interior* c1933, oil painting, reproduced in *Art in Australia*, 15 December 1933

Into the Light Acquisitions 2021

Into the Light: Recovering Australia's lost women artists 1870-1960 is Sheila's national research project to collect data about women artists working professionally in Australia whose work may have slipped from view. The data will be made available to researchers, art historians, curators, artists and collectors via an online portal, facilitating research, exhibitions and publications that reconsider women's place in Australian art and allow their stories to be seen and heard in our art museums and art histories.

The project's acquisition fund, supported by the Into the Light Donor Circle and other Sheila supporters, acquires artworks by artists uncovered by the program or known to us from previous research. In time it will become a major reference collection of artworks by generations of little-known women artists.

Artworks purchased in the third year include impressionist paintings by Ethel Stephens and Aline Cusack (Sydney), Theo Anderson and Beatrix Colquhoun (Melbourne) and Daisy Rossi (Perth). There are also artworks by Melbourne tonal painters Elizabeth Colquhoun and Polly Hurrey, and modernists Elma Roach and Louise Thomas, with watercolour portraits by Gladys Laycock and Tempe Manning making up the balance.

This year's cohort of young researcher/writers numbers seven, drawn from the universities of Sydney, Melbourne and Western Australia, along with two who have written previously for us. Art historian Dr Juliette Peers has been involved as mentor, providing expert guidance and advice, as well as writing three essays

and the introduction. This year for the first time we staged a seminar for researcher/writers ahead of the project and a debrief session at its conclusion. We believe the project offers these young art historians and curators an invaluable introduction to professional work in a mentored context.

On behalf of Sheila I'd like to thank everyone involved, with some special thank yous. Firstly, to Juliette Peers, a mainstay of the project. Her research and advice is crucial to our acquisitions program, while for the catalogue she shared her knowledge and experience with a new generation of writers. Secondly to Sheila's Sydney intern for 2022, Annabelle Mentzines. Annabelle organised the seminars, researched copyright and supplementary images and helped research the fourth year's tranche of acquisitions. Thirdly to Sheila board members Kelly Gellatly and Angela Goddard, who serve with me on the ITL sub-committee, making difficult decisions about how best to spend our donor funds.

And finally, to our wonderful donors and supporters. You are contributing to a project with the power to transform Australian art by presenting a more accurate and truthful picture of the role of women. We're proud to present this summary of the works purchased and look forward to adding to it every year as the collection grows. If you would like to join the Into the Light Donor Circle, visit <https://sheila.org.au>.

John Cruthers



Studio Group at Olinda 1932 with *Dans L'atelier* (In the Studio)

From left: Dr John Dale, Meldrum, Peter Hurry, Lil Jorgensen, Justus Jorgensen, Mary Hurry (seated on floor), John Farmer

Photograph reproduced in Peter and John Perry, *Max Meldrum & Associates: Their Art, Lives and Influences*, Castlemaine Gallery and Historical Museum, Castlemaine, 1996, p 36. Into the Light artist Polly (Mary) Hurry and her husband John Farmer are pictured lower right with teacher and theorist Max Meldrum standing in the foreground on the left

Introduction

With the third tranche of acquisitions for Into the Light before us, there is little need for repeating the rationale and process behind the project. However the context in which the project has operated has changed rapidly. With the considerable expansion of scale in the number of artworks acquired and writers commissioned, the logistics of wrangling images, support material, essays and writers, across several states, has become more complex. Whilst this complexity has always remained (just) within the pale of manageability, it should be noted that the scale of operations is equivalent to that of a regional gallery or a small specialist press. Together a diverse team has completed both research and print prep activities but without the concomitant managerial and corporate fallback and resources of a public institution. This publication is truly the swan of cliché, gliding calmly and stately on the lake to charm viewers, whilst her unseen feet are paddling frantically underwater to keep moving.

A less obvious challenge to the ITL project is that in this current year, after lockdowns have lifted, the discovery and recovery activity that has been a central part of the Cruthers family's collecting, and later the Sheila Foundation's mission, has suddenly, surreptitiously, become nearly mainstream. Whilst interwar women modernists have engaged private and public collectors since the late 1970s, less famous impressionists, tonalists and realists from Melbourne in particular are currently fetching prices sometimes spectacularly above estimates in auction catalogues, with direct impact on the ITL project. In the last quarter century, shrinking funds that have failed to keep up with rising costs prompted all but the largest public galleries to serve primarily as a sympathetic forum for current art and the ever-growing cohort of contemporary artists, often foregrounding Indigenous art. However regional and municipal collections are now proactively revisiting art history in order to expand their collections. This shift is possibly due to pressure for gallery holdings to reflect changing and diverse demographics. Addressing the creativities of communities representing racial or gender differences usually involves accessing/commissioning new art production, but with women artists works from the 1880s onwards can be found and public institutions are (finally) actively seeking them out. Instead of curators waiting for dealers such as the late Joseph Brown and Frank McDonald to locate works and then offer them to institutional and other buyers, as was the accepted behaviour for decades, curators are choosing and buying works without any mediation or assistance and bidding live at auction. This is a massive shift in expected curatorial activities. The desire to make public collections more equitable not only is driving this shift in acquisition policies but demanding a recognition of the limitations of the old stories and displays that have served public collections in Australia for the last eight decades, when figures such as J.S. Macdonald, Daryl Lindsay and Bernard Smith began pruning and streamlining both displays and the storerooms. The Cruthers Collection and Sheila have consistently pushed against this norm.

Although the larger community of interested bidders impacts on ITL's ability to locate favourable opportunities, the 2021 tranche has acquired works by three women artists of immense cultural significance to their contemporaries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Ethel Stephens, Theo – Theodosia – Anderson and Beatrice Colquhoun. These artists have faded in varying degree in curatorial and academic memory. Dealers and

academics, outside of the present writer, have not even been able to pinpoint Theo Anderson's name and gender, assuming that Theo was either a male artist or, when correctly identified as female, assumed as does the Design and Art Australia Online index that she was the wife of a Mr Theodore Anderson. With the well known precedent of highly famous 19th century female authors using male names such as George Sand, George Eliot and Currer, Acton and Ellis Bell to capture both publishers and a readership, Theo may have intentionally set up this ambiguity to gain public traction and authority.

Assembling the stories of Anderson's, and especially Stephens', professional lives greatly extends the profile of feminist presences in Australian art at the turn of the century and the acquisition of these works by Sheila prompts consideration of these complex women in themselves and equally the impact they made on both the general public and their immediate colleagues. Anderson was known in family recollection to have been strongly interested in women's suffrage, while Stephens worked consistently through multiple projects and platforms on behalf of women in the arts. Stephens was a powerful, political and high profiled figure in Sydney across five decades and notably visible in the press. She is very close to a classic separatist feminist of the 1970s in her desire to set up opportunities for women artists that were neither dependent upon nor shared with male colleagues.

Whilst Stephens and Anderson can be reconstructed through contemporary press accounts, Beatrice Colquhoun's story survived more in personal memory than on the public record. Without the capturing of these memories through interviews and discussion, mostly in a short period in the late 1980s within about 18 months of her daughter Elizabeth's death, this woman, who was such a vivid figure for her colleagues, pragmatic, unconventional and inspiring, would be substantially reduced to a handful of lines in turn of the century art reviews. The near loss of Beatrice Colquhoun's story indicates how faulty, spasmodic and inadequate are accepted practices for public historical and cultural documentation. Current calls by younger art professionals for overturning academic and curatorial processes¹ recognise these limitations of standard institutional practice but are based solely in contemporary understandings of race and identity and prioritise the current, personal, relational and experiential over both history and the object. The latter being mere "stuff" in the words of an emerging writer.² These new paradigms would not have captured Beatrice Colquhoun's life and work either, even though she appears to have subverted and evaded her period's norms of class and whiteness.³ An autistic rather than an activist brain is needed to fight the systemic and wilful forgetting, and also resist this current rejection of the object as inherently tainted, which will lead to the further attrition of a multi storied and diverse past.

An artwork that offers insights into less expected aspects of Australian public memory is Polly Hurry's still life of daffodils. She and her husband John Farmer made a then unusual journey across parts of China, Korea and Japan after their marriage in 1921. Their journey is another story that is mostly documented in personal information captured from John Farmer and his associates. Sadly no mention of their journey in either the *Home* or *Table Talk* or other periodicals that recorded the travels of the Australian elite in Asia as well as to Europe and the United

States during the 1920s and 1930s can currently be found. Their determination to travel “on a budget”, by public transport and avoid the Eurocentric expatriate world of cocktail bars and country clubs is only captured in a few comments made by John Farmer four decades ago. ‘Everyone was very nice to us’, he said, meaning the local population.⁴ Yet did the Farmers only find their own romantic fantasies? Were the quiet, careful takeaways from their travels – their practice of ikebana, their performance of the tea ceremony, (presumably with artefacts brought back from Japan), their ongoing interest in Buddhism – merely racial mimicry and to be scorned by today’s values? Or did they offer some glimpse of less familiar and less Anglophile cultural options in 1920s Melbourne when Asian people were mocked as untrustworthy inferiors? Clarice Beckett found their practices highly inspirational.⁵ Whilst there is no documentation to support such an assertion, it is likely that they discussed Buddhism with Beatrice and Elizabeth Colquhoun, who were also close friends.

Daisy Rossi also ranks as an important woman artist of c1910. Whilst already represented in the Cruthers Collection and well known in Perth, she is the first ITL acquisition off the Melbourne-Sydney nexus. Her landscape *Fairy Waters* consolidates a specifically West Australian regional story of terrain, locality, friendship, celebrity, feminism, politics and environmental degradation. However this is not just a “Perth-centric” story: like Irene Hewitt’s Meldrum School view of Black Hill, pre-1937 (Art Gallery of Ballarat), these representational landscapes jump across the decades and resonate with current urgent issues about the environment and how to live within the fragile ecology of Australia.

This tranche has brought the significant development of a public donation of an artwork to ITL by Aline Cusack, encouraged by reading previous years’ publications. This donation marks an exciting new step and it is to be hoped the welcome gift will be the first of many. The Sheila Foundation now has an informative and varied grouping of works by Cusack, more than can be found in any Australian public gallery. Moreover the acquisition of the Stephens flowerpiece further consolidates the series of paintings by female plein airists from Sydney. Across the last three years purchases of works by Stephens, Muskett, Potter, Scarvell and Aline Cusack through ITL have built a cohesive assemblage of Sydney plein air works by women. This unique grouping is a major achievement of ITL and allows for a clearer understanding of a generation of artists little known to public and professionals. Outpacing current public gallery holdings, this plein air collection is a tangible achievement for three years of activity.

The vital importance of classical empirical research (no matter how off-trend or stale it may appear) for understanding historic women artists’ practices can be demonstrated in the research unlocked by the labels found on the backs of works. Three of the works in this tranche acquired significant backstories via the information on the original labels on frames or supports. Extra levels of precise detail regarding the origins, meanings and reception of these works that were unknown at the time of purchase are now accessible. The fascinating stories can be read in the essays on Aline Cusack, Daisy Rossi and Gladys Laycock and they transform our understanding of the actual complexity of these works for their artists and their original audiences.

Tempe Manning’s self-portrait also has a significant backstory that makes compelling, if sobering, reading. Manning was one of the victims of a key, highly publicised moment of sexism in public art patronage in Australia: the Commonwealth Art Advisory

Board’s rejection in 1945 of portraits from Manning and Mary Edwards. Commissioned to honour the first female members of Federal Parliament, the works were not accepted on account of their supposed poor quality and male artists were asked to paint replacements. This scandal was an inglorious nadir in the treatment of women artists by mainstream authorities in Australia and should be remembered as much as contestations over the Dobell’s portrait of Joshua Smith.

This tranche ranges across several styles and movements. Ritualised expressions of Edwardian art and taste are seen in the Cusack painting of Pat the dog and the Laycock miniature of Colin Young Caird, both of which embody the aristocratic, yet sentimental, tone of the era set in chain by the king and queen. They were both enthusiastic dog lovers and owned myriads of indoor and outdoor dogs of different breeds. Alexandra was an inveterate collector of small but valuable trinkets, and Edward was a highly partisan Francophile. Both royals also thus informed the renewed relevance of miniatures, ported through the endorsement of French style and the art professional interest in the 18th century during the Edwardian era. It is typical of the very rigid vision of Australian art history writing that miniatures are often discussed as an irrelevant and backwards looking art medium in the early 20th century.

For the first time tonal paintings have been acquired although work by a fellow traveller, Jo Sweatman, was acquired last year. Both are from the hands of less familiar female members of the group, who bring a distinctive, unusual and subtle variation to a movement that is often wrongly assumed to be dull, hegemonic and repetitive. Elizabeth Colquhoun was somewhat modest and retiring in her life and her paintings generally eschewed showy bravura. Polly Hurry was a versatile artist who handled landscapes, portraits and still life with equal confidence. Famed as one of the first students of Max Meldrum, she managed to avoid the anger and insults that were often hurled at her colleagues. Hurry, who usually used her maiden name, was a notably prolific artist, showing in both solo shows and regularly at the important artists groups in Melbourne. A full-length portrait of a woman in 1920s evening wear has been bequeathed by its sitter, Mrs T.R.P. Hole (who made the much desired “good marriage” of her generation), to the Victoria and Albert Museum and a portrait of the celebrated art historian Ursula Hoff indicates the breadth and sophistication of Hurry’s social circle, which was wider than the Meldrum group. Another key interwar art movement, neo-classical modernism, was favoured by Tempe Manning, whose work joins the notable collection of self-portraits in the Cruthers Collection. Manning was passed over in the early discovery of Sydney modernist women artists in the first upswing of feminist art history in the 1970s, and well deserves the renewed attention offered to her in this publication.

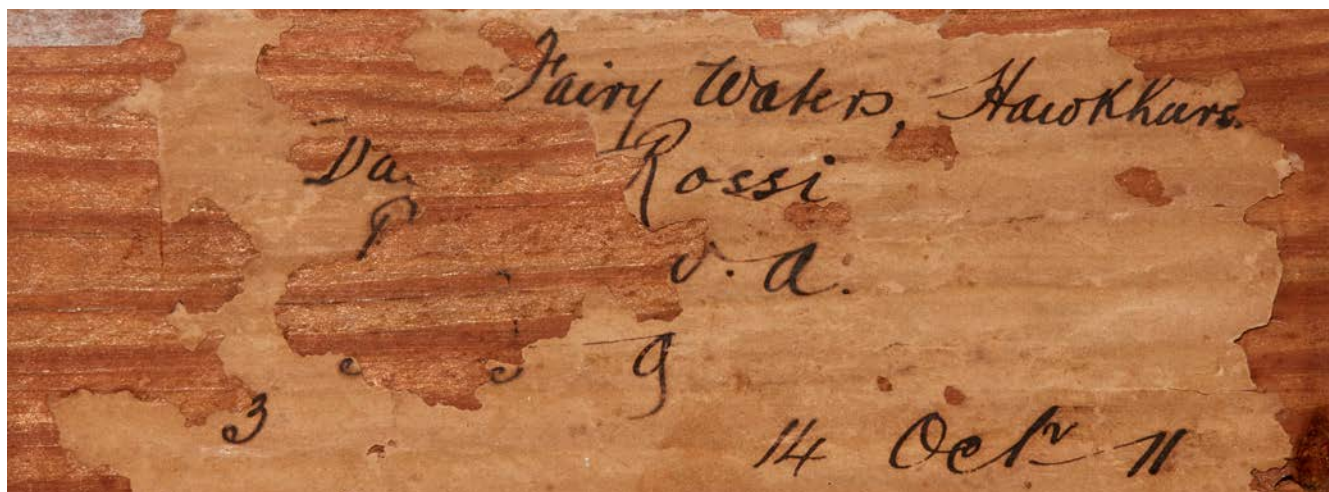
Whilst modernism is the one phase of historic women’s art that has attracted consistent attention from curators and academics, some significant artists remain overlooked. Two are represented in this third tranche. Elma Roach, who died relatively young of cancer, was a major unfamiliar expatriate modernist. Like Iso Rae, Roach’s long years in France possibly faded her local reputation, and the war and her illness gave her no opportunity to re-establish herself in Melbourne. She worked in Paris with a Polish Jewish member of the Ecole de Paris, Adolphe Millich. He had previously painted and studied in Munich and the location of her landscape, the town of Sanary, on the Côte d’Azur, was famed as a hub for expatriate creative refugees from Nazism.

With the establishment of the Vichy regime, Millich escaped to Switzerland and returned to France after the war. The very enigmatic Louise Thomas was greatly admired by her peers at the Bell School, and her earliest known work is professional and mature. But of her art training and experiences we know little, nor do we know how the wife of a blacksmith at the Newport Railway Workshops came into contact with the fashionable school of modern art run by George Bell. She was the daughter of a miner in Stawell Victoria, a town of highly industrialised, deep lead mining, with a clear class division between mine owners and workers, but had moved to Melbourne by the time of her marriage. Hers is the only fragmentary story of the whole selection.

Each biography in this publication tells the story of both an artist and an artwork. All these artists were admired and successful, and their stories deserve to be better known. The stereotype of the sidelined unimportant woman artist does not tally with the following accounts of women, teaching, organising art groups and other relevant support for artists and generally being well

received by critics. The diversity of ambitions and styles documented in these following pages does not lessen the impact of the collective whole, rather it demonstrates that women were engaged with all facets of the Australian artworld at any given time. In many cases, except for Daisy Rossi who has been the subject of a previous publication by Shirley Daffen and also mentioned in Janda Gooding's history of West Australian art,⁶ (although the story of *Fairy Waters* was not touched on in either publication), the ITL writers have had to tackle the often challenging task of "greenfields" research, as there has been little discussion of these women in previous secondary publications to guide or inform judgement of works or offer a timeline as a backbone. Without the essays, without the research and discussion, without the ITL project, all these women's careers would have remained untracked in the immediate future. To all those who have made this opportunity possible we should be thankful.

Juliette Peers



Inscription verso of Daisy Rossi's painting *Fairy Waters, Hawkhurst* 1911

Notes

1 Journalist Jan Fran uses the term 'reckoning' which is also used frequently in the US and Canada discussing the question as to how high art practice is to be aligned with massive demographic changes. See Jan Fran, 'The Frant: Australian culture's diversity problem is more than skin deep – video', <https://www.theguardian.com/media/video/2020/dec/19/the-frant-australian-cultures-diversity-problem-is-more-than-skin-deep-video>, accessed 16 December 2022, cf. a critique of the Archibald Prize by Eugene Yiu Nam Cheung & Soo-Min Shim, 'Complaint as Counteraction: Disputing the Archibald Prize', *Running Dog*, 8 May 2020 <https://rundog.art/complaint-as-counteraction-disputing-the-archibald-prize/>, accessed 2022. Both these articles date from mid-2020 when in the middle of Covid there was a peak mass of public discussion around representation in the press, television, literature, the Sydney Film Festival and the Archibald Prize mostly from young art writers and critics in NSW.

2 Tian Zhang, 'A Manifesto for Radical Care or How to be Human in the Arts', *Sydney Review of Books*, July 2022, <https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/essay/a-manifesto-for-radical-care-or-how-to-be-a-human-in-the-art>, accessed 16 December 2022. Cf. for a different view on this new de-object, de-material practice see Tara Heffernan, 'Double the Care: Philosophy of Care and Care Ethics and Art', *Artlink*, 5 October 2022, <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/5003/double-the-care-philosophy-of-care-and-care-ethics/> accessed 16 December 2022.

3 Whilst debates around the identity and value of Theosophy abound and its relationships to colonial power structures are highlighted in the present, JJ Clarke stated that the movement was a 'challenge to Western intellectual and cultural hegemony in the late Victorian era'. See John James Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought*, Routledge, London, 1997, pp. 89-91.

4 Conversations with John Farmer. John and Peter Perry and Volkhard Wehner also interviewed John Farmer about the trip, which was in the 1920s, a less expected choice for Australian artists where the correct career path involved visiting European and England. In 1902 Lionel Lindsay prepared for his journey to Spain by taking informal lessons from a Spaniard who ran a small business in Melbourne and who also gave him letters of introductions to friends and relatives back home, one wonders whether the Farmers similarly sought to acquire at least some rudimentary language help from local Asian Australians in Melbourne. Artists and art students from the Gallery School, Meldrum's School and later the Bell School frequently found restaurants and other businesses in Little Bourke Street to be well priced and convenient in the interwar years.

5 Tracey Lock, *The Present Moment: The art of Clarice Beckett*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 27 February – 23 May 2021, pp. 78, 170.

6 Janda Gooding, *Western Australian art and artists 1900-1950*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, 1987.

Ethel Anna Stephens (1864-1944)

Reversing the curatorial and critical positioning of overlooked women artists is understood by both professional and popular audiences to be a core objective of feminist art history. In Australia the “rescue” of Clarice Beckett’s artworks has become the touchstone not only to curatorial practice but to culturally processing and validating a range of social and generational experiences, especially around the (often limited) place given to older women in Australian society.¹ *The Rescue* 2021 was the title of a digital artwork by Peter Drew. Commissioned by the Art Gallery of South Australia ‘as a symbolic memorial to the legacy of Clarice Beckett, it is a potent reminder of loss, love and the fragility of the fearless creative act.’²

Unlike Clarice Beckett, looking at Ethel Stephens sometimes prompts anxiety and complaint rather than praise or affection. Could we insightfully contrast Ethel Stephens’ unresolved status with the probing, sympathetic attention paid to Clarice Beckett and the universal respect that her work currently elicits? Stephens’ entries in *Heritage* and the database Design and Australian Art Online clearly document this anxiety. The late Angela Philp deployed a very classical vision of the function and definition of radical art and therefore Ethel’s career was too interstitial and complex to register well in that context. ‘[B]ossy, pretentious and patronising’ were terms she used for Ethel. Even the usually more broadminded and welcoming Joan Kerr could not reconcile the incongruity of Stephens choosing to depict a major 19th century Australian feminist activist, Mary Windeyer, as a placid matronly knitter.³



Ethel Anna Stephens, *Dame Mary Gilmore* 1891, oil on canvas on board, State Library of New South Wales

Writing from a history of education perspective outside the arts industries, Rebecca Kummerfeld is more unambiguously positive than art historians about Stephens’ contributions to late 19th and early 20th century Sydney cultural life. Kummerfeld pays particular attention to the manner in which Stephens found ways to subvert the narrow and rigid positioning of respectable women in domestic space at that date and open out professional opportunities for herself and her students, as well as make her art visible to buyers and patrons.⁴ She also notes that Stephens’ vast oeuvre, painted across four to five decades of working life, is now reduced to a handful of known paintings. Moreover two works have been deaccessioned in the 1940s from the Art Gallery of New South Wales.⁵

The disappearance of Stephens’ oils from the Sydney gallery may indicate that her works had no place in a narrative foregrounding the progressive development of modern art, as Bernard Smith claimed to advocate for, and which is now assumed to be the central and correct narrative of Australian art history. Helen Topliss’ *Feminism and Modernism* is the quintessential presentation of the much-repeated 1990s construct of a female-driven Australian modernism opposing the conservatism of male establishment figures in the early decades of the 20th century. Yet surprisingly in the context of accepted stories, Topliss also briefly acknowledged Stephens’ dedication to establishing alternative structures and support for women artists in a hostile professional artworld, a generation before the modernists that were her central focus.⁶

Yet cue-ing to a sermon about present day curatorial lacks is undermined by the twist that 120 years ago Stephens’ actions were sometimes viewed as negative and divisive and, in some cases, not passively accepted by her contemporaries. Stephens is already cast as taboo, a pollution and disorder to the system and the existential reassurances that cleanliness and system offers (in the construct of Mary Douglas), by offending a major legendary figure in radical nationalist culture, poet Dame Mary Gilmore in the 1890s. Gilmore, who had been approached by Julian Ashton to sit for a portrait, ended up at his recommendation sitting for his student Stephens in 1891. However she rejected Stephens’ portrait as being ‘conventional and without fire’,⁷ and therefore not conforming to her own self-conception as a radical agitator. The portrait follows the manner of similar fancy portraits by Roberts and Ashton presenting elegant, soulful and introspective women and is a very accomplished example of the genre. Ironically far from indicating a faux status for Stephens’ portrait, this tension between the urbanely middle class and a fantasy construct/performance of radicalism was a dichotomy that Ian Burn claimed was central to understanding the work of the Heidelberg School and plein air circles in Melbourne and Sydney. In 1980 Ian Burn indicted Australian painting of the 1880s and 1890s as essentially a bourgeois leisure practice that had little relationship to what working class and Indigenous experience within the landscapes actually entailed.⁸



Ethel Anna Stephens, *Roses on Panel: Marie van Houte* 1893,
oil on cedar panel, 61 x 19 cm
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation

Another divisive tension Stephens created in her lifetime followed on from her comments made in a press interview. Members of the Society of Arts and Crafts of New South Wales were distressed by public comments made by two committee members, Stephens and her colleague Eirene Mort, around the idea that the crafts and the trades were a haven for those unable to commit to years of professional art training and that Sydney offered poor training opportunities in comparison to Hobart and Melbourne. Records of the Society show that the committee discussed both women's comments and thought that the interviewees were also misrepresented by journalists,⁹ a surprisingly modern complaint. The controversy also reflects the origins of the Society as a north shore social group which was taken over within a year c1906 by established Sydney creative professionals such as Stephens and Mort. The management of the group teetered between amateurs and professionals throughout the first decade of the 20th century, before finally resolving around female professionals.¹⁰

If conventions imply that only the successful and mainstream deserve attention, ironically erasing Ethel Stephens' career removes a woman who was *foundationally* positioned within the origin stories around the development of the teaching and exhibition of radical art in Sydney in the 1880s and 1890s. Stephens was more directly involved in art politics than Melbourne women artists at the same date. She was perhaps the most proactively feminist of all Australian-based artists prior to the 1920s, and perhaps even prior to the 1970s.¹¹ Her record of support for women artists stretches across three decades. In the early 1890s her influence was highly visible and cutting edge and offered tangible improvements to the status of women artists in Sydney. She was elected to the Art Society of New South Wales committee to represent the large cohort of female members in 1892, the first woman to gain that distinction, and had founded the female art group, the Painting Club,¹² c1893. Her energy and flair for leadership were directed towards expanding and consolidating opportunities for women artists.



Miss Ethel Stephens,

the well-known Sydney painter who now goes to London and the Continent to resume her work. Through the war Miss Stephens was debarred from visiting the old world centres, where she had planned exhibiting her canvases, but the way being now clear, we may hope to hear of her name from the other side in due course. The visit will be a lengthy one, Miss Stephens's programme being so comprehensive as to need a long sojourn for its fulfilment.

Ethel Anna Stephens pictured in her studio in *The Sun* newspaper, 18 January 1920

Over two decades, 1900s-1910s, she organised myriads of small women's art exhibitions in Sydney galleries and studios. These small exhibitions would lead to the foundation of the Society of Women Painters in 1910. At the same time Stephens also advocated for craft and design in Sydney.

Whereas many Sydney women artists prior to the 1920s are shadowy and enigmatic, Stephens was constantly featured in the press from the 1890s onwards.

Miss Stephens holds a distinguished position in art circles. That fact is proved by her election as the first lady member of the Council of the Art Society.¹³

Misses Meston and Scarvell and Ethel Stephens are some of the best known of the painting girls of Sydney. They all have "studio days" and "private views," when Society meets with Bohemia...¹⁴



Ethel Anna Stephens, *Still life of flowers* n.d., oil on canvas, dimensions unknown, S. H. Ervin Gallery

Photographs of her works and exhibitions as well as in-depth interviews appeared frequently in newspapers and magazines from the 1890s to the 1930s. Press accounts note her presence at many events and working for many causes. Stephens' diverse range of contacts and friendships placed her in a far more central and prominent position of cultural agency than is outlined in *Heritage* and in the DAAO biographies. Although free with her opinions when talking to journalists, she was generous and loyal to her working colleagues. When Jessie Scarvell married in 1901 Stephens presented her with a fine flowerpiece that is now in the S.H. Ervin Gallery, having been preserved by Jessie and her daughter. Stephens supervised the selection of Sydney work for the 1907 Women's Work Exhibition in Melbourne and travelled down to Melbourne to supervise the arrangement of the New South Wales display.¹⁵ The patron of the Exhibition, Lady Alice Northcote, wife of the then Governor General, remained well disposed to Stephens and sponsored her membership of the Lyceum Club in London in 1910, when Stephens was making her first overseas journey.¹⁶ In 1913 Stephens was noted as a guest at the opening of Ethel Carrick Fox's Sydney solo exhibition,¹⁷ and the two artists remained friends, exchanging letters in the decade ahead.¹⁸ Both artists have been misread as marginal and desperate by later art historians, although views on Carrick Fox have been substantially revised to acknowledge the extent of her status, agency and ability as an artist.

Stephens tirelessly promoted and encouraged her fellow women artists and attracted a number of like-minded young women to her side. Several of these artists, including Aline Cusack, Jessie Scarvell and Alice Muskett, have been acquired previously for the Into the Light collection. Now the work of the artist who was both the linchpin and the mentor to these emerging radicals has joined that of her friends, allowing us to more tangibly reconstruct this strong feminist network that has passed unnoticed in public gallery and academic culture. It is faintly possible that we are talking also of a lost *queer* history, given the stable partnership and joint household of Eirene Mort and Norah Weston was part of this circle, although that ongoing partnership resists modern definition and categorisation.¹⁹ Stephens never married, nor does public documentation proffer any romantic male suitor, happy or unhappy. She lived, as well as worked, closely to other notable women, establishing a female artist enclave of homes in Vacluse,²⁰ which included the household of Mort and Weston, as well as Alice Norton, Stephens' cousin, also a high profiled and skilled exhibitor of plein air watercolours in the 1890s and 1900s. Throughout her life, she shared studios and apartments with other women artists; she also promoted the work that English women artists sent out for her to exhibit in Sydney.

Ethel Stephens established the key pattern in Sydney of many women artists between 1880 and 1920, being closely connected to high society. Stephens was one of two children born to William John Stephens and his wife Anna Louise Daniell, whom he married at St Marks Darling Point in 1859. Her father was a young and talented academic from Oxford University, who had been headhunted as first headmaster of Sydney Grammar in 1856. However he was soon stood down from that prestigious post after other staff members denounced his controversial refusal to sanction capital punishment of the students. Subsequently he established his own progressive and rationally modern school in his home in Darlinghurst, taking a considerable amount of early Sydney Grammar School pupils with him. He was appointed professor of Natural Science at the University of Sydney in 1882.²¹ A posthumous portrait, painted by his daughter in 1913 and based on a photograph from the 1880s, is in the collection of the University of Sydney. William Stephens was well connected in Sydney's cultural life, being a trustee of the Australian Museum from 1862 and the [now] State Library from 1870-1890, serving as the president of the Library in 1887-1890, as well as being involved with both scientific and literary societies across Sydney. Anna Stephens was a close friend of major feminist and radical intellectual Mary Windeyer.²² In her childhood, Ethel Stephens was surrounded by adults who were intellectually broadminded and exercised public service and authority, underpinning her own sure placement of her art and opinions.

She was central to shaping art education in fin de siècle Sydney and for decades afterwards. Julian Ashton claimed that he had no thought of being an art teacher until Professor Stephens asked him to tutor his daughter. By his account Stephens was his first pupil and Alice Muskett his second.²³ Ethel Stephens' own account of her origins as an artist also involved Ashton but was more romantic and dynamic. Her drawings had been shown by chance to Ashton who immediately identified the future talent and offered to teach her.²⁴ Her father's premature death in 1890 led her to establish art classes to make an income for herself. Stephens had been exhibiting since 1880, but swiftly moved from describing herself as an amateur, whilst her father still

lived, to being elected to the committee of the Art Society of New South Wales in 1892, a rapid shift of status.²⁵ When she moved to Vacluse in the mid 1920s, she designed a studio and had it built to her specifications. The room boasted a spectacular view of Sydney Harbour from large windows.²⁶

Whilst Stephens' career was shaped by her thorough grounding in the cultural possibilities and options of Sydney, she travelled overseas, although she advised that Australians would benefit more from travel if they had picked up the basics of art techniques from local art teachers before they left Australia.²⁷ Her first trip was in 1910 and she spent her time visiting galleries in Europe and painting, as well as apparently taking some lessons for short periods, particularly in tempera painting, which she launched in Sydney,²⁸ and possibly working for a short time in one of the famous Parisian studios. Florence, Venice, Etaples, Paris, London and Cornwall were amongst the locations she visited. After the war she undertook a longer period of study in 1920-1922. Based in Paris she spent time at the Academie de la Grand Chaumiere and exhibited twice at the Paris Salon, including a well-regarded white on white painting of undecorated china on a white tablecloth.²⁹ She resigned the presidency of the Society of Women Painters to again travel in 1929.

Ethel's move into charity and war work during World War I, yet again, set a major precedent for a whole generation of female contemporaries in Sydney. 'At the present time many of our women painters of pictures are devoting their energies almost entirely to patriotic work.'³⁰ This diversion into charity and rehabilitation/nursing work dominated her artmaking in the teens of the 20th century. Her sacrifice of personal practice and reputation to assist a collective good has made little impact in either narratives of art history or the – highly gendered, often conservative – manner in which war is remembered in Australian public culture. In Melbourne art was often cast as anti-imperial, even treacherous, to the extent that drunken soldiers stoned the windows of Meldrum's art school, and invaded it, trashing its fittings and brawling with the male students.³¹

This diversion of a whole generation of women artists into charitable work, fundraising and especially the support and rehabilitation of wounded ex-servicemen (substantially devolved at an official level to female volunteers), has undoubtedly contributed to the faint presence of Sydney female plein airists in Australian public histories. In an era when culture and sense-making globally and publicly grapples with the inheritances from the British Empire, this story of individuals' willing sublimation of their imaginative and creative life to the demands of imperial politics may be problematical. Yet Stephens and her colleagues' sacrifice could be equally seen as prophetic a century or more later when young curators and art writers advocate for a contemporary art practice focused on 'relationships' not 'products, projects, objects and profit' or 'mak[ing] stuff'.³² The politics may be vastly different but the structure and premise of de-centring the self and the object in art practice to create a social practice is twinned.

Stephens' wartime activities were prodigious. Barely a fortnight after the British entered the war on 4 August 1914, bringing Australia with them, she had organised first aid and nursing classes for Sydney women artists and was chairing meetings³³ where the Governor General's wife, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, outlined her vision for organising a national Red Cross. Headed by Munro Ferguson, the Australian Red Cross

became a massive nation-wide woman-led corporate organisation that managed assets and funds to the value of five million pounds, over 390 million Australian dollars today, somewhat to the chagrin of upper and middle class male employees under that female leadership.³⁴ Women moved into public life by supposedly conforming to wartime exigencies and patriotic loyalty. This movement was facilitated by the already established alignment in Sydney of women's craft and design to an Anglophile, Ruskinian, chivalric vision of women as helpmates to the imperial project.³⁵ Stephens cast her activities as a public and national service and made a clear claim for women's right to public space and the nation.

Miss Stephens has as well a fine war record. She was the first Australasian quartermaster, and took up duty with the Darlinghurst Division (No. 15) in August, 1914, and was with the Division when it took charge and arranged the home for the reception for the first wounded in October, 1915. In the meantime she has worked untiringly for such activities as clothing for the Red Cross, Belgian Day, and other such patriotic movements, while her advice and assistance were at the service of both her old Division and the whole of the Red Cross Industries' committee throughout the war.³⁶

Her most interesting project was the Red Cross toy factory, founded in early 1916, which created income for wounded returned soldiers and replaced imported toys, 'products of Hun ingenuity' that were no longer available for Australian children due to the war.³⁷ It was also an early example of upcycling; many of the materials, wood and textiles, from which the toys, dolls and stuffed animals were made were donated scraps and off cuts. Stephens designed the toys and registered the models, becoming amongst the first recorded Australian design registrations for toys.³⁸ She was later joined by Dora Barclay, an Australian sculptor. Reforming the design and manufacture of children's toys to improve quality and make them more educationally and psychologically relevant was a vernacular expression of early 20th century modernism that was popular in Europe.³⁹ She had possibly observed such movements and displays of progressive toys when overseas in 1910. Again Stephens is partly an agent of modernism as well as a foe.



Ethel Anna Stephens, *Nasturtiums* 1931, colour linocut, 22 x 19 cm, National Gallery of Victoria

Whilst the war made it impossible to travel, she left for Paris as soon as possible after the war.⁴⁰ On her return she became President of the Society of Women Painters (SWP) and the society was never long absent from the Sydney press. Stephens not only discussed art, she also promoted the SWP, which during her presidency organised a frenetic range of social activities, including balls, afternoon teas, card parties, musical evenings and charity events. Architect Florence Taylor also convened the Arts Club, a group that hosted social entertainments during the 1920s intended to raise funds to support the SWP, in running its art school and its club rooms. Stephens continued to work for the Red Cross,⁴¹ heeding Lady Munro Ferguson's advice that Australian women ought not to disband the organisation after the war, rather build on the network and the professional experience. Stephens resigned the presidency to travel overseas again in 1929. On her return she retained her high profile in the press during the 1930s. Her modernist prints which she especially produced after her third overseas trip, were noted as being a highly attractive component of a 1934 solo exhibition.⁴² However she severed her links to the SWP as she disapproved of its changes to update itself and keep relevant in the 1930s.⁴³

Despite complaining that cubism and futurism were poor art, Stephens' modernist colour linocuts produced in the later 1920s and 1930s were highly accomplished. Thus she followed a vastly different arc to her most famous peers in the Society of Artists in the 1890s, Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts. None of the male plein airists embraced modernism to this extent. She equally outpaced her friend Eirene Mort who moved from art nouveau design work in the 1900s to a conservative neo-gothic style, aligned with Britain and the Anglican Church by the 1920s. Stephens also adopted sporty art deco fashions when she was in her 60s, as can be seen in a photograph in the National Library of Australia. She remained punchy and opinionated in the press throughout her working life. Her detailed, scornful denunciation of futurism and Matisse in 1913 for the Sydney press predates Norah Simpson sharing prints of post-impressionist works. In railing against these movements, Ethel betrays a de facto knowledge and observation of them.⁴⁴

Ethel Stephens' oeuvre is fragmented and hard to classify. As Rebecca Kummerfeld states, deaccessionings have undermined and sundered a logical public interface with her work. Equally academic interpretations have created a vision of an art practice that was at war with itself; with Stephens seeking to show portraits whilst the critics endorsed flower paintings.⁴⁵ Yet there was nothing specious or desperate about her practice as a portraitist. She stepped into the void created by the departure of the widely commissioned Mary Stoddard in 1900 and between 1900-1914 painted a number of prominent Sydney men on commission from the University, religious bodies and private schools, which contrary to the received truth, often received positive coverage in the press. Portraiture was a very well-paid branch of painting and many artists male or female were pleased to access such commissions for the fees as much as the kudos. Stephens' female sitters generally were friends and colleagues, apart from Mary Gilmore's rejected portrait. Not all these commissioned portraits are "dull"; her 1911 portrait of Sir Henry Normand MacLaurin, University of Sydney collection, is substantially impressionist, focusing on strong light on the gold braid and the starched white shirtfront. Both the face and the decorated robes are broadly handled with square brushes. The work resembles similar commissioned portraits of men in office that were produced by the plein air circle.

Ethel Stephens was one of a number of artists linked to the plein air group who painted both academic and progressive pieces and also in a number of different genres simultaneously. These artists, male and female, including Artur Loureiro, Charles Douglas Richardson, Florence Fuller and May Vale, have been elided in studies of the Heidelberg group because they do not fit the preferred model, derived from Smith's narrative of a clear-cut positivist progress from error to raised consciousness. If decolonisation suggests that discourse ought to abandon the idea of nationalist landscapes "discovering" the "true" Australia, then freeing the plein air circle from its assigned role of creating a "correct" image of Australia may offer a means of relaxing the severe censure directed since the 1940s to these multi layered artists such as Stephens who fascinate as much as disappoint.



Ethel Anna Stephens, *Blair Hill Lake, Stonehenge, New England, N.S.W. 1890*, oil on canvasboard, 19 x 28.7 cm, New England Regional Art Museum

In Stephens' case, evaluation of her work is complicated by her Parisian studies in 1920-1922 overwriting the confidence drawn from her radical origins in the late 1880s, early 1890s Sydney milieu from Ashton and the self-help, plein air ethos of the Painting Club with a less spontaneous, more pedantic and stiff manner of painting landscapes. Simultaneously in the 1920s her highly skilled and well-judged coloured linocuts are more satisfactory than her oils and watercolours. Stephens' colours in her oils become brighter and harder, less nuanced, caught not only in tensions between radical and conservative, but between popular and high culture. Her garden scenes with massed blooms in saturated colours resemble commercial art of the 1920s and 30s, such as can be seen in advertising, packaging and early coloured off-set printing. Stephens brought back a collection of modern posters from her 1920-1922 trip to share with artists in Sydney.⁴⁶

Stephens' long association with applied arts introduced her not only to Ruskinian medievalism, but also to constant engagement with the relationship between art and the everyday. Her focus on advocacy, sharing and support, long before World War I, also pushed her practice towards the popular and democratic, no matter, how strong her opinions were. Curiously both Stephens and Streeton's artworks of their later years reflect popular taste of the 1920s and 1930s, but at different points of the taste spectrum. Streeton represents an ordered subdued Anglophile concentration on spectacular flowers and (often antique, sometimes oriental) *objets de vertu*, with compositions and tonal range



President of the Society of Women Painters Miss Ethel Stephens, New South Wales c1930, photograph, 8.3 x 10.8 cm, National Library of Australia

carefully controlled. Stephens tends more to the eclectic and bright, feminised, American-leaning world of popular consumerism in fashion and interiors and the unabashed romanticism of the cinema. Far from being conservative, both of their oeuvres relate to the life around them. Both made a parallel evolution from the youthful bravura and energy that we so admire – to an aesthetic that is partly more ordered and contained and yet also more pragmatically grounded in the shapes and forms of the urban life around them, rather than the spectacular aestheticism of the 1880s and 1890s. Both moved on without qualm and regret in their artwork, although not their often-acerbic comments, accepting the levelling, de-romanticising and change in visual cultures that followed on from the war, although each took a divergent but legitimate response. Later generations should at least respect their choices, even if the impact on their artwork is somewhat disappointing.

If public gallery curating in Australia forever desires the elusive high noon of the 1880s and 1890s Heidelberg School radicalism, then Stephens should be accorded her full status as a practitioner who was thoroughly literate as portraitist, landscapist and still life artist in that relatively brief moment of Australian art. As a professional and progressive artist, Stephens was also naturally included in Tom Roberts' breakaway group of radical professionals, the Society of Artists, in 1895. Stephens' artmaking is at its most engaging and straightforward to the degree that it reflects the plein air movement. The painting *Roses on Panel: Marie van Houte* 1893 encapsulates everything that keeps the plein air group alive in the public imaginary. It has all that we expect from that time, direct square brushwork, the confident construction of plausible form though rapid paint application alone, the long Anglo-Japanese panel design, the careful arrangement of compositional features, the skilful colour harmonies, with juxtaposition of complimentary colours to create a light keyed colour saturation that is both subtle and vivacious.

The pink/yellow contrasts of the Marie van Houte rose, still a much loved heritage species, makes it almost a dream colour scheme for late 19th century radical art. Stephens' painting was included in a remarkable exhibition of the [later Royal] Art Society of NSW in 1893 which featured a number of major icons – Roberts' *Breakaway*, *An Eastern Princess* and *Hilda Spong*, Streeton's *Fires On*, *The Railway Station*, *Circular Quay* and *Pastoral*, and Fullwood's *Hop Pickers*. Roberts showed an oil painting of roses, *Summer Roses*, in the same exhibition.

Despite Stephens working in many media – watercolour, pastel, pen and ink, oil, tempera, printmaking – and across many genres, critics and buyers across four decades consistently favoured her flower painting and claimed that she was Australia's leading exponent in that branch of painting.

Miss Ethel Stephens is a very prolific exhibitor. She is known as one of the very best of Australian flower painters and shows some fine studies of this class.⁴⁷

Miss Stephens has already made a name through her artistic treatment of flowers and such studies are well represented with charming clusters of roses, a bowl of redgum blossom, zinnias, waterlilies, and wisteria.⁴⁸

Critics singled out her rose paintings as being in a class of their own.

Miss Stephens's [sic] forte is undoubtedly flowers, and especially roses, as has already been recognised by Australian critics. In this section, "Roses" (No. 80) is a triumph of the artist's skill. The picture displays every gradation of colouring and has perfect perspective.⁴⁹

She was represented in the prestigious 1898 Grafton Gallery exhibition of Australian art in London by flower paintings and even gained one of the few sales of Australian works for a rose study.⁵⁰ Roses were a perennially favourite subject. The colonial governor bought a rose painting in 1892,⁵¹ the year before this piece was painted.

No matter how she placed her aesthetic, she seemed to have accepted the public favouring of her flowerpieces when her career was at its maturity, and she gleefully threw out a challenge to the yet unencountered later generations who only anxiously read lacks in her refusal to accept the primacy of modernism.

Miss Stephens finds that her watercolours sell better than oils, and her flower pictures better than any. She has no time for futuristic art, being convinced that Nature in its many aspects cannot be surpassed. Old fashioned? "Well," she smiled, "perhaps I am, but I am inclined to glory in it," which is but another way of admitting that in nowise has it been detrimental to success.⁵²

Juliette Peers

Notes

- 1 Juliette Peers, 'I Am Woman Hear Me Weep', *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Art*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2000, pp. 213-233.
- 2 <https://www.agsa.sa.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/clarice-beckett-present-moment/the-rescue/> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 3 <https://www.daao.org.au/bio/ethel-stephens/biography/> accessed 16 December 2022, credited to Angela Philp and Joan Kerr combining the essay on the Portrait of Mary Windeyer by Kerr and Philp with the biography by Philp in Joan Kerr & Anita Callaway (eds), *Heritage: the National Women's Art Book: 500 works by 500 Australian Women Artists from Colonial Times to 1955*, Art and Australia, Craftsman House, Roseville East, 1995, pp. 40, 455. In recent years an image of a knitting feminist activist could be read ironically and there is a curiously inverted synergy here to the Stephens' very straight portrait. Kerr noted that the portrait was a private family commission which only became public in the mid 20th century when donated to the University of Sydney in the 1960s.
- 4 Rebecca Kummerfeld, 'Ethel A Stephens' "At Home": Art education for girls and women', *History of Education Review*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2015, pp. 1-17.
- 5 The date of the two sales of works by Stephens, 1946 and 1948, corresponds to the time in which Bernard Smith had published *Place, Taste and Tradition* (1945) and was working at the AGNSW as education officer, then assistant director and acting director, and later as curator until 1948 and 1951-52, writing a catalogue of Australian oil paintings in the AGNSW (1953) across the period of the AGNSW's intense culling of its collection, purging it of irrelevant and inappropriate artwork.
- 6 Helen Topliss, *Modernism and Feminism: Australian Women Artists 1900-1940*, Craftsman House, Roselle, 1996, p. 11.
- 7 <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/collection-items/dame-mary-gilmore> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 8 Ian Burn, 'Beating About the Bush: The Landscapes of the Heidelberg School' in Anthony Bradley & Terry Smith (eds), *Australian Art and Architecture: Essays presented to Bernard Smith*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1980, pp. 83-98.
- 9 Pamela Lane, *Eirene Mort: Artist, Artisan and New Woman*, M.Phil Thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, 2017, pp. 161-162, <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/143833> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 10 Jane E Hunt, *Cultivating the Arts: Sydney Women Culturists 1900-1950*, PhD Thesis, Macquarie University, Sydney, 2001, p. 112, <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.14/196247> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 11 Dora Meeson Coates worked on projects close to the WSPU in London, therefore outside Australia. Portia Geach was a political feminist in Sydney from c1915 onwards but tended to keep her art and her political activities separate.
- 12 *The Sun*, 18 May 1913, p. 19.
- 13 *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 10 September 1892, p. 8.
- 14 *The Argus*, 28 May 1898, p. 4.
- 15 *Town and Country Journal*, 30 October 1907, p. 24.
- 16 *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 8 June 1910, p. 45.
- 17 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 November 1913, p. 7.
- 18 *Daily Mail*, 3 January 1917, p. 4.
- 19 Pamela Lane, *Eirene Mort*, pp. 77-82.
- 20 *Table Talk*, 16 April 1925, p. 8.
- 21 <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/stephens-william-john-4645> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 22 *Mirror of Australia*, 27 January 1917, p. 7. Mary Windeyer had a very wide range of feminist and intellectual contacts. For example, she was a major supporter of Louisa Lawson, despite their different backgrounds, a fact that is often ignored as it transgresses neat demarcations between radicalism and conservatism in public memory.
- 23 *Sunday Times*, 6 October 1918, p. 13.
- 24 *The Sun*, 18 May 1913, p. 19. Her friend Eirene Mort in turn established the other major Sydney teaching atelier, being the first pupil of Dattilo Rubbo in Sydney.
- 25 <https://www.daao.org.au/bio/ethel-stephens/biography/> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 26 *The Sun*, 25 February 1934, p. 28.
- 27 *Daily Telegraph*, 3 February 1927, p. 5.
- 28 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 May 1911, p. 8.
- 29 *Daily Telegraph*, 28 December 1922, p. 3.
- 30 *Daily Telegraph*, 14 June 1916, p. 6.
- 31 Conversations with John Farmer.
- 32 Tian Zhang, A Manifesto for Radical Care or How to be Human in the Arts', Sydney Review of Books, July 2022, <https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/essay/a-manifesto-for-radical-care-or-how-to-be-a-human-in-the-art>, accessed 16 December 2022. Cf. for a different view on this new de-object, de-material practice see Tara Heffernan, 'Double the Care: Philosophy of Care and Care Ethics and Art', Artlink, 5 October 2022, <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/5003/double-the-care-philosophy-of-care-and-care-ethics/> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 33 *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 20 August 1914, p. 8. See also, *The Sun*, 23 August 1914, p. 3.
- 34 Melanie Oppenheimer, 'Ferguson [née Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood], Helen Hermione Munro, Viscountess Novar (1865-1941)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.slv.vic.gov.au/10.1093/odnb/9780198614128.013.60197> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 35 Jane E Hunt, *Cultivating the Arts*, pp. 105-108.
- 36 *Country Life Stock and Station Journal*, 18 July 1924, p. 4.
- 37 *Hobart Mercury*, 4 November 1916, p. 10.
- 38 Marjory Fainges, *Australian Dolls: Yesterday and Today*, CD-Rom, Brisbane, 2004, p. 10.
- 39 Reforming the design of toys had interested the Wiener Werkstaette, the Munich and Berlin Sezessions, and was featured in both public and commercial exhibitions such as the Warenhaus Tietz in the 1900-1910 period. During World War I exhibitions were held in Paris of modern reformed toys and dolls to aid wartime charities. Stephens may have known of some of these events.
- 40 *The Sun*, 18 January 1920, p. 12.
- 41 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 December 1925, p. 9. Alice Norton and Gladys Owen helped at her stall selling hand painted Christmas cards and calendars at the 1925 Red Cross Market Day cf. Oppenheimer on Helen Munro-Ferguson.
- 42 *The Sun*, 25 February 1934, p. 28.
- 43 <https://www.daao.org.au/bio/ethel-stephens/biography/> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 44 *The Sun*, 18 May 1913, p. 19. In the same era, we may recall that Kaiser Wilhelm II was able to complain about public decorations at a gala event being 'more Sezession Rubbish'. The modernist décor was organised by his cousin and brother-in-law, whilst King George V was a stamp collector, who never mentioned vorticism or futurism.
- 45 <https://www.daao.org.au/bio/ethel-stephens/biography/> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 46 *Daily Telegraph*, 28 December 1922, p. 3.
- 47 *Sydney Mail*, 9 October 1897, p. 765.
- 48 *The Sun*, 6 July 1915, p. 3.
- 49 *The Sun*, 4 May 1911, p. 4.
- 50 *Daily Telegraph*, 21 May 1898, p. 4.
- 51 *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 10 September 1892, p. 8. *Illustrated Sydney News*, 10 September, p. 3 noted that he also bought an Australian wildflower piece by Henriette Halligan and claimed that these purchases were the first time that a Colonial Governor of New South Wales had bought artwork from an exhibition he had visited officially.
- 52 *Daily Telegraph*, 3 February 1927, p. 5.

Theodosia Anderson (1858-1933)

Theodosia Anderson, known professionally as Theo Anderson, endured the melancholy experience of witnessing the disintegration of her own creative and professional reputation during her lifetime before her death in 1933. The idea that she was unfairly edited out of public memory of the Heidelberg School, substantially by her former friends and colleagues and their familial and curatorial supporters from the second decade of the 19th century onward, survived within one branch of her family for at least six decades.¹ Her oil painting of *Violets* 1895² is surprisingly highly engaging, the more so as one becomes aware of the lively fresh paint surface that lifts this work above many similar flowerpieces by less remembered artists of c1900. The alla prima attack, the crisp confident handling of paint, direct and immediate, without second thought or hesitation, the observation of light on the flower petals, and defining the thin sharp edges of petals and stems with a single line of oil paint to represent highlights is what we expect from a more avant-garde work of this period, even if the leaves are not captured quite so effectively. The skilful handling of the main subject suggests Anderson's level of professional experience. However the warm red/mahogany/brown but indeterminate background that does not create a tangible spatial regression or give a clear understanding of what logical space the flowers inhabit, and even the very bright red foreground, are more alien to plein air and its careful orchestration of colour schemes and control of the relationship of hue and tone. Anderson's flowerpiece is a sort of interstitial work; it is uncanny, both like and unlike work from the plein air circle.

Despite being barely mentioned in recent texts, Theo Anderson was recognised by art writers of the 1930s as playing an important part in Melbourne art history. Eveline Syme noted that Anderson was 'for many years a prominent figure' in the 'steadily growing' art world of Victoria and was amongst the dissonants, a small group of 'serious professionals' who founded the Australian Art Association.³ In reality Anderson was one of several women of high profile in the 1880s who showed across the society's three exhibitions. Her presence indicated her status as the group consisted of artists who in 1886 wanted to break away from the placid late colonial norms of the Victorian Academy of the Arts, placing Anderson firmly in alignment with the artists now remembered as the Heidelberg School. For William Moore, she along with John Mather, Frederick McCubbin, Walter Withers and Will Ashton, was one of the artists whose commercially successful exhibitions consolidated the first Australian art boom launched by Arthur Streeton's first Melbourne exhibition after his 1907 return from London.⁴ She was active from the radical plein air movement of the 1880s to the consolidation of the generation of Edwardian graduates from the National Gallery of Victoria School. A striking and determined woman, she made an impact on her contemporaries. 'Mrs Theo Anderson has a fine, original, and vigorous personality.'⁵ Theo Anderson was greatly interested in feminist politics and would take her very young daughter to suffrage meetings. She was so busy teaching, painting, attending to the business of organisations from the Austral Salon to the Ringwood Progress Association that an unmarried sister had to act as a live-in housekeeper to take care of Theo's house and family.⁶

Yet the qualifications and subtlety of the process around the loss of her fame and esteem places her centrally within histories of art curating and art writing in Australia, and offers multiple reasons why she should be revisited and re-evaluated. Firstly and most importantly, her current obscurity says nothing about the extreme level of fame she achieved in Melbourne in the 1895-1910 period, when she held regular solo exhibitions and her artworks were frequently illustrated by the new process of photogravure in weekly illustrated newspapers such as *Table Talk* and *Arena*.⁷ Her paintings appear to have been included in public collections in Edwardian Melbourne, although both the actual ownership of artworks as well as collecting policies have shifted so much in the past 110 years that her works are not surprisingly no longer able to be traced.⁸ Additionally she sold well out of public exhibitions including to colonial governors⁹ and major collectors. The disjunction between the records of her substantial career and the few works that have appeared on the secondary market indicate how outlying and less recognised artists are poorly served by standard art historical templates and methodologies. This is a major lesson of Theo Anderson's public career as an artist.

Secondly, mapping Anderson's life is insightful and demonstrates how contested and arbitrary are longstanding constructs of the Heidelberg/plein air group in public memory. Theo Anderson represents a demarcation of sorts, an outer limit of how the Heidelberg group can be defined in relation to primary sources of the 1880-1920 period in Melbourne, rather than how it has been defined across the past seven decades of professional sense-making around the group. The latter interventions have favoured a neat and tight catchment that is generated by both family and peer group influences within the group and simultaneously also arbitrarily centres a (substantially fictional and rhetorical) concept of radical dissonance generated from outside, via later curatorial and academic activities.¹⁰

Thirdly, Theo Anderson throws up specific historiographical problems and obsessive tropes around the Heidelberg School. Current revisionist scholarship around the group concentrates on decolonising their claims to have "discovered" the "truth" about the forms and colours of the Australian landscape and interpreted them and opened them up against a baseline level of colonial public indifference and ignorance that overwrote Indigenous care for and knowledge of country.¹¹ Yet decolonisation projects themselves merely expand on baseline concepts that are in reality more unstable, rhetorical and arbitrary than public culture acknowledges and overestimate the clarity and fixity of the group's definition within primary documentation. At the time the actual boundaries and meaning of the group were more fluid and less clear cut. If the existential post-colonial errors of the Heidelberg project can be identified in claims that the group "reformed" the ways of seeing landscape and "transformed" and "corrected" of academic and prior falsehoods via their symbolic performance of the neat hierarchical evolutionary and enlightenment classificatory ladder of regressive to progressive, then equally the rhetorical and arbitrary nature of both membership of the group itself and the ambit of its achievements should be acknowledged as something less positivist and centralist.



Theo Anderson, *Violets* 1895, oil on canvas, 25.5 x 40.9 cm,
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation

As I have argued across several decades, the low reputation of female plein airists is not simply baseline sexism or an actual reflection of the quality of their art, but an indication of how female artists destabilise, if not fully negate, the often complacent myths that are now established around the Heidelberg group.¹² Female plein airists represent the urban and the middle class aspects of the story that are often wilfully ignored in discussions around late 19th century radical Australian art, no matter that it was more than four decades ago when Ian Burn highlighted the movement's strong bourgeois and romantic elements.¹³ Yet this is not only a story of curators' and academics' choices. If subsequent generations of art professionals sidelined Theo Anderson, she was not the only woman erased from the mythology. In some cases women artists such as Emma Minnie Boyd and Beatrice Colquhoun (and in the second generation women artists such as Sheila McCubbin, Elizabeth Colquhoun and Margery Withers) were relegated to secondary handmaid positions, not by outsiders but by their own family mythologies that favoured other [male] geniuses, although family and public endorsements of the celebrated icons mutually informed each other in complex cross currents.

We can define Anderson best by what she is not. Placed by early commentators as progressive, radical and nationalist in her techniques and subject matter, she clearly ranked above the vernacular populist visual nationalism of artists working in late 19th century Melbourne such as James Alfred Turner, Signor Rolando¹⁴ and Jan Hendrik Scheltema. This latter group of artists were undoubted stars in the highly nationalist, white, booming secondary art market of the 1880s and the Hawke years, although their reputations have faded since the new millennium. In recent years they have rarely featured in curatorial or academic projects.¹⁵ Yet whilst they captured major popular attention in the late 19th century press and elsewhere, having their paintings reproduced widely as coloured postcards and other paper ephemera in the early 1900s, the popular late colonial painters were never considered by critics and connoisseurs of the day to belong to the schist of dynamic reformers. Turner, for one, was deeply rankled by that exclusion, and saw himself as having direct alignment as an equal with the aesthetic of the likes of Roberts, McCubbin and Streeton who distanced themselves from him.¹⁶ Nor was Anderson a direct outsider such as Bernard Hall¹⁷, who was both implicitly – and actively in the case of McCubbin – alienated from the central in-group of Melbourne artmaking by influential figures. Ironically many of these high profile figures relied heavily on Hall's expertise and support but did not always endorse or acknowledge him consistently in public. Hall provided the foundation simultaneously for a cosmopolitan and professional approach to curating and for centring a practice-based innovation, both still current as the core of art professionalism in Melbourne. However his modernisations and reforms were credited to his successors – the misogynist and queer-phobic James MacDonald¹⁸, Daryl Lindsay and in practice to Max Meldrum.

Unlike either Turner or Hall, Theo Anderson studied and worked alongside major artists in the 1870s to 1890s. She socialised with them, collected their works, painted with them and showed in the same group exhibitions. When reviewing her career four decades later, Anderson claimed to be an associate of Richardson, Streeton and Longstaff when a student.¹⁹ All of these artists had high reputations at the date of her interview. It is fair to assume that she was one of the otherwise anonymous throng of visitors at both the Box Hill and Eaglemont artists camps,

although she was by this date married to a fellow gallery school student. She continued to paint on the outer margins of Melbourne until the 1920s.

Within the documentation of the time, the Heidelberg School's relationship to "reform", and even the understanding of who or what were the progressive clique, were always more ambiguous. The stars of present-day construct, reduced – seemingly on an ahistorical whim – to just four in the keynote foreground essay to the recent *She-Oak and Sunlight* 2021,²⁰ in an especially minimalist presentation of Heidelberg, were always part of a larger and once admired cohort. Long lines of column space can be found ascribing the familiar rebootings of art practice: reform of landscape painting, the bringing of progressive overseas trends to Australia and the raising of local standards to many artists, male and female. A number of artists closely associated with the group such as Artur Loureiro, Charles Douglas Richardson, May Vale, Emma Minnie Boyd and Florence Fuller as well as Theo Anderson, worked across a range of styles and subjects: figures, still lifes and landscapes, mingling modernising and conservative trends.²¹ Anderson was not an anomaly or an outlier but her range paralleled a number of working colleagues, whose practices have been less endorsed by later generations. This blurring of styles cuts across the neat origin stories of Bernard Smith who named his chapter on the Heidelberg School, 'Genesis', emphasising the Heidelberg School as modernist origin point and also confirming the symbolic moment of overwriting of error and ignorance, either colonial or Indigenous.²² Artists who do not conform to the idea of the Heidelberg School as a movement of painting realist landscapes and male labour such as Anderson were erased as much as were pre-European traditions of art making in Australia.

From 1898 to 1911, many of these now-sidelined artists showed with the Yarra Sculptors Society, organised by Charles Douglas Richardson in Melbourne.²³ A number of members including Richardson, Theo Anderson and Margaret Baskerville had studios in the Assembly Hall building in Collins Street, Melbourne, whilst the Sculptors Society used the main hall for exhibitions. Theo Anderson ran art classes and held regular exhibitions in that building until December 1910, when the building was set to be demolished to build a concert hall that would also serve as a cinema. She then moved her studio to Temple Court²⁴ which was home to several women artists of a younger generation, Jessie Traill, Dora Wilson, Janet Cumbræ-Stewart and Norah Gurdon, amongst others, all of whom would have known her from their student years onwards as a high profiled and senior female professional in Melbourne. Anderson is recorded as being an early purchaser of works by some of these women.²⁵

Mrs. Theo. Anderson,

Resumes her Painting and Drawing Classes at Miss Unsworth's, Station Street, Box Hill, on Thursday, 11th April, at 2 o'clock.

Mrs. ANDERSON'S PUPILS have always held a prominent place in the prize list at the Doncaster-Box Hill and Ringwood Shows, and other Exhibitions.

Paintings in Oil, Water Colour, Pastel, Black & White Drawing.

Terms £1 1/- per term. Special arrangements for more than one in family.

OUT DOOR SKETCHING CLASS.

Pictures are on view at Miss Unsworth's and also at City Studio, Temple Court, 426 Collins Street, Melbourne.

An ad for Mrs Theo Anderson's painting and drawing classes in *The Reporter* (Box Hill, Victoria), 12 April 1912

Theo Anderson was the daughter of the generation that Paul de Serville named as 'Port Phillip Gentlemen',²⁶ the closely networked community of pre-Goldrush (1851) arrivals who dominated government and the professions in Melbourne from the 1840s to the 1890s. Her father William Henry Tuckett arrived in Melbourne in 1841 and married Elizabeth Hall in 1845. Theo was born in 1858, the seventh of a family of nine children. William Henry Tuckett bought a squatting run, Spring Bank, south west of Casterton, in 1862, and Theo's childhood was firstly spent amongst some pomp and status, as reflected in the quasi-baronial and feudal tone of life on the large Western District properties. Her father convened the meeting that would lead to the formation of the Glenelg Shire Council and her elder sister was married to an Irishman at the family property in 1866. However Tuckett had overextended himself financially and he and his family left the Western District and returned to Melbourne by 1869-70, and to the lower status of working for a salary in an accountancy firm.²⁷ Still it can be noted that Theo passed through what was in effect a golden triangle for creative and visionary women artists in Australia, in south western Victoria. Casterton was also the birthplace and early residence of Clarice Beckett. Mary Cockburn Mercer spent her childhood in Wannon, Clarice Zander was born in Coleraine between Wannon and Casterton, where Helena Rubinstein worked in her uncle's store, and further south Agnes Goodsir was born in Portland in 1864, just five years after Anderson.

Returning to Melbourne brought Theo Anderson close to the centre of the colonial artworld in Melbourne. Her uncle was a director of Gemmell, Tuckett, a major real estate auctioneer in 19th century Melbourne, which also handled produce, machinery, furniture, house contents, rare books, art and design. The company conducted auctions for local artists, including fundraising sales for the Victorian Academy of the Arts and offered a well-lit space for private art exhibitions.²⁸ She enrolled in the National Gallery School in 1878, when it was under the somewhat acrimonious leadership of Oswald Rose Campbell and Eugene von Guerard, who mostly kept the students confined to the task of making copies of existing oil paintings. Theo's time at the school coincided with the advanced students, male and female, revolting against the arid and unambitious curriculum via an ongoing series of disputes, complaints, petitions and counter petitions. Theo Anderson implied about 45 years later that she was sympathetic to the rebellious students.²⁹

Whereas Eleanor Ritchie, Edith Huybers and others who had the means left the school to study in Europe in the 1870s, Theo Anderson had to find a cheaper local alternative to access better tuition. In 1881 French artist and teacher, certificated by the Prefecture of the Seine, Berthe Mouchette, arrived in Melbourne and started private art classes including life classes for women.³⁰ Anderson joined Mouchette's art school and exhibited with other pupils.³¹ 'She was a wonderful teacher, and I made good progress with her,' Anderson recalled four decades later.³² Mouchette made a lasting impact on Anderson. The high pastel artificial colours and a tendency towards an academic as much as an impressionist approach appears to have come from Mouchette more than Folingsby. However if Anderson's *Violets* follow Mouchette's use of a dark but warm plain background in still life painting, the handling of the main subject is more progressive than Mouchette's detailed close focus on all parts of her flower subjects simultaneously. Mouchette was highly literate in art history and fluidly referenced 17th and 18th century art and both the Dutch and French schools in her work and teaching. Anderson's

bravura razor sharp transitions from light to dark on the edge of flower petals are not seen in Mouchette's more modulated work.

In one aspect Anderson learned much from her teacher. Mouchette's energetic ambitiousness as a professional artist, her high profile as a cultural agent in founding the Alliance Francaise in Melbourne and an art school, running a ladies' secondary college (which also took art pupils) and overall her profile in Melbourne as a de facto feminist offered a precedent for Anderson's constant and diverse public orientated activities into the 1920s.³³ Mouchette taught many female pupils in both Melbourne and Adelaide from the 1880s to the 1900s; as well as Theo Anderson, Clara Southern, Daisy Rossi and [probably] Margaret Preston were the most notable. Anderson was elected a female associate of the Victorian Academy of the Arts in 1882,³⁴ when there were relatively few female exhibitors in the VAA. She showed alongside Emma Minnie A'Beckett, Jane Price, Iso Rae, Berthe Mouchette, the latter's sister Marie Lion and the late colonial professional Elizabeth Parsons, who also promoted the same informal approachable landscape style as did Buvelot. As early as 1883, critics could write of the then Theo Tuckett's 'usual brilliant style'.³⁵

In November 1884 Theo Tuckett married another student from the National Gallery School, Scottish born Walter James Anderson, an accountant who was also a leisure time plein airist of talent.³⁶ This was one of several marriages of gallery students in the 1880s and early 1890s, including Alexander Colquhoun and Beatrice Hoile, Arthur Boyd and Emma Minnie A'Beckett, John Llewellyn Jones and Lalla Corbett.³⁷ Theo Anderson was a founding member of the Australian Artists Association, a breakaway group in Melbourne, organised in 1886 by artists associated with Tom Roberts. According to Andrew Montana, the presence of amateur (female) flower painters in the Victorian Academy of the Arts exacerbated the tensions between progressive male professionals and the Academy,³⁸ although conservative male artists, who were more numerous than their female colleagues, in turn felt more aggrieved, alienated from and discriminated against by the plein airists in the 1880s and 1890s.³⁹ However at this date Anderson was unambiguously in the radical faction as documented by her presence in the original breakaway group. By 1888 the conservative and the progressive groups combined to form the Victorian Artists Society, with which Anderson was closely associated until the 1920s. In her own recollections, her art activities temporarily halted after her wedding, but the crash of the Victorian land boom in the early 1890s and its impact on wages and investments offered a perfect reason for her to start working professionally again.⁴⁰ However between 1884 and the early 1890s she still managed to show at the Australian Artists Association and the Melbourne International Exhibition 1888, where she won a third order of merit for *Autumn*, presumably a landscape. As her husband was based in Bacchus Marsh during the 1890s,⁴¹ Anderson was most likely having to commute by train into Melbourne.

The period 1900-1920 formed the high point of Anderson's professional life. Press accounts affirm the breadth and visibility of her activities with many exhibitions, both solo and with groups such as the Victorian Artists Society and the Yarra Sculptors Society and purchases, including by state governors. She served as hostess at social events at the Victorian Artists Society and the Austral Salon, where she entertained leading women in music, literature, society, the university, high society and even a few artists such as Emma Minnie Boyd, May Vale, Margaret

Baskerville and Ida Rentoul Outhwaite. Distinguished guests were often presented with a ceremonial address or an artwork painted by Anderson and sometimes pictures by her daughter Olave Anderson, an accomplished plein airist who had moved in artistic circles in Melbourne since her childhood. Uniquely Walter, Theo and Olave Anderson, father, mother and daughter shared exhibitions, with Walter and Olave's works being more consistently aligned with impressionism and the Heidelberg School, although Theo could occasionally produce a rapid Streeton-esque impression as well. By 1921 Theo Anderson had joined the Lyceum Club and was included in a members exhibition with many iconic Melbourne women artists including Jessie Traill, Ethel Spowers, Frances Derham, Clara Southern and May Vale, some of whom she had known for forty years.⁴² She was active in charity and pro bono events such as decorating the children's ward of the Alfred Hospital in 1902 along with colleagues such as Emma Minnie Boyd, Louie Riggall, Margaret Baskerville, Charles Douglas Richardson, Hugh Paterson, John Ford Paterson and Harry Recknall and donating works to the Melbourne Hospital bazaar along with Withers, McCubbin, Richardson, Ford Paterson, Longstaff, May Vale and Alice Chapman.⁴³ Similarly she contributed to fundraising exhibitions during World War I along with her better remembered contemporaries.

Anderson painted en plein air around a ring of the rural margins of Melbourne from Coburg to Dandenong, not just in the famed outer east, Box Hill, Warrandyte, Eltham. The old press photographs of these works depict rural landscapes with bush tracks, fields, haymakers, harvesters, women herding domestic livestock, animals and birds. The sites where she painted have been long overlaid by suburban residential subdivisions. Anderson's works also offer a reminder of how Australian nationalist painting adopted tropes of French realist artworks of peasant life for depicting Australian workers. Anderson raises questions about the borders of the Heidelberg School and plein air and also as to how far did the contributions of Parisian trained artists such as Artur Loureiro and the more academic Berthe Mouchette influence what is regarded as quintessentially Australian imagery. Sidelining Anderson suppresses these nagging questions of received certainties. She also painted in Gippsland and on the east and west coast of Victoria.



Theo Anderson's home on Bedford Road, Ringwood n.d., photograph, Ringwood and District Historical Society. The inscription on the back reads 'owner of the orchard was Mrs. Theo Anderson, landscape painting artist'.

Most notably she and her husband established a rural home in Ringwood East by about 1903, according to the local press. She was also directly involved in community life and local civic, cultural and charitable activities in Ringwood, and also by extension to districts nearby Box Hill, Doncaster, Bayswater, Lilydale and Warrandyte. The Box Hill press spoke about her in glowing terms: 'Whereas Streeton, McCubbin, Johnny Ford Paterson, Wilkie, and Handasyde have camped in our midst, stealing the beauties of our neighbouring bush for admiring crowds of the metropolis, leaving us none the poorer,' Anderson had resided 'here during the last three or four years [...] and of them no one has displayed a greater devotion to all that is beautiful in landscape, flowers, and pastoral life than Mrs Anderson.'⁴⁴ Many artists such as members of the Boyd family when painting in the outer eastern fringes of Melbourne would call in at the Anderson's home for a meal, drinks or conversation.⁴⁵ Emma Minnie Boyd was a contemporary and longstanding associate and her son Penleigh Boyd and his wife Edith lived and painted at Warrandyte relatively close to the Anderson's home and itself an artists' colony since Clara Southern settled there in the early 1900s.⁴⁶

Discussion of her work in the press often indicates the richness of debate and ideation around supposedly unimportant artists. Her 1907 exhibition at the Guild Hall prompted a rare plea to recognise the contribution of women artists based upon the quality of Anderson's works. Ironically one of the Gallery's own board of trustees criticised the gender imbalance in public art purchases.

Henry Giles Turner [...] in opening the exhibition, mentioned the paucity of women's work in the National Gallery, and the number of women in the profession and the standard of excellence attained as shown in the display, remarking that in place of only nine pictures by women in the National Gallery the trustees should more evenly divide the purchases between the sexes.⁴⁷

Theo Anderson also sits on an interesting borderline between legitimate and illegitimate art practices and art styles, and also by implication defining the legitimate beneficiaries of art patronage in Melbourne. Although these debates took place a century or more ago they are not superannuated in so far as they are refracted – sometimes without acknowledgement – into favoured narratives of art history and choices for public gallery hangs across the last seventy years. They also animate the more familiar and much discussed contentions and conflicts between radical and conservative art in Melbourne from the 1880s to the 1960s, as legitimacy, influence and power were under dispute as much as the credited fight over painting styles. From within the Meldrum circle his associates cast themselves as the vanguard in a fight between legitimate, intellectual, rational practice and poor, amateur, chaotic practices. Ironically for many decades the tonalist were themselves cast as the conservative other, even though their self-construct of being the legitimate practice under siege by the faux became a touchstone to subsequent art debates. This was a fight in which both A.M.E. Bale and Jo Sweatman were major and vehemently active protagonists.⁴⁸ Max Meldrum saw himself as superior to the disorderly laxity of impressionism that responded to sensations in an unsystematic emotionally driven manner.⁴⁹

Anderson was clearly on the other side. Her husband was a key member of the faction that removed the tonalists from the Vic-

familial connections, her attitude to art was different. She ran two teaching ateliers, one in her Collins Street Studio and one in Station Street, Box Hill. She followed Berthe Mouchette in offering teaching that was both formal and structured offering technical skills, yet democratic, porous and accessible to all who wanted to attend and who were interested in art. This was a view of art that was anathema to those who wanted to restrict “ownership” of the status of artist to a clearly demarcated group marked by shared friendships and professional background, and not to people who, in the scathing words of Fanny Withers, “Mother and Aunt Mary” said were ‘clever’.⁵⁰ Despite her gender and her fiery public spirit, Fanny Withers’ words also ironically gender the correct artist as male and devalue a female-inflected domestic practice. Conversely Anderson tempted would-be students with accounts of the success of her students in the accessible fora of the agricultural shows. Anderson was judge of artworks at the Royal Melbourne Show for many years.

These stand-offs continued into the 1920s with Harold Herbert, Victor Cobb and John Longstaff thrashing out issues about selection of works at the annual exhibitions and thus power broking around legitimacy and overall leadership for the Victorian Artists Society via letters to the press.⁵¹ Theo’s husband Walter appeared to attempt to uphold neutrality, as the secretary to the society. Alexander Colquhoun’s ambivalence⁵² about Theo Anderson when reviewing her shows also reflects the degree to which she transgresses Meldrum’s ideas about limited palettes, concentrating on tonal relationships and avoidance of drawing lines and borders within a painting, and illustration and narrative. Both the *Argus* and the *Age* now complained that Anderson’s industriousness outpaced her skills and that the prettiness in her artwork was odious and her colours were too British.⁵³ The mention of “prettiness” suggests there was a gendered component in this disdain, whereas by implication “strong” and “legitimate” art was made by male artists.

These concepts touch on a complex and contradictory slew of ideas of rightness and wrongness in Australian art between the world wars, whereby simultaneously both the modern, cosmopolitan, Jewish, female and queer and also the suburban, modest, domestic, craft-based and non-nationalist were antithetical to “authentic” and “valid” Australian art. Whilst research has focused on the modernist aspects of these debates, the fear and loathing of a domestic and middle class-based creativity – in some ways a rhetorical paper tiger/straw-man of convenience for both critics of the 1920s and 1930s (precursing as noted by Fanny Withers’ definitions of good and bad artists) and for subsequent art professionals particularly during the alignment of the contemporary to the capitalist state during the Cold War era in Australia has impacted on recognition of women artists from the 1890s-1960s. Exploring the art of the period in depth reveals that the boundaries between convention and innovation were fluid and unclear. Yet in the *Herald* we may read:

Sir James, a true Australian always, expressed his appreciation of the artist, whose work is thoroughly atmospheric of Australia. He recalled the days when people thought Australian scenery dull and uninteresting, up to the present development, when our country’s artistic productions are everywhere valued for their beauty. He congratulated Mrs. Anderson for placing on record such scenes, so that those who come after us can see creative work representative of their native land.⁵⁴

That Anderson was lauded by early environmentalist and advocate for Australian indigenous flora, James Barrett, as painting the truth of the Australian landscape, indicates how friendships dating from the 1880s were sundered by later art politics. Barrett’s wife was an artist and colleague of both the Andersons and the Colquhouns at the Gallery school and another founding member of the radical Australian Art Association. Equally much of the popular and received understanding about the Heidelberg School was edited to reflect an implied inheritance of McCubbin to Meldrum (possibly via the by-then deceased Ramsay) excluding the austere Hall and the fanciful Richardson and the foreign Loureiro. Much of that editing and realigning was driven by the patriotism and emotional strain of World War I⁵⁵ – itself in some ways an allegorical conflict between the stoutly ordered and consistent and the amoral, eclectic, disorderly and modern-facing, although hidden behind a publicly proclaimed narrative of human rights issues, that has crystallised as a lite version of World War II. The Empire valued conformity and organisation of the type that *Place Taste and Tradition* and *Australian Painting* offered in abundance.

Against the lukewarm reviews of the 1920s we may read the enthusiasm directed towards Anderson as an Australian nationalist advocate and a skilled artist two decades earlier:

She made a fine display of work, which showed decided variety, figure, landscape and flowers equally cleverly treated. Mrs. Anderson’s painting exhibits not only vigour and good technique, but there is a pleasing colour sense and she seems to have caught in a marked degree the spirit and atmosphere of our Australian scenery, while the true poetic instinct is apparent. One seems to feel the vastness and stillness which broods over it, and the native trees convey really that suggestion of substance and weight and warm, deep, yet sombre tones which are so characteristic of them.

One study, “Cloud Shadows”, which, with scanty, rather ragged, trees along the track in the foreground, has the purple depths of the Dividing Range, capped by light clouds in the distance, is very suggestive of the bush of the country and its lone grandeur. Very beautiful, yet scarcely so suggestively Australian, is the picture of the Avon in Gippsland, a delightfully restful scene of flowing water and cool greens. The Yarra scenes by day and at sunset prove there are indeed beauty spots upon our much maligned river, and Mrs. Anderson has certainly succeeded in depicting them in most attractive form.⁵⁶

The high praise that Theo Anderson received in her lifetime, and especially the strongly nationalist inflection of this praise, totally contrasts with her virtual invisibility either in public galleries or on the secondary art market. On paper there is a substantial record of achievement which melts away to virtually nothing in material cultural survival of actual works, creating a substantial distortion in understanding the structure and networks of Melbourne art making in the first decade of the 19th century. This small study of briskly painted violets offers a first step in restoration and reappraisal and an art history that is not based upon paradigmatic tropes, stale practices and received, unquestioned templates.

Juliette Peers



The opening day of Ringwood Mechanics Institute 1909, photograph, Ringwood and District Historical Society. Theo Anderson is pictured in the middle of the third row with the large hat and lace applique collar.

Notes

1 Her invisibility in both *Completing the Picture* (1992) and *Heritage* (1995) was noted and regarded as undeserved. Her exclusion was not irrational but driven in both cases by the lack of representation in public collections by the 1990s and the very low market value of her work on the secondary market at that date. Curatorial and academic reputations are complexly linked to and often buoyed up by secondary market performance.

2 Removal of old varnish revealed the date 1895 next to the artist's signature.

3 Frances Fraser & Nettie Palmer, *Centenary Gift Book*, Robertson & Mullens for The Women's Centenary Council, Melbourne, 1934, p. 83.

4 William Moore, *The Story of Australian Art: from the earliest known art of the continent to the art of to-day*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1934, vol. 2, p. 28.

5 *The Countryman*, 18 September 1924, p. 6.

6 Juliette Peers, *More than just Gumtrees: a Personal, Social and Artistic History of the Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors*, Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors in association with Dawn Revival Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 28.

7 Not the more recent left-wing journal of the same name.

8 The location of the actual collections themselves are unclear as Melbourne local government areas have seceded and then amalgamated at various dates in the last 120 years shifting and combining the ownership of collections of paintings and realia, leading to both formal deaccessioning of overlaps and excess material and more informal disappearances of works that lack a clear history of stewardship, until moves to formalise the (digital) documentation and physical handling of artworks across all public collections in Victoria begun in the 1970s. Some accounts suggest that the Prahran municipal gallery where Anderson's works hung was a loan collection.

9 Conversations with John Hooke.

10 Peter McNeil, 'Family Ties: The Creation of Frederick McCubbin's Reputation 1920-60', *La Trobe Journal*, no. 50, 1992, pp. 32-39.

11 Most succinctly articulated in Sophie Gerhard & Hannah Presley, 'Australian Impressionism: A Longer History' in Anne Gray & Angela Hesson (eds), *She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism*, National Gallery of Victoria in association with Thames & Hudson Australia, Melbourne, 2021, pp. 132-133.

12 Juliette Peers, 'Leader of the Lady Artists: Contextualising Jane Sutherland's Reputation and Oeuvre', *Australian Journal of Art*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1999, pp. 129-144.

13 Ian Burn, *National Life & Landscapes: Australian Painting, 1900-1940*, Bay Books, Sydney, 1990; Ian Burn, *Popular Melbourne Landscape Painting Between the Wars*, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, 1983; Ian Burn, 'Beating About the Bush: The Landscapes of the Heidelberg School' in Anthony Bradley & Terry Smith (eds), *Australian Art and Architecture: Essays presented to Bernard Smith*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1980, pp. 83-98.

- 14 Rolando showed with the AAA however was never considered a "Heidelberg" artist.
- 15 A very recent exception was *The Lost Impressionist* exhibition in 2020 at the Gippsland Art Gallery, documenting a large collection of Scheltema works donated to the gallery from the Netherlands where they had been sent a century or more ago. <https://www.gippslandartgallery.com/exhibition/jan-hendrik-scheltema-the-lost-impressionist/> accessed 16 December 2022. Scheltema is also featured in the Art Gallery of Ballarat's revisionist exploration of the Heidelberg School, *Beating About the Bush*, 2022.
- 16 Conversations with Shirley Jones. In her booklet *JA Turner: A Quiet Painter*, S Jones, Kilsyth, 2009, p. 19, she notes that professional painters were critical of his mass-produced postcards, and some saw him 'as an amateur artist who never moved on'. Curiously one of the aesthetic crimes and naïve simplicities that Turner is routinely accused of: his high coloured bright yellow, orange tips to the gumtrees is directly visible for a few weeks in spring in some species in remnant bushland in the northeast and east of Melbourne. Turner was based in Croydon but worked throughout the reaches of the Yarra on the outskirts of Melbourne, documenting both mining and timber industries. Scheltema was not an outsider artist but a highly trained academic painter and graduate of the Royal Academies of both the Netherlands and Belgium, funded by a scholarship from King Willem of the Netherlands. Both Turner and Scheltema were commissioned and purchased by James Oddie for the Art Gallery of Ballarat in the 1880s. Theo Anderson links into a broader pattern of (official but implicit) anxieties around "academic" art in Australia, although she was actually within the pale of radicalism.
- 17 Gwen Rankin, *L. Bernard Hall: the Man the Art World Forgot*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2013.
- 18 Ted Gott, 'J.S. Macdonald Self Portrait' in Ted Gott (ed), *Queer: Stories from the NGV Collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2021, pp. 26-31.
- 19 *The Countryman*, 18 September 1924, p. 6.
- 20 Anne Gray, 'Friends and Rivals: A Quartet with Variations' in A Gray & A Hesson (eds), *She-Oak and Sunlight: Australian Impressionism*, p. 4.
- 21 As did too the slightly younger Janie Wilkinson Whyte (1869-1954). See Juliette Peers, 'Janie Wilkinson Whyte (1869-1954)', *Into the Light Donor Circle Acquisitions*, Sheila Foundation, Newtown, 2022, pp. 28-31, <https://sheila.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Into-the-Light-acquisitions-2020-WEB.pdf> accessed 12 December 2022. There are also a group of primarily radical landscapists such as John Ford Patterson, John Mather, Stuart Handasyde, Tom Humphrey, and the better known David Davies who are swept aside for more admired figures.
- 22 The chapter title to Chapter Four remains in all later editions – even those of the last few decades with further material added by Terry Smith and Christopher Heathcote, as does the lack of mention of any women artists active in the period, until a note about the re-evaluation of women artists in the context of feminism appears in the additional material without changing the words as set out by Smith.
- 23 Another woman artist who showed frequently with the Yarra Sculptors Society was Mrs Elizabeth Rix, mother of Hilda Rix Nicholas, her flower paintings were often praised.
- 24 *The Herald*, 22 December 1910, p. 5.
- 25 *The Herald*, 14 August 1913, p. 7.
- 26 Paul De Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen and Good Society in Melbourne Before the Gold Rushes*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1980.
- 27 <http://www.swwic.org/casterton/tuckett-william.htm> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 28 Shireen Huda, *Pedigree and Panache: A History of the Art Auction in Australia*, ANU Press, Canberra, 2008, pp. 39-40.
- 29 *The Countryman*, 18 September 1924, p. 6. Although she misnames the leaders of the revolt – Roberts, Richardson and McCubbin, as Richardson, Streeton and Longstaff. The latter two artists were also contemporaries of Anderson at the Gallery School, but arrived after Roberts and Richardson had departed for London, and after Campbell had been replaced.
- 30 <https://emhs.org.au/biography/mouchette/berthe> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 31 *The Herald*, 23 February 1883, p. 3.
- 32 *The Countryman*, 18 September 1924, p.6.
- 33 At this date Blanche Mouchette was not a Theosophist.
- 34 *The Age*, 6 May 1883, p. 5.
- 35 *The Herald*, 23 February 1883, p. 3.
- 36 *The Argus*, 4 December 1884, p. 1.
- 37 Alexander Colquhoun, 'Old Gallery Days: A Memory', *The VAS*, 1 August 1906, p. 6. Colquhoun lists six marriages amongst the students so possibly he also counts the much later weddings of Tom Roberts and Lillie Williamson and Charles Douglas Richardson and Margaret Baskerville.
- 38 Andrew Montana, 'Virtue and Sentiment: Madame Mouchette's Art and Teaching in Melbourne 1881–1892', *French Australian Review*, no. 70, 2021, p. 24.
- 39 Their dissatisfaction is documented by a number of letters from various artists in the VAS papers in the State Library of Victoria. The plain artists are regarded by many less remembered artists as a clique who dominate hanging and selection to the detriment of artists who did not follow their style.
- 40 *The Countryman*, 18 September 1924, p. 6.
- 41 *The Age*, 4 May 1891, p. 6.
- 42 *The Herald*, 28 October 1921, p. 12.
- 43 *The Age*, 12 August 1900, p. 9; *Australasian*, 1 November 1902, p. 46.
- 44 *The Reporter* (Box Hill), 28 June 1907, p. 2.
- 45 Email correspondence with Russ Hains, President Ringwood District Historical Society, 21 October 2022.
- 46 Ringwood was a major supply and retail hub for the smaller Warrandyte and the nearest train station and often artists such as Jo Sweatman walked between the two towns.
- 47 *Leader*, 6 July 1907, p. 45.
- 48 See Juliette Peers, 'Jo Sweatman (1872-1956)', in *Into the Light Donor Circle Acquisitions*, Sheila Foundation, Newtown, 2022, pp. 22-27, <https://sheila.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Into-the-Light-acquisitions-2020-WEB.pdf> accessed 12 December 2022.
- 49 Jenny McFarlane, *A Visionary Space: Theosophy and an Alternative Modernism in Australia 1890-1934*, PhD Thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, 2006, p. 107, <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/11007> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 50 Fanny Withers letter to the Victorian Artists Society: 'The Victorian Artists Society Annual General Meeting', 31 October 1911 in Andrew Mackenzie (ed) *Walter Withers: The Forgotten Manuscripts*, Mannagum Press, Lilydale, 1987, p. 74.
- 51 WJ Anderson, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Argus*, 26 November 1925, p. 13. Cf. *The Argus*, 25 November 1925, p. 21; *Herald*, 20 November 1925, p. 3.
- 52 *The Age*, 19 September 1923, p. 13.
- 53 *The Argus*, 19 September 1923, p. 11. '[...]a sincerity of purpose that is not always backed up by technical ability'; *The Age*, 19 September 1923, p. 13. '[...] a tendency to pander to the uneducated eye by a "prettiness" that is rather unpleasant. The cool grey of Australian bush foliage is absent: we get only the vivid green of the English countryside.'
- 54 *Herald*, 19 September 1923, p. 9.
- 55 Leigh Astbury, 'The Art of Frederick McCubbin and the Impact of the First War', *La Trobe Journal*, no. 24, 1979.
- 56 *Table Talk*, 29 July 1905, p. 8.

Beatrice Colquhoun (1860-1959)

Elizabeth Colquhoun (1899-1989)

The three pictures featured in this essay, a flower study, a portrait and a self-portrait document a remarkable, female-heavy family network of Australian artists dating across a century from the 1870s to the 1980s: the Hoile siblings, Beatrice, Marion and Millicent and brother Henri, Beatrice's husband Alexander Colquhoun, and two of their children Archie and Elizabeth, as well as their daughter-in-law Amalie Colquhoun née Feild. Whilst multiple books have been devoted to the Boyd and Lindsay "dynasties", the equally fascinating story of the extended Hoile-Colquhoun family of artists and particularly its senior figure, the artist Beatrice Colquhoun, is barely on the public record. Major texts neglect to mention Beatrice Colquhoun and barely notice Alexander Colquhoun her husband.¹ Equally her daughter, her son, her remarkable daughter-in-law, Amalie Colquhoun, also a highly acclaimed artist and teacher and close to Beatrice, let alone her three artist siblings from the Hoile family escape attention. The extended family of artists made substantial contributions to Australian culture in art making, art writing and advocacy and are equally worthy of attention as the Boyds and the Lindsays. This out-of-centre status makes the family narrative more interesting as they transgress many preconceptions. They are more cerebral and socially responsible than the Lindsays and less self-focused and more *truly* democratic than the Boyds, although the latter adjective is often ascribed to that family by Peter Herbst and Patricia Dobrez.

The extended Hoile-Colquhoun family have been excluded from Australian cultural narratives by different gate-keepers and at different eras and for various reasons. As noted, the advocacy of some members of the family for tonalism rendered them invisible until that movement has been subject to widespread rethinking and reappraisals within Australian public galleries. Tonalism is not the only factor in play. As I have frequently suggested, non-stellar plein airists still trigger something of a cultural and curatorial anxiety in Australia, due to the scale of the mythologies and claims woven around the stars of plein air and the Heidelberg School. Alternative expressions of the myths have traction at different points of the political spectrum, but none are fully objective or inclusive. Beatrice is a key example in this particular tranche of artistic practice that is so consistently overlooked, as, to a lesser degree, is her husband.

One clear problematic preventing endorsement of the Hoile-Colquhoun artists in mainstream art narratives is the strong engagement of some family members with the Theosophical Society,² a choice that became more complex to defend in the secular capitalist world of post-war Australia. There is evidence that, when they were older, some family members became guarded in how they spoke about the family's interest in alternative spirituality when talking to art professionals.³ Academic opinion thawed slightly towards Theosophy in the late 20th century for its anti-imperialism and engagement with non-western culture only to chill markedly again in the 21st century as race and opposition to cultural appropriation are placed as central to intellectual life. Beatrice Colquhoun had already conceptually reached a position of displacing Eurocentric whiteness by c1930 as she rejected Theosophy in favour of following Jiddu Krishnamurti.⁴ The latter

philosopher and teacher had withdrawn from the movement, partly due to the imperial and Christian superstructure that Bishop Leadbeater was building upon a nominally universal and syncretic faith practice. The mutability of opinion is a warning to treat any position as beyond questioning.

Theosophy has been reinstated as culturally valid in relation to Clarice Beckett's art. Beatrice Colquhoun was a major cultural contact, even a role model, for Beckett in her early years, particularly in her devotion to art and rejection of the conventionalities of polite middle class norms for women, offering a very different image of womanhood to Beckett than did her mother. They met in the early 1900s at a Theosophical or Spiritualist event at the Princess Theatre, and Beckett was invited to Beatrice and Alexander's home for a vegetarian meal followed by a séance.⁵ The extensive library and lively discussions of philosophy, culture and religion in the household greatly expanded Beckett's intellectual horizons, incalculably assisting her self-education and the development of the complex extended ideas world that informed her artworks. When her father banned most of Beckett's artistic colleagues from visiting the Beckett home, the Colquhouns were granted an exemption. Joseph Beckett most likely accepted the Colquhouns due to Beatrice's sister Marion Ferdinando, married to Benjamin Ferdinando, a councillor of the City of Moorabbin and later the first Mayor of Sandringham in Melbourne. Joseph Beckett had no objections to receiving an important local politician in his home⁶ and thus the dialogue between Beckett, Beatrice Colquhoun and Marion Ferdinando was able to continue. Marion Ferdinando not only was an exhibiting artist but was also a Theosophist. She wrote extensively on Theosophy and cultural matters for the journal *Theosophy in Australia*, including a study of traditional art practices in India, a major tranche of unfamiliar early 20th century Australian art writing.

Although she was twelve years younger, Elizabeth Colquhoun became a particular friend of Beckett, whose art and mind she greatly respected.⁷ Elizabeth tried to help Beckett escape her narrow family situation and become financially independent by organising a teaching position for her in a private girls school. In the end Beckett was unable to take up the position, due to parental disapproval but also her own fears that it would be an uncongenial, uncomfortable situation, which would interfere with her artmaking. Elizabeth took up the job herself and believed that she was better able than her friend to deal with the challenges of teaching girls from financially privileged and social backgrounds, who had to attend art classes without having any depth of knowledge or commitment to art.⁸ Given that Beckett is acknowledged as a major Australian artist, the significant interchange between her, Beatrice and Elizabeth Colquhoun and Marion Ferdinando alone should broker a far more prominent position for these singular women and also indicate that Beckett was never as isolated as many later accounts imply.

Much of Beatrice Colquhoun's story has only been captured as anecdote and in personal memories rather than in documents, but digitisation of newspapers and journals confirms the



Beatrice Colquhoun, *Roses* 1908, oil on canvas, 30.5 x 36 cm,
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation

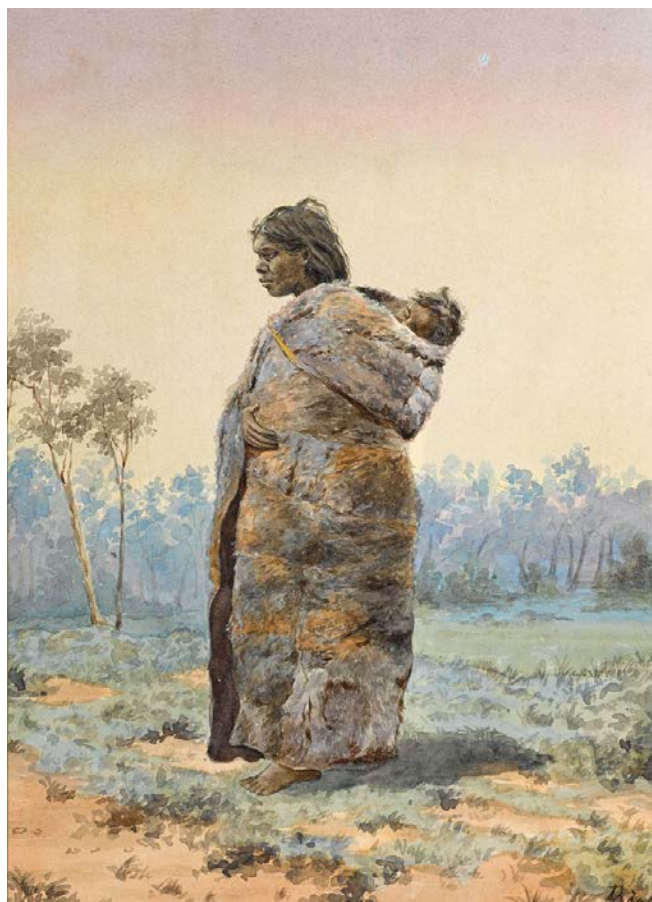
somewhat colourful mythologies of three generations of bohemian unconventional lives. Also historical documentation of the family has tended to be preserved through the functional lens of their relationship to greater names such as Meldrum or McCubbin. Ironically too the Colquhoun family's own close, collegial relationships to the McCubbin family and the Meldrum circle often encouraged them to displace themselves in relation to those artists whom they regarded as true masters. Possibly the family's belief in discipleship and ethical, restrained living, aligned to their interest in Theosophy, underpinned this erasure of themselves from the narrative centre. Alexander Colquhoun documented the life and work of many artists in Melbourne, as well as such matters as art collecting in Australia and literary history, but tended to write little about himself. Beatrice Colquhoun partly has to be reconstructed from fragments gleaned from the sidelines of discussion focused on people regarded as more important by art writers: McCubbin or Meldrum or more distantly via research into Clarice Beckett. Elizabeth Colquhoun herself spoke less of her mother in comparison to such cultural heroes as Meldrum and McCubbin, and emphasised the greater public record of her father.



Samuel White Sweet, *Portrait Aboriginal woman Teenminnie, wife of Pelican, wearing a kangaroo skin cloak, Point McLeay region, South Australia* c1860, National Library of Australia

Beatrice Colquhoun was English born, but her father and grandfather, both named Henry Hoile, moved to Paris and worked there. Her younger siblings were born in Paris and her sister Marion married Benjamin Ferdinando at the British Embassy in 1878. Colquhoun spent most of her childhood and youth in Paris during the Second Empire and Third Republic, living

though the Siege of Paris in 1870-1871.⁹ The older and younger Henry Hoile made contact with Australian cultural officials when assisting the South Australian government at the 1878 Paris Exhibition.¹⁰ They took up this task partly to thank the people of South Australia who raised a trust fund for Henry Hoile senior's sister-in-law, who was left widowed with nine children when her husband Valentine Hoile died at sea en route to Adelaide in 1873. This first cluster of Hoiles settled across South Australia, although apparently they had neither subsequent links to the artworld nor any sign of their cousins' casual bohemianism. The Parisian Hoiles arrived in Adelaide c1880, bringing the married daughter Marion Ferdinando and her husband Benjamin, establishing the pattern for family members to live in multi-generational clusters. In the 1900s the Colquhouns and Ferdinandos often lived in the same street in Melbourne coastal suburbs, and later the Colquhouns lived as three generations in East Malvern and from 1941 onwards in Kew.



Beatrice Colquhoun, *Aboriginal mother and child in landscape* c1880s, pencil, watercolour and gouache on paper, 35 x 25.2 cm, courtesy Sotheby's Australia

Whilst he did not apparently exhibit in Melbourne, Henry Hoile's death notice in 1888 described him as an artist, living in South Melbourne.¹¹ Previously in Adelaide, he did paint and show works, receiving favourable mention as 'the well known and popular South Australian artist, Mr. Hoile, of Adelaide, whose reputation as a delineator of colonial scenery is a sufficient guarantee of the excellence of these Pictures'.¹² Equally he was renowned as an art administrator and curator, working on the staff of the 1878 Paris exhibition and managing the Tasmanian court at the

1880 Melbourne Exhibition. He was 'superintendent' of the "National" Art Gallery of South Australia in 1881.¹³ In some cases he promoted his daughters' art to the Adelaide press.

Full details of the family circumstances are obscure. In 1970 Norman Lindsay presented a somewhat racist and stereotyped account of the family, with whom he made contact at the Gallery School and whose home he visited regularly for meals and sketching sessions in the late 1890s. The long dead father had been an artist. He claimed they were Irish, and their name was actually Hoyle¹⁴ Whilst Lindsay praised Beatrice's brother Henri (whom he called Harry) as a street fighter and absurd prankster, he respected the whole family as unconventional and anarchic.¹⁵ Beatrice was already married with several children and living in her own home. Lindsay omitted to mention that Henri exhibited professionally for four decades in Melbourne. Millicent Hoile shared Lindsay's interest in graphic art and critics linked their work in the 1890s.¹⁶

Vague stories still current in the 1980s amongst other tonal artists,¹⁷ but not her daughter, implied that Beatrice Colquhoun had seen "real" impressionist art in Paris, even met or talked with major artists and had been an art student in Paris, perhaps of those iconic names. Colquhoun's experience and status was seen to reflect well on the cosmopolitan nature and high cultural literacy of the Meldrum circle, independent of circles of professionalism endorsed by public galleries and universities in Australia. Sadly for that legend, early reviews of Beatrice Colquhoun's art in Adelaide identify her as conforming to the more limited expectations and options of a young woman of good family in Paris of the 1870s. She and Marion Ferdinando had learned china painting in Paris, and showed flower pieces and neoclassical and Egyptian figures in that medium.¹⁸ Although envelopes of exquisite hand drawn paper dolls and cut out figures in watercolour by Colquhoun, including images inspired by the Empress Eugenie, still in the possession of her daughter in the 1980s, suggests that the fabled modernity of 1860s Paris, as far as it had percolated in a fashion and consumption-centric iteration into the lives of petites filles modèles was not alien to the expatriate Hoile household in Paris.¹⁹ These meticulously detailed figures show that Colquhoun was confident in watercolour before her teens.

Not unexpectedly for both the time and her background, Beatrice also captured attention as an early and skilled copyist working in the Art Gallery of SA collection.²⁰ Beatrice was praised on the numerous times she exhibited in Adelaide. Most likely the two variant watercolour copies of South Australian photographer Samuel White Sweet's study of Teenminie, wife of Pelican in a fur cloak with her child²¹ were produced at this Adelaide period. Beatrice Colquhoun was already an accomplished academic artist, mature and precocious in her handling of watercolour like her close contemporary Emma Minnie Boyd. Sisters Beatrice and Marion intended setting up a business in Adelaide, selling and teaching china painting.²² Beatrice must have acquired a kiln as she advertised that she fired china and offered classes,²³ before the family moved to Melbourne c1884.

By 1884 she had enrolled in the National Gallery School in Melbourne, working there until 1891. She does not appear to have entered for the travelling scholarship, nor did she attract much press attention amongst the students, although she was favourably noticed in 1887 amongst well known names including Arthur Streeton, David Davies, Margaret Baskerville and Rodney Cher-

ry, secretary of the Buonarroti Club, which was a noted meeting point for art students, male and female in 1880s Melbourne.

Among the other drawings noticeable for their excellence are those of Miss B Wedel, Miss Collis, Miss Baskerville, Miss Thomas, and Miss Hoyle, and of Messrs. Streeton, Davies, and Cherry; but the average is much higher than in previous years, and it is gratifying.²⁴



Beatrice Hoile, [Seaside glade with sailing boat] 1889, oil on canvas, 53.8 x 35 cm, Cruthers Collection of Women's Art, The University of Western Australia

Study and survival as an artist was not always easy for women students at the Melbourne National Gallery School in the 1880s. There are accounts of both Masters at the School during the decade, Oswald Rose Campbell and George Folingsby, targeting women students with particularly limiting strictures around their behaviour. Folingsby dismissed a female student, Alice Chapman, in 1886 for exhibiting as a professional artist without his permission, although his class favourites, John Longstaff and Julian Gibbs, had done exactly the same thing without censure.²⁵ As noted Beatrice Colquhoun had taught in Adelaide and by the time she enrolled at the Gallery School was not a teenage girl but in her mid-twenties. Yet her highly professional view of Port Phillip Bay and the foreshore dated 1889, now in the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art, counters her textual

invisibility – which could be mistaken for a minor talent – amongst the Gallery School students. Sophisticated and broadly painted with squared brushes, Colquhoun's grasp of plein air techniques and composition tropes, such as the path leading the viewer into the scene, the tangible sense of light and atmosphere, is assured and effective. She captures both the shadows of the foreshore vegetation in the front of her composition and the more bleached light of the beach. Two men, one possibly launching or pulling a boat into shore, and another watching him are rapidly drawn in. This is not the separate, lesser and enclosed spaces that 1990s post-structuralist critics claimed were the purview of Australian female plein airists,²⁶ but identical to works by Roberts, Mather, Paterson et al. depicting life along the suburban Melbourne coast, Brighton to Beaumaris, an open and mature placement of both artist and her subject.

Nor did Beatrice Colquhoun attract much critical comment when she started exhibiting professionally in Melbourne in the late 1880s. In some ways her situation is similar to Clara Southern, who was regarded as a major artist but at the same time was never the subject of extended critical commentary or extensive claims for her contribution to Australian art on a national scale, except for brief reviews of her solo exhibitions. Colquhoun is generally identified as an outdoor landscapist. In 1895 she was listed amongst artists who 'demonstrate the immense amount of attention that is being devoted to out-door work'.²⁷ Other artists noted included Percy Lindsay, George Coates, Stewart Handasyde, Janie Wilkinson Whyte and Helen Peters. In 1901, *The Bulletin* noted her work and that of her husband, painted at Hampton, 'are good examples of impressionism in its best sense'.²⁸ *The Age* identified her as one of the painters of 'small and excellent landscapes', along with Percy Lindsay, Jane Price and Dora Hake, later Serle.²⁹ Her small still life of roses seen here, although not a landscape, perfectly embodies this repeated opinion of Beatrice Colquhoun as a painter of small, but credible, radical works.

On 15 September 1892 she married fellow Gallery student Alexander Colquhoun in the Prahran Registry Office, suggesting they were not interested in the expected religious and social panoply of a fashionable wedding. Their subsequent life together, whilst never sensational or scandalous, showed a certain disdain for bourgeois convenience, display and materialism. Jane Price, who was close to the family, was also a Carpenterian socialist, as well as being interested in esoteric spiritual beliefs.³⁰ Beatrice was remembered as outgoing, verbal and energetic, whereas Alexander was often quieter and bookish. Their son A.D. Colquhoun described the marriage as a 'romance' that started at the Gallery School.³¹ Beatrice and Alexander lived in various cottages and shacks in outer Melbourne throughout the 1890s, Heidelberg, Healesville and Diamond Creek. Elizabeth Colquhoun suggested they were trying to live the bush life that their painting friends so often depicted.³² The couple finally returned closer to the city in New Street, Brighton in 1897, prompting one of the longest press comments received by Beatrice.

[Alexander Colquhoun] has returned to Melbourne from his three years sojourn out at Diamond Creek. Mr. Colquhoun and his gifted wife - Miss Bertha [sic] Hoile- have been close students and energetic workers - whilst residing in the beautiful district of Diamond Creek, and now at their studio, in New-street, Brighton, are bringing to a finish a number of oil paintings, in which their fine sense of Australian colour and characteristics are pleasingly prominent. These studies

combine figures and landscapes, and their appearance, when finished, will be a matter of much interest to lovers of art.³³

In Brighton they lived next to the McCubbin family for several years, where the two households were at the centre of social life in Melbourne's art community. A.D. Colquhoun remembered that all the artists called in at his parents' house, Streeton, Mather, Paterson, Withers, McCubbin, Longstaff, and there were parties, music, discussions and recitations. The children slightly ran amok with the equally unconventionally brought up children of their parents' colleagues, most notably the McCubbins, but also the Patersons, Boyds, Withers, Mathers, Loureiros. Many of these children in turn later studied at the National Gallery School.³⁴ The Ferdinando family also frequently lived in houses close to the Colquhouns. Benjamin Ferdinando was treasurer to the Victorian Artists Society for many years, retiring early in Meldrum's presidency in 1916.

Beatrice had four children between 1893 and 1899, but still kept painting, whilst her children were young, taking them out with her to play at her feet, whilst she worked. Elizabeth Colquhoun recalled her mother's casual attitude to house keeping that was intended to prioritise painting time as well Beatrice's long discussions on art with her sisters or with Jane Price, to the annoyance of her young daughter. Beatrice was helped by Jane Price who worked as a sort of servant, companion, nanny and governess in return for free board and lodging. Later Price and her sister Lucy moved to the McCubbin household where they lived under the same arrangement. Emma Minnie Boyd also followed a similar routine, taking her children on plein air painting expeditions. Both Helen Boyd and Elizabeth Colquhoun remembered going out with their mothers' classes for plein air painting, and again amusing themselves whilst their mothers tutored their all-female cohort of students,³⁵ offering a glimpse of a different, female-centric way of engaging with the practice of plein air painting that is not captured by more formal documentation around the Heidelberg group. Jenny Macfarlane suggests it was Price who encouraged Beatrice and Alexander Colquhoun and Marion Ferdinando to join the Theosophical Society in 1903 and 1905, as well as Ina and Ada Gregory. Beatrice's children Meg, Archie and Elizabeth in turn joined when they each came of age.³⁶

In the context of Beatrice's professional life, the Theosophical Society did not only offer an Edwardian version of "new age" practices, but a stage for highlighting her cultural knowledge and energy amongst Melbourne contemporaries. Alexander and Beatrice were the drivers of an art discussion and lecture group that flourished until the 1920s, where both Alexander Colquhoun and Marion Ferdinando spoke.³⁷ When the Society moved to Centreway in Collins Street, its Besant Hall at that address became a favoured exhibition space in the 1913-1920 period. A joint exhibition by Alexander and Beatrice in 1913 is perhaps the earliest exhibition documented in the space, suggesting that the couple were involved with launching the space. Artists who showed included Harold Herbert, Esther Paterson, Frederick Woodhouse and Rose Walker.

The Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors provided another key node of professionalism and public profile for Beatrice Colquhoun in the first two decades of the 20th century. In this context, she scrupulously avoided mixing her religious and philosophic interests with her corporate duties. She was not a proselytiser like Jane Price, who strongly championed



Elizabeth Colquhoun, *The artist's Mother* c1950, oil on canvas on masonite, 49.5 x 39.5 cm,
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation

the importance of spiritual over material concerns in organising public space whenever she had the opportunity. Colquhoun's ubiquitous presence in the early MSWPS minute books is one of the most tangible markers of her impact on her contemporaries and another reason for reinserting Beatrice into art historical narratives. She provided a crucial backbone of professionalism and a link to a broader engagement with art for the members, often giving critiques on works and assisting in hanging annual exhibitions. Yet she also resisted McCubbin's, Withers', Officer's and other's attempts to restrict membership of the Victorian Artists Society and led the MSWPS in writing a letter to McCubbin to reconsider his resignation from the VAS in 1912.³⁸ Colquhoun established the baseline of a practice-based emphasis on making and showing art in the MSWPS, as opposed to the more social and high society focus that developed at the Sydney Society of Women Painters. She thus contributed to the group's ultimate longevity. Throughout much of her life Colquhoun sought to mediate her deep commitment to art and culture with the options and expectations that society around her demanded from women and pushed out boundaries to create a dynamic and interstitial place that is not credited either in the micro space of Heidelberg School historiography or in larger-scale narratives of art history in Australia.

This study of roses and the beachscape in the Cruethers Collection of Women's Art are amongst the very few paintings from Colquhoun's large oeuvre to survive. Both hold their own against better known work by contemporaries such as Sutherland, Southern and Price, if we may refrain from re-centring the males whose work she also matches, with these oils. The roses are not the work of a marginal artist but a thoroughly trained and confident artist, a lively, vivacious, informal study. Many more works by Beatrice once existed. Regular exhibitions can be traced from 1881 onwards to c1920, at least including the Victorian Artists Society and the MSWPS, and by invitation with the exclusive Twenty Melbourne Painters. She also organised two smaller group shows, one in 1913 with her husband, where she showed pastels and watercolours at the Besant Hall and another in 1914 with MSWPS colleagues Mina Fullwood Watson, Kate Allen and Maria Holgate.

By c1913, Colquhoun had shifted to predominantly works on paper, watercolours and pastels, her works believed to display 'a certain poetic suggestiveness which has a subtle charm of its own'.³⁹ It is possible that the Theosophical injunction to see not the immediately visible material forms of the world, but the inherent underlying spiritual forces had impacted on Colquhoun's practice, as it had with the better known examples of Ina Gregory and Jane Price, both of whom were her close friends. The linked range of multiple subtle greens extending into blues and jades, the surface facture of brushstrokes and the lack of spatial definition are qualities that Colquhoun's later watercolours share with the best of Gregory's landscapes. Colquhoun also followed Price into abstracting her landscapes by seeking a spiritual rather than a literal depiction. A Melbourne critic was scornful of her arbitrary interpretations, stating that she was 'not especially remarkable as a pastellist. A profusion of purple and marine tints rather spoils Mrs. Colquhoun's adventures in this medium'.⁴⁰ These abstracting small-scale landscapes also subvert the reading of large-scale Heidelberg School works as organising the landscape with a colonialist, conquerers' eye.⁴¹

In November 1916 her second son Quentin Colquhoun died fighting with the AIF in France. Elizabeth Colquhoun recalled that

her mother would say frequently 'I gave my son for France'.⁴² Via her son's death, Beatrice also validated and affirmed her public identity as quasi-French, recalling that she, unlike local jingoistic British empire loyalists, had lived through the Franco-Prussian war, witnessed the collapse of the Second Empire in violence and chaos and the rebuilding of the highly chauvinist and nationalist Third Republic. La Ravanche was not an abstract claim for her. Krishnamurti's doctrines of acceptance, living in the moment and the importance of self-reliance in spirituality would later provide practical support in her grief. Colquhoun stopped exhibiting and withdrew from the MSWPS, although she continued to be visible and engaged within both Theosophical and Meldrum circles. Amongst the latter group many remembered her nearly four decades after her death for her cosmopolitan bohemianism, her unusual cuisine including spaghetti and vegetarian meals and serving coffee. She was an exotic, memorable figure who taught others in Melbourne how to live their lives differently to expectations, for example she was never fazed in engaging eminent men in debate and dispute. Lesley Sinclair remembered that if there were ever a toss up between buying groceries or a piece of antique or oriental porcelain in a junk shop or market stall, the porcelain would win.⁴³ Beatrice Colquhoun remained in contact with many artist friends such as Violet Teague and Ethel Carrick Fox throughout her later years. When she died in 1959 aged 99, she was still lucid and alert, although she had lost her eyesight.⁴⁴

Beatrice Colquhoun was most likely the last witness with any direct engagement with radical art in 1880s Melbourne, but was never approached or interviewed by curators or art historians at a time in the later 1950s when documentation of the movement was being actively clarified and researched by professionals.⁴⁵ Her status as the last of the Heidelberg School was ratified by James McNally when writing in 1941 about a chance find of an



A.D. Colquhoun, *Portrait of my mother* 1934, oil on canvas, 62 x 52.5 cm, National Gallery of Victoria

1890 catalogue of the Victorian Artists Society:

What a story was here in the names of the pictures and the men and women who painted them! I could only find two that are alive today — Sir Arthur Streeton and Beatrice Hoile (Mrs. Alex Colquhoun).⁴⁶

Thus too in the portrait of Beatrice by her daughter we have an image of the last member of the group that was already, at the time the portrait was painted, being idolised as the foundation of Australian visual culture. The Heidelberg School as origin story is a myth that is manifestly untrue for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the melancholy injustice of the lack of recognition for this remarkable woman. In the plain straightforward unsentimentalised approach of this portrait we witness a mother and daughter who were friends and colleagues, as well as living under the same roof for most of their lives. When Elizabeth's short-lived marriage failed, she took her young son and moved back in with her parents, who helped care for the child whilst she went out to work to support herself. At that date in the 1920s and 1930s, divorcees and single mothers were often socially scorned in Australia, but as Alan Martin remarked, Elizabeth moved freely as an equal in the Meldrum circle.⁴⁷ She produced a work that is vastly different to the images of sentimentalised motherhood often produced by early 20th century artists such as *The Kiss* 1922 by Gladys Laycock. Both Archibald and Elizabeth painted their mother in a similar casual dress. Mother and daughter stayed together after the death of Alexander Colquhoun when they set up home in Packington Street Kew, then in Raven Street Kew with Archie and Amalie in close walking distance.

Living so close to her parents, the childhood and early life of Elizabeth Colquhoun, her 'remarkable life' in her own words, has been substantially outlined in the previous pages. 'As far as I could remember, there were always artists in the house and there was always art going on whether you liked it or not'.⁴⁸ With parents, an uncle, two aunts and a nanny cum teacher who were all active artists it was natural she too would take up art; all the children in the household drew, it was their major activity recalled her brother.⁴⁹ She followed a lot of her childhood friends to the National Gallery of Victoria School in 1917-1918 but was unhappy with what she saw as McCubbin's unsystematic and vague teaching, although he was in poor health. She soon left the Gallery as had so many others in favour of Max Meldrum's classes. Meldrum had long been a visitor to their home and part of her parents' friendship circle, expounding on his theories at dinners and picnic lunches. Proudly she claimed that Beatrice had encouraged him to start his school so that her children could have better art training than at the Gallery. Others' accounts put the story in a context with a bit more sass, stating that Beatrice challenged Meldrum after he had been pontificating all night, to stop talking about what was wrong with art education in Melbourne and do something about it.⁵⁰

The Meldrum School became the centre of Elizabeth's life. 'When you are young you are hard and fast from your master. If you agree with him, there's no one else.' 'He was a gentle teacher...he may have been more gentle with women than he was with men, but I always found him so considerate ...'.⁵¹ Unlike her parents who had mixed broadly with the mainstream artworld, changing paradigms of art practice and the art market tended to keep Elizabeth Colquhoun within the compass of the Meldrum group, and she exhibited mostly with artists groups, the Twenty Melbourne Painters, the VAS and the MSWPS, where she

served on the committee in the 1970s. Amongst collectors and supporters of the tonalists, Elizabeth Colquhoun was unfairly overlooked in favour of the louder male students, who were often highly visible and performatively combative in their promotion of Meldrum's theories.

Austere and dignified, her self-portrait in the ITL collection, perhaps from the 1960s, reveals a degree of Buddhist hermit ruggedness and austerity, a rigorous self-contemplation and honesty typical of her approach to art and life. She was also well-versed in the full tonal painter's conventions of self-portrait as baroque performance. In her McClelland Gallery self-portrait she mustered all the expected signifiers that her colleagues deployed to celebrate their status as artist and professional in the studio and document themselves in the act of painting: mirror, reflections, paint brushes, Whistlerian pictures-within-pictures, and objects d'art. Here in this work she rejected such self-advertisement. The work steps across the boundaries of style and art politics to present the same queries about creativity, female identity, gender and age as does Ruth Tuck's self portrait in the Cruthers Collection, and equally pushes back against the stereotypes that render older women irrelevant and invisible.



Elizabeth Colquhoun, *Self portrait in a mirror* c1970. McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery

Ironically, whilst she was seen as too quiet and retiring in relation to characters such as Jimmy Minogue and Colin Colahan, Elizabeth also engaged far more than her brother and parents with life in the mundane and dull world of the non-artistic, those who were not loyal followers of "the master". She taught at private schools in Melbourne and ran non-Meldrum art classes for the famed inner Melbourne school run by Archibald and Amalie Colquhoun, and thus greatly helped to keep the operation solvent. When her brother and sister-in-law travelled overseas she ran the fine art school with great competency. She never made space for either expressionism or egotistic grandstanding.

Painting is a very difficult thing to do. You don't simply cover a canvas with colour and design. It takes a life time of study - it takes a lifetime to make an artist. ⁵²

Juliette Peers

Notes

- 1 Equally Peter Perry notes that despite his role in documenting the Heidelberg group and as art critic, Alexander Colquhoun is hardly mentioned in scholarship around the group. See *Alexander Colquhoun: 1862-1941: Artist and Critic*, Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum, Castlemaine, n.p.
- 2 Possibly neither Henri Hoile nor Millicent Hoile were Theosophists.
- 3 Jenny McFarlane, *A Visionary Space: Theosophy and an Alternative Modernism in Australia 1890-1934*, PhD Thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, 2006, p. 60, <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/11007> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 4 Conversations with Dr Quentin Porter.
- 5 Tracey Lock, *The Present Moment: The art of Clarice Beckett*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 27 February – 23 May 2021, pp. 49, 168. Lock gives the date as c1906 and the location of the meeting as the Princess Theatre; McFarlane in *A Visionary Space*, p. 111 gives the date as c1914 and suggests the two women met at Besant Hall, Collins Street. As with Beatrice Colquhoun, the life story of Clarice Beckett substantially survives in personal memory, a curious overlap given that they were friends. As Beckett's philosophical interests were developed in Melbourne during the early 1900s before her family moved to Bendigo, it is plausible that the earlier meeting date is more likely.
- 6 Jenny McFarlane, *A Visionary Space*, p. 112.
- 7 Juliette Peers, *More than just Gumtrees: a Personal, Social and Artistic History of the Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors*, Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors in association with Dawn Revival Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 197.
- 8 Conversations with Elizabeth Colquhoun.
- 9 McFarlane, *A Visionary Space*, p. 94 quoting Dr Quentin Porter.
- 10 *Express and Telegraph*, 26 December 1878, p. 3.
- 11 *The Argus*, 27 November 1888, p. 1.
- 12 *Evening Journal*, 28 October 1883, p. 1.
- 13 *Express and Telegraph*, 17 August 1881, p. 3. The AGSA timeline lists Louis Tannert as the first staff member appointed in 1882. <https://www.agsa.sa.gov.au/about/our-history/timeline/> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 14 Family notices confirm that the spelling used by the family was Hoile, however press accounts sometimes refer to the family members as Hoyle. Spellings of the Christian names also are inconsistent even when used by the family as well as the press: Beatrix/Beatrice, Marian/Marion/Mae, Henri/Henry. This is another way in which the cluster of artists in the family elude orderly norms. Possibly some of these variant names were an attempt to infer French nationality as well as residence.
- 15 Norman Lindsay, *My Mask: For What Little I Know of the Man Behind It, an Autobiography*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1970, pp. 87-94.
- 16 Both artists worked for the Adelaide paper *The Critic* in the late 1890s see also *Melbourne Punch*, 10 November 1898, p. 2, which lists Valentine [Henri?] Hoile, Millicent Hoile and Norman Lindsay as among the few black and white artists showing with the Victorian Artists Society.
- 17 Conversations with Alan Martin and conversations with Graham Moore.
- 18 *Adelaide Observer*, 12 May 1883, p. 31 cf. McFarlane, *A Visionary Space*, p. 94 commenting that it would appear that from the standard of her surviving watercolours, Marion Ferdinando had only learned art as a polite accomplishment in Paris and posited that she may have studied only within the family circle.
- 19 Juliette Peers, 'Adelaide Huret and the Nineteenth-Century French Fashion Doll: Constructing Dolls/Constructing the Modern' in Miriam Forman-Brunell & Jennifer Dawn Whitney (ed), *Dolls Studies: The Many Meanings of Girls Toys and Play*, Peter Lang, New York, 2015. The dolls were seen by this author in 1987-88. The creation of 'the figures' as Elizabeth Colquhoun named them, was something that Beatrice made for herself, and then for her siblings and tutored them in making similar figures. She kept them and later let her children play carefully with them, who in turn kept them.
- 20 *Evening Journal*, 14 October 1881, p. 2.
- 21 A copy of the Sweet photograph is in the National Library of Australia dated 1860s <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-148818555> accessed 16 December 2022. Beatrice's two variant watercolours were auctioned in 2014 by Sotheby's Australia and 2018 by Leski's. Both fetched large sums due to the subject as much as the artist.
- 22 *Adelaide Observer*, 12 May 1883, p. 31.
- 23 *Evening Journal*, 5 February 1884, p. 1.
- 24 *The Argus*, 25 April 1887, p. 7.
- 25 See for example *The Age*, 14 September 1886, p. 5; *Hobart Mercury*, 20 September 1886, p. 3; *Sydney Mail*, 2 October 1886, p. 684; Juliette Peers, 'Women and the Cult of Plein Air' in Victoria Hammond & Juliette Peers (eds), *Completing the Picture: Women Artists and the Heidelberg Era*, Artmoves, Hawthorn, 1992, pp. 29-30.
- 26 See for example Sue Rowley, 'The Journey's End: Women's Mobility and Containment', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 10, 1991.
- 27 *Table Talk*, 27 September 1895, p. 6.
- 28 *Bulletin*, 3 August 1901, p. 32.
- 29 *The Age*, 8 July 1904, p. 8.
- 30 McFarlane, *A Visionary Space*, p. 61.
- 31 Archie Colquhoun interviewed by Hazel de Berg in the Hazel de Berg collection [sound recording], National Library of Australia, 1965, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-214476119/listen> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 32 Conversations with Elizabeth Colquhoun.
- 33 *Table Talk*, 19 March 1897, p. 16.
- 34 Juliette Peers, *More than just Gumtrees*, p. 28.
- 35 So far, no formal documentation such as advertisements have been found for such classes. Boyd and Colquhoun both lived along the bay in contiguous suburbs Hampton and Sandringham around the same time, living and working in much the same manner. It is likely that the two women interacted as friends and professionals. Boyds' friendship with Theo Anderson suggests that she kept up gallery school contacts. Kathleen Mangan's recollections that Boyd took care of the McCubbin children when Annie McCubbin was seriously unwell, places her in the Colquhoun's social circle.
- 36 McFarlane, *A Visionary Space*, p. 95.
- 37 Theosophy did not diminish the Colquhoun's art activities but gave them further public platforms. Cf. McFarlane, *A Visionary Space*, p. 30 suggests that the society also pragmatically recognised that art matters would draw a more intellectually robust and diverse audience than religious and mystical matters.
- 38 Juliette Peers, *More than just Gumtrees*, p. 21.
- 39 *The Age*, 19 August 1914, p. 9.
- 40 *Melbourne Punch*, 28 August 1913, p. 28.
- 41 Juliette Peers in press for *Beating about the Bush*, Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat, 5 November 2022 – 19 February 2023.
- 42 Conversations with Elizabeth Colquhoun.
- 43 Conversations with Lesley Sinclair.
- 44 Conversations with Dr Quentin Porter.
- 45 To be fair, Robert Henderson Croll working on the commissioned biography of Tom Roberts in the 1930s does not seem to have engaged greatly with either of the senior Colquhouns, so Australian art history prior to the Herald Chair of Fine Arts was equally remiss.
- 46 *The Mail*, 10 May 1941, p. 6.
- 47 Conversations with Alan Martin.
- 48 Conversations with Elizabeth Colquhoun.
- 49 Archie Colquhoun interviewed by Hazel de Berg, 1965.
- 50 Conversation with Alan Martin.
- 51 Conversations with Elizabeth Colquhoun.
- 52 Juliette Peers, *More than just Gumtrees*, p. 211.



Elizabeth Colquhoun, *Self-portrait* c1960s, oil on canvas on composite board, 44.2 x 35 cm,
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation

Aline Cusack (1867-1949)

A dog, a famous brewing family and an Australian woman artist. What do they have in common?

Aline Cusack, one of Sheila Foundation's Into the Light artists, painted a subtle painting of a sweet dog called *Pat* for the Royal Art Society Annual Exhibition in Sydney. There her painting *Pat* 1911 was purchased by Philip Toohey, of the famous brewing family, and his wife Ellen, who emigrated to Australia after her marriage to Philip. Sometime later the painting found its way to England.

Fast forward a century later and *Pat* has managed to make its way to Sheila Foundation and to its first home in Australia, via Ellen's descendant John Tuck from Oxfordshire in the UK, and has a story to tell us.

Aline Cusack, born 1867 in New Zealand and brought up in Newcastle and Sydney, was a prominent professional Sydney-based artist who worked actively from the 1890s-1930s. Her sister Edith E Cusack was also a successful artist and the pair were well known as the Cusack sisters. They studied overseas, had numerous exhibitions together of a wide range of paintings and shared a studio at the Palings Building in George Street, where they also ran an art school. In 1910, Aline and Edith, along with Lady Chelmsford, started the Society of Women Painters at an event in their studio.¹

Despite her success as an artist, Cusack's works were not acquired by public collections during her lifetime, a fate which befell many other then-prominent women artists. Sheila Foundation has been fortunate to have acquired two paintings by Cusack through its Into the Light Acquisition Fund in 2019 and 2020. These two have brought the total number of extant paintings by Cusack to eight. Now, almost unbelievably, her painting *Pat* has found its way to Sheila, generously donated by John Tuck, who inherited the painting as a descendant of Ellen Toohey of the Toohey family. John Tuck came across Aline Cusack's story online thanks to the writing published by Sheila Foundation about her life and art on its website.



Phillip Toohey's family home, Sydney. Source John Tuck

The importance of the online realm to the recovery of Aline's story, as well as those of many other Australian women artists, cannot be underestimated. It has enabled Sheila Foundation to work to consolidate the previously fragmented stories and careers of forgotten artists such as Aline Cusack. Along the way we have been able to assemble a group of three paintings which begin to make the case for her as a significant artist.

We cannot tell the story of *Pat* without first sharing the story of Philip and Ellen Toohey. Philip Toohey was the son of James Toohey, who started the now famous Australian brewery Toohey's Brewery with his brother John Thomas Toohey. Philip married Ellen Langford (known as Nell) at Wickham, Hampshire, England, on 4 April 1908. Nell's father was William Thomas Langford who was schoolmaster at Wickham School in Hampshire, where Nell worked as a teacher for a period of time.²

Philip and Ellen Toohey travelled frequently between Australia and England, and moved in elevated circles in Edwardian London. *The Daily Telegraph*³ of 7 August 1908 gives an account of a reception for an Australian governor in London, the Earl of Dudley, and his wife the Countess of Dudley before they travelled to Australia so he could take up his appointment. The reception included notable members of high society along with several Tooheys, including Mr and Mrs Philip Toohey. In 1910 Philip and Nell travelled from London via Melbourne to Sydney on the *Orvieto*, arriving on 8 December 1910.

However, the Tooheys did not stay put in Manly. In March 1913 they were aboard the *Orama*, travelling saloon class from London to Sydney, arriving there on 27 March 1913. In 1917, at the time of drafting his will, Philip was resident at Beach Road, Rushcutters Bay, Sydney. Philip and Ellen travelled from Sydney to Honolulu arriving 15 March 1917. On 22 June 1921 they left Sydney again for London on the *SS Ceramic*.⁴

On 28 January 1922, Philip Toohey left Liverpool on the White Star Line ship, *SS Ceramic*, arriving on 13 March 1922 in Sydney. Unfortunately, Philip Toohey died on 8 November 1922, at the age of 41 and was buried at Rookwood Catholic Cemetery. Nell Toohey married again and became the wife of Dr A. J. Frost and they lived in Dandenong, Victoria. Nell's sister Emily Tuck visited her in Australia around 1937. In 1938, Nell died aged 56 after a period of ill health.

From this snippet of the Toohey's history it is unclear when the painting of *Pat* made its way to the UK. However, the painting could have travelled to the UK in 1913, 1921 or 1937 with Nell's sister Emily. All we know for certain is that Nell Toohey's descendants have been taking care of it ever since. John Tuck who generously donated *Pat* to Sheila Foundation is the great nephew of Nell. His grandmother was Emily Tuck, Nell's sister. John Tuck shared with us that:

The painting resided for many years at 20 Court Lane, Cosham, Portsmouth, Hampshire in the south of England (my family home) and was located on display



Aline Cusack, *Pat* 1911, oil on canvas on board, 31.3 x 25.7 cm
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation

just inside the front door opposite the telephone and on the wall just before entering the sitting room.⁵

Tuck is unsure when the painting came to England. He posits that it could have spent time with

...Dad's sister before it came to our family house, around 1956. It stayed there on the wall until 2001 at which time my Dad had to move to a care home. The painting then came to me and stayed out of sight (in our garage!) until we contacted the Sheila Foundation.⁶

It seems that Pat has been on quite the journey. Tuck also recalls that his family was not a 'dog-loving family but must have looked at the painting in the hall several times every day.'⁷

Tuck also shared a photo of his maternal grandfather sitting in a chair in which part of Cusack's painting can be seen in the upper right corner. Pat's snout is just visible on the upper edge of the photo. This photo and John Tuck's story puts Cusack's painting in its context: a painting for people to enjoy in the comfort of their homes.



John Tuck's maternal grandfather sitting beneath the painting.
Source John Tuck.

This painting provides an integral link to a part of Cusack's work that Sheila Foundation had wanted to know more about – animal painting – and is a rare opportunity to piece together her career more holistically. The painting is mentioned in a *Sydney Morning Herald* article on Saturday 9 September 1911⁸ as one of two paintings by Aline sold in the Royal Art Society Annual Exhibition that year. But without the physical painting we were not to know it was a painting of a dog.



John Tuck as a child in front of his family home in Portsmouth.
Source John Tuck.

Animal painting was a major genre in 19th century and Edwardian Australian art. Aline Cusack was 44 years old at the time she made the painting. She would have been fully aware of the genre's importance and had the ability to align herself with the hugely popular and profitable genre. This was a prudent move on her part and would have offered her opportunities for patronage. Many other artists were similarly aware. Arthur Streeton was commissioned to paint dogs. Artur Loureiro also painted dogs.⁹ Many wealthy people commissioned portraits of their horses, dogs and other livestock at the time.

From 1983-1984 Colin Lavery's exhibition *Pastures and Pastimes: An Exhibition of Australian Racing, Sporting and Animal Pictures of the 19th century* toured Melbourne, Geelong and Sydney. The exhibition catalogue contains invaluable information about the importance of animal painting in 19th century Australia and puts into context Cusack's work and her choice to attend the London School of Animal Painting.

Lavery notes that:

...a long English tradition was followed when proud owners had their champion racehorses, cattle and greyhounds painted, as well as favourite hunters and even hunting dogs. The famous horses and

horseraces were dwelt on at length in the newspapers, and immortalised by balladists like Adam Lindsay Gordon, himself a champion rider.¹⁰

Paintings of dogs were at the height of popularity in the period in which Aline Cusack painted *Pat*. Steven Miller¹¹ notes that London and Paris were 'dog mad'¹² and that 'for a few Australian artists living and studying overseas, dog painting became a sign of European sophistication.'¹³ He notes that 'small lap dogs, terriers and elegant greyhounds appear regularly in the paintings of Rupert Bunny, Emmanuel Phillips Fox, Bessie Davidson and their circle.'¹⁴ Miller also states that artists 'kept abreast of European developments and adapted them to suit local conditions.'¹⁵ It is clear that Aline Cusack sought to do this in her own work. She had trained in Paris and London between 1906-7 and would have been cognisant of this major trend in art.



Lucien Henry, *Australian Terrier on a packing crate in garden* 1890, oil on board, 38.5 x 55 cm, reproduced in *Dogs in Australian Art* (2012) by Steven Miller, page 43

The dog in Cusack's painting is likely to be an Australian Terrier. It closely resembles the dog painted by Lucien Henry in *Australian Terrier on a packing crate in garden* 1890, referenced in Miller's book.¹⁶ The Australian Terrier was being developed in the 1890s and was not recognised as a breed until 1933.¹⁷ The breed of the dog is an important element of the painting and adds further interest to the story of *Pat*. *Pat* was painted in 1911, a time when the breed was still being developed and finessed. Miller notes that this breed is closely connected with the famous Australian impressionist movement, the Heidelberg School of artists, as it was being developed in Heidelberg itself.¹⁸

Charles Conder, one of the Heidelberg School artists, painted an Australian Terrier in his work *How we lost poor Flossie* 1889, which was exhibited in the famous 9 x 5 Impressions exhibition in Melbourne. Miller notes that though the painting has been misinterpreted previously, the content of Conder's work is a confrontation between Flossie, a "new-breed" Australian Terrier, and an English Fox Terrier. Miller posits that the painting points to the struggle Australian breeds had in gaining 'their place in national life and affections.'¹⁹ If Cusack's *Pat* is also an Australian Terrier it adds the painting to this conversation around the breed, especially since the painting travelled to the UK where people may have become acquainted with the breed through it.

In 1906-1907 Aline Cusack was a student at Frank Calderon's London School of Animal Painting. At the school she would have

created works directly from live animal subjects. Calderon's school must have been something to behold.²⁰ A 1913 article in the *Christian Science Monitor* offers an insight into what the school would have been like for Cusack during her studies. It states that the school was located in Kensington, London, nearby the zoological gardens, that 'models are plenteous in that neighbourhood'²¹ and that Calderon:

[insisted] that pictures of animals should represent what the animals themselves represent. That is to say, that a picture of a dog should stand upon its merits as the picture of a dog, not as some sentimental human being disguised as a dog.²²

It appears Calderon's lessons influenced the way in which Cusack decided to paint the dog *Pat*. The painting itself is of a sparkly eyed, alert little dog with a scruffy bit of tawny fur around its neck. It has endearing floppy ears and distinctive white eyebrows and white fur highlighting its facial features. It is painted in warm tones and the rich dark brown background and frame draws attention to the white sections of fur on dog's face, neck and chest. It looks directly at us as the viewer as if ready to play or to garner our attention. The dog represents itself, nothing more or less. The way it is framed with its oval inner frame creates the feeling of a keepsake. It is a relatively small work, 31.3 x 25.7 cm (panel), 53.2 x 47.5 cm (framed) and is oil on canvas on board, signed and dated lower left (under the mount), Aline Cusack 1911.

ANIMALS PAINTED FOR WHAT THEY ARE IN LONDON SCHOOL. ENGLISH ARTIST ...
(Special to the Monitor)
The Christian Science Monitor (1906); Mar 25, 1913;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Christian Science Monitor
pg. 1

ANIMALS PAINTED FOR WHAT THEY ARE IN LONDON SCHOOL

Founder of Institution Which Follows Unique Lines Talks of Its History and Success and Explains the Necessities of Depicting Four-Footed Creatures Realistically

(Copyright by Turner's Pictorial Press)

Frank Calderon's school of animal painting, showing equine model and class in studio at work

(Special to the Monitor)
LONDON—St. Mary Abchurch place, Kensington, is a pleasant little back-water off one of the main streets of London traffic, where there is a small colony of artist studios, amongst which is the group of buildings, picturesque in spite of its modernity, comprising the London school of animal painting.

A representative of The Christian Science Monitor called there and was conducted over the school by the painter, Mr. Frank Calderon, who related the history of the institution from its first inception up to the present day. It owes its existence to the initiative of Mr. Calderon himself, who first established it nearly 20 years ago.

The landings were then in Baker street, and there the school flourished successfully for 10 years, in spite of some disadvantages, chief amongst which was the fact that the quarters were not originally intended for this sort of thing. Encouraged by his success, however, Mr. Calderon planned and built under his own direction the present commodious studios, into which the school moved in the early part of last year. But if Baker street had some disadvantages it had also some advantages. Models are plentiful in that neighborhood. The zoological gardens are close by and the Albany

English Artist Whose School Is Devoted to Painting Animal Pictures

banes. The picture is full of life, vigor and movement. The whole thing, head, harness and all, was painted in a London studio. Occasionally a model was employed, a professional model who could not rise come and sat on a toy horse that was never intended to go.

Another point upon which Mr. Calderon insisted, and that a very important one, is that pictures of animals should represent what the animals themselves represent. That is to say, that a picture of a dog should stand upon its merits as the picture of a dog, not as some sentimental human being disguised as a dog. A thing that is very often done and that accounted largely for London's great success. "A distinguished member of the London Society" recently exhibited a New-England dog at his best, as a dog. It is a pretty creature, the nature of whose nature seems to have entered its bones. But Londoner

"Animals painted for what they are in London school" in *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 March 1913

Before acquisition for the Into the Light Collection, the painting underwent conservation assessment in the UK. London conservator Alan Bradford found it to be in good condition except for 'extensive bloom over the image, readily apparent under glass.'²³ Once in Australia, conservator Anne Gaulton carried out conservation work on *Pat*. She conjectures that Aline Cusack is likely to have:

...painted the work with a rectangular format, making a small canvas work that was stretched over a strainer or stretcher. Probably at the time of the Royal Art Society exhibition (see label on verso) the artist decided to frame the work using a portrait oval mount, a silver gilded inner slip and two timber outer frames. The small canvas work was removed from its auxiliary support, cut down and attached to cardboard.²⁴

Anne Gaulton's observation suggests that Cusack may have made *Pat* into a more saleable commodity by framing it in such a way. It was popular in the Edwardian era to mount photos and paintings in an 18th century or rococo fashion. She notes the importance of retaining the original label on the verso of the artwork. The label on the painting clearly states Cusack's name,

the name of her studio and the title of the work as well as faint text establishing the work was exhibited at a Royal Art Society Annual Exhibition.

This painting provides a crucial link to Cusack's career as an animal painter following her training at the Frank Calderon School, and an insight into the importance of this genre in Australian art. It is incredible that this small painting has come to light and been linked to Aline Cusack and her legacy, and that *Pat* has made this journey back home. It demonstrates the importance of preserving artworks in order to gain insights into the stories of artists and their works. If *Pat* had not been kept so lovingly by the Tuck family all these years, we would not have this story to share. And if Sheila hadn't commissioned Alexandra Mitchell to research and write on Cusack previously, John Tuck would never have known why this painting was of such interest. It is wonderful that *Pat* has returned to Sydney to join the Into the Light Collection, where it will be united with other works by Aline Cusack, a significant Australian woman artist about whose life and art we now have a much better understanding.

Alexandra Mitchell

Notes

1 Alexandra Mitchell, 'Artist Spotlight: Aline Cusack (1867-1949)', Sheila Foundation Blog, 13 July 2020, <https://sheila.org.au/blog/artist-spotlight-aline-cusack/> accessed 16 December 2022.

2 Email correspondence with John Tuck, 2 September 2022.

3 'The Countess of Dudley's Reception', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 August 1908, p. 4.

4 'Personal', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 June 1921, p. 4.

5 Email correspondence with John Tuck, 2 September 2022.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 'Royal Art Society', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 September 1911, p. 12.

9 Many other artists also painted dogs and animals. For further paintings of dogs see Douglas Fry's *My best friend*, 1910 at <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/592/> accessed 16 December 2022; and Justine Song Kim's *Chums*, 1911 at <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/345.2016/> accessed 16 December 2022.

10 Colin Laverty, *Pastures and Pastimes: An Exhibition of Australian Racing, Sporting and Animal Pictures of the 19th century*, The Ministry, Melbourne, 1983, p. 6.

11 Steven Miller, *Dogs in Australian Art: A New History of Antipodean Creativity*, Wakefield Press, Sydney, 2012, pp. 1-187.

12 Steven Miller, *Dogs in Australian Art*, p. 10.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Lucien Henry, *Australian Terrier on a packing crate in garden*, 1890 pictured in *ibid*, p. 40.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid, p. 9.

19 Ibid.

20 For further reading about Frank Calderon's School of Animal Painting see Lenore Van der Veer, 'A School for Animal Painting', *Strand Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly*, August 1901.

21 'Animals Painted for What they are in London School: English Artist Whose School Is Devoted to Painting Animal Pictures', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 March 1913.

22 Ibid.

23 Letter from Alan Bradford, 16 November 2021.

24 Anne Gaulton, Condition and Treatment Report, 18 January 2022.



Aline Cusack, *Pat* 1911 in its original frame

Daisy Rossi (1879-1974)

My landscapes and flowers are all painted out of doors. [...] so many delightful subtleties of nature are lost when working within walls. In inspired moments of glorious endeavour, nothing daunts me.¹

Daisy Rossi

Daisy Rossi's 1911 painting of twisted paperbarks in the river on the western edge of the Western Australian wheatbelt brings much to light. *Fairy Waters, Hawkhurst* is a fine example of Rossi's impressionistic landscape painting en plein air. It also touches on webs of professional, political, and personal connection in the artist's milieu in Perth in the early 20th century, and documents a scene profoundly altered since the day Rossi set up her easel on the bank of the Avon River.

Painter, teacher and critic, Daisy Rossi grew up in South Australia. Her parents encouraged her enthusiasm for art, and she recalled that, 'As a little child I would easily forego any pleasure to stay at home and draw from simple subjects set by my mother.'²

Following private tuition from French painter Berthe Mouchette and studies at the Adelaide School of Design, Painting and Technical Arts, Rossi moved to Western Australia in 1905, at the age of 26. That same year, she established her professional presence in Perth by exhibiting at the Karrakatta Club, Australia's longest-established club for women.³ Among the women whose presence was noted at the exhibition was a Miss Fuller;⁴ perhaps Florence Fuller, a landscapist and portraitist who had arrived in Perth the previous year. An established artist, Fuller had trained in Melbourne and Paris, and exhibited at London's Royal Academy and the Paris Salon.⁵ Daisy Rossi took the opportunity to study under Fuller in Perth. One photograph of Fuller instructing Rossi at the easel displays the elaborate coiffure and constricted costume of the day, while another image, captured outdoors, offers a more candid insight into the collaboration of two women working for their living.



Florence Fuller (left) and Daisy Rossi in the studio, Perth c1906. Collection of Simon West.



Daisy Rossi (seated) and Florence Fuller. Collection of Simon West

A painting of one of the state's most prominent citizens launched Rossi as a professional portraitist in Perth. George Temple-Poole had arrived in Western Australia in 1885 as superintendent of public works.⁶ He was the architect of an array of important buildings in the boom years of the goldrush, and was a significant figure in the development of Kings Park on Mount Eliza, a large swathe of natural bush and botanic garden rising above the city, and a place long treasured by the Noongar people.

Temple-Poole was also a painter, and a founder, in 1889, of the Wilgie Sketching Club, which later became the Western Australian Society of Arts. At the Society's inaugural meeting in 1896, the 'about fifty gentlemen' present moved 'that Ladies be admitted as well as Gentlemen to full membership.' Rossi joined the Society when she arrived in Perth in 1905.⁷

Her later professional pursuits as an art critic included a review of the Society's annual exhibition in 1912. Given the social constraints of a small community of artists, it is a fearless piece of work. In it, Rossi contends that the Society 'hangs much that is absolutely bad', and declares that, 'if an artist is unafraid to show his or her work, he or she should possess the courage to face a fair criticism.' Rossi does afford unreserved praise to an oil exhibited by George Pitt Morrison, and she is also very taken with Temple-Poole's watercolours:

The drawing is above average, and the colour restrained. The stones reveal much, yet subtly suggest more. They speak. [...] Mr Poole uses watercolours as they should be used, with a flow, and unhesitating touch, so free from the struggle after excessive detail which so often mars an amateur's work.⁸

While the extent of Rossi's output as a critic was sometimes constrained by her own participation in exhibitions under review, she made a significant contribution for several decades as a



Daisy Rossi, *Fairy Waters*, Hawkhurst 1911, oil on canvas, 17.7 x 35.7 cm
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation

writer and broadcaster. Publications to which she contributed included *The West Australian*, *The Sunday Times*, *Art in Australia*, London art journal *The Studio* and Sydney's *Salon*.⁹ Rossi asserted, 'Art criticism is not a cult, you know; it is knowledge – knowledge in some degree of the absolute good [...]'.¹⁰

In 1909, Daisy Rossi travelled to London to study under Walter Donne, took anatomy classes at the Royal Academy and visited Paris.¹¹ Her work as a portrait painter in Perth had financed the trip, but on arrival home in 1910, her focus shifted:

On my return to Perth from Europe, I was freshly impressed with the unique splendour of our bush flora [...] I think I have evolved a way of painting them entirely my own, born of my love for them [...].¹²

Rossi was also a teacher and was the first art instructor at Perth's Free Kindergarten, established in 1912 to realise the Kindergarten Union of Western Australia's ambition to provide early education, particularly for children living in poverty.¹³ Daisy Rossi's contribution to 'this admirably good work' was to develop 'a system of my own' to teach drawing and perspective to small children.¹⁴ Rossi also took adult students for private lessons and, in 1912, joined the staff of the Fremantle Technical School, where she would work for six years, occasionally taking students on field trips for a fortnight's work amongst nature.¹⁵

In 1918, at the age of 39, Daisy Rossi married her long-time colleague in the Western Australian Society of Arts, George Temple-Poole, the eminent architect whose portrait she had painted soon after arriving in Perth, and whose watercolours she had so praised. Temple-Poole designed a new house for them both on an acre of bush on a crest at Crawley, looking over the Swan River on one side, and Kings Park on the other. The site was chosen 'because it had three huge old tuart trees, and the house was placed to catch their afternoon shadows on the white walls [...].'¹⁶ Rossi looked forward to her new studio there, 'where I shall be surrounded by the beautiful bush and can paint to my heart's desire.'¹⁷

Rossi's daughter Iseult was born in 1920. In the years that followed, the artist's professional practice was overtaken by her embrace of the roles of mother and wife, and eyesight problems contributed to a decline in her output. As she wrote in 1928, '[...] I have not been working the last few years. My private and social life, and the care of my little daughter having absorbed all my interests and energy.'¹⁸ Her husband died in 1934, and whilst Rossi remained engaged in the arts milieu, it was not until the early 1950s that she resumed her career, painting landscapes and flower studies.¹⁹ Rossi spent her final years living in Victoria with her daughter and died in 1974, at the age of 95.²⁰

One of Rossi's best known works is a portrait completed in her early years in Perth. The subject was a friend Rossi had known from her youth in South Australia, Bessie Rischbieth. Rischbieth was an influential feminist and vigorous activist. Her work in pursuit of social justice, notably through the Women's Service Guilds and the Australian Federation of Women Voters, focused on the rights, status and welfare of women and children.²¹

Rischbieth, who, like Rossi, had studied art and design in Adelaide, was also an accomplished craftswoman, and exhibited in Perth as a practitioner of the applied arts. Rossi's portrait captures a duality in this reformer and leader: an elegant, wealthy

doyenne of Perth society who loved fashionable clothes and beautiful things, and the measured gaze of a woman whose life was committed to community service and advocacy.

There is little glamour and much determination in another famous image of Bessie Rischbieth. At the age of 89, in 1964, she stood barefoot in front of a tip truck as the Swan River's Mounts Bay foreshore was being sacrificed for freeway development. That battle was lost, but the figure in front of the machinery defending the natural landscape from destruction is a precursor to the direct action embraced by West Australian conservationists who followed.

Earlier, in the 1950s, Rischbieth had led the successful drive to prevent the clearing of Kings Park bushland for the construction of an Olympic-sized swimming pool.²² In a letter to *The West Australian*, Daisy Rossi lent her voice to the campaign to save the precious remnant bush:

[...] there are still acres and acres of land suitable for an Olympic pool without desecrating our "indigenous" park, which belongs as it now is to all sections of the public.²³



Daisy Rossi, *Portrait of Bessie Rischbieth* c1909, oil on canvas, 128.2 x 90.2 cm, The State Art Collection, The Art Gallery of Western Australia. Gift of The Women's Service Guild of Western Australia, 1995.



'Prominent issues campaigner Bessie Rischbieth, barefoot with beads and brolly, wades into the Swan River in 1964 to protest against reclamation for the Mitchell Freeway', *The West Australian*, 21 April 1964, courtesy Westpix

Daisy Rossi's connection with the bush is palpable in the work acquired by the Sheila Foundation, *Fairy Waters, Hawkhurst*. To be among a stand of paperbarks in its natural state is to experience a particular atmosphere: a cool stillness; a graceful intertwining of curved shapes; an enchantment of soft colour and the tactile textures of the bark's layered flakes.

Rossi captures that atmosphere with intimacy and immediacy. The trunks, in cream, pink, mauve, yellow, grey, deep brown and splashes of crimson, twist as they rise from the water. On the large trunk to the left, paint is generously applied in angled patches evoking the tree's thickly layered cladding, and the etched striations express the fissures of the bark. Rossi's grandson Simon West says that in his grandmother's paintings, 'the trunks have got a personality [...] in general, our trees are very complicated shapes, and she loved it.'²⁴

Vigorous daubs across the top of the picture evoke the massed foliage. It is spring (the painting shows an October date on the back), so the trees may be bearing their creamy yellow flowers. Vertical patches of colour, from forest green to a playful baby blue, describe the vegetation at the water's edge, as the artist sets down her impressions of the light's interaction with the scene. A grove of paperbarks indicates the presence of water,

and the pool's surface occupies much of the image: horizontal strokes, from pink and violet to olive and grey, denote depth, reflection and shadow.

Given the title of the painting, the nature of the vegetation and the artist's personal connections with the property named Hawkhurst, it is possible to suggest where Rossi may have been when she painted the paperbarks in the water.

In 1907, an article in *The Western Mail* notes the purchase by Henry Wills & Co. of the Hawkhurst property, five miles east of York, and describes the river pool behind the homestead:

Hawkhurst Homestead [is] a white, one-storied building shadowed by sheltering trees [...]. The river flows just behind the house, opening out into a wide, deep pool, whereon a little fleet of snowy ducks paddle contentedly to and fro, and dwarf paper-bark trees trail their branches in the clear water, which reflects every leaf and bough upon its un-ruffled, mirror-like surface.²⁵

Hawkhurst's new owner was the merchant and grazier Henry Wills Rischbieth, husband of Rossi's activist friend Bessie Rischbieth. That Rossi went to Hawkhurst after her return from Europe in 1910 is evident in the catalogue of the Western Australian Society of Arts exhibition of February 1911. Rossi had the largest number of works in the show, and among the ten oils she presented were three paintings executed in York, including *Hawkhurst (York)* and *Fairy Waters (Hawkhurst)*, each priced at eight pounds and eight shillings.²⁶ Later that year the artist returned to York and painted the work now in the Sheila Foundation collection. Its title, *Fairy Waters, Hawkhurst*, differs slightly from that of the earlier work, and it is dated 14 October 1911.

Since the late 1920s, Hawkhurst has been in the hands of the Boyle family. The homestead that stood when Henry Wills & Co. owned the property was destroyed by fire; some mud bricks and palm trees remain to mark the spot. The broad pool below is one of a series of river pools along the Avon. Hawkhurst's owner David Boyle remembers swimming there as a child: 'I couldn't swim down to the depth of it because there was too much pressure on the ears, but now it's only a couple of feet deep.' Boyle recalls seeing the bulldozers in the river in the late sixties or early seventies, undertaking:

what they call river training. People used to get flooded all the time and they wanted to let the water get away, so they cleared a channel through the trees [...] and all the big pools along the river became silted.'

David Boyle says there are still paperbarks, flooded gums and York gums along the river, but 'a lot of the paperbarks that would have been in the pool have been buried under dirt.'²⁷

Another of the Boyle farming family, Peter Boyle, says:

It's very salty. There's no fish left in the river or anything like that. [...] Even in the bush the water table's rising. Every inch of rain puts something like ten kilos of salt on your soil. And when the water table rises, it causes it to evaporate and you lose good farming country.'²⁸

The journalist who had written about Hawkhurst in 1907 returned the following year, and observed how the land was changing:

[...]At Hawkhurst, about fifteen hundred acres have been grubbed this year; nine hundred are under crop, out of a total acreage of between four and five thousand. Looking north and east from the heights of the wooded hills, rosy with everlastings that sentinel the verdant valley, the eye encounters wide stretches of emerald wheat damascened with the pale gold of luxuriant Cape weed, [...] and then belts of grey, spectral trees, ring-barked and ready for sacrifice, the remnants of primeval forest-lands, ever dwindling year by year as settlement advances, and in place of tangled, trackless bush are seen green, fruitful clearings, rich virgin soil ploughed, harrowed, and sown [...].²⁹

Daisy Rossi's painting of a river pool on the Avon is not only an image of natural beauty, but a powerful piece of information. Rossi's work, and that of her fellow West Australian landscapists and flower painters, adds to the environmental and historical record. The very act of painting plants and natural places espouses a treasuring of such things, particularly in a part of the world where extraordinary biodiversity has collided with the demands of European occupation.

The environmental scientist George Seddon touched on the role of art in understanding how those with far-flung origins might belong in the land:

The enduring form of possession is imaginative possession, which is fed by knowledge, understanding, associations, stories and images, affections and, finally, incorporation of the environment into the self [...] we have alighted rather than settled. It takes time, but we have made a beginning.³⁰

At Hawkhurst, Daisy Rossi saw a scene of such enchantment that she called it *Fairy Waters*. Standing on the riverbank, a 32-year-old, independent, professional woman who loves the bush is painting for her living; taking imaginative possession of the pool and the paperbarks, and, in her own way, making a beginning.

Robyn Johnston

The author is indebted to Shirley Daffen and Christobel Bennett, whose earlier research greatly informed this essay, and is grateful for the generous collaboration of Daisy Rossi's grandson Simon West, and Peter and David Boyle of Hawkhurst, York.



Daisy Rossi painting en plein air. Collection of Simon West.

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Gladys Laycock (1882-1959)

Gladys Laycock was born in 1882 in inner Sydney to Thomas and Elizabeth Laycock. Her father filed for bankruptcy twice, once in 1880¹ and again in 1890², suggesting that Laycock's childhood may have been difficult and financially unstable. This origin story represents a significant break from the circumstances of many Australian women artists from the late 19th to early 20th centuries, who were often born into affluent families that could afford to finance their daughters' artistic endeavours. Women born into such families, such as Adelaide Ironside and Jane Sutherland, were afforded a certain amount of economic freedom that increased the extent to which they could experiment and be creative with their art. Those who were not as fortunate, such as Gladys Laycock, had to be conscious of the interests of the consumer and in what areas public demand for art lay. In the early 20th century, fields of art practice with a consistent public following included commercial art, the production of homewares and consumer goods, and embroidery. Miniature portraits, Laycock's primary medium, were functional objects used to remember a loved one that would have provided her with a relatively stable customer base. Laycock studied in London at the Heatherley School of Fine Art and in Paris under Senor Seniorina.³ This period of overseas travel suggests she had access to some funds or financial support, perhaps as a result of her early commissions or due to a change in her family's finances. She first exhibited work as an artist in 1907 with the Women's Work Exhibition.⁴

The first significant record of Laycock involves her role as the principal witness in a 1908 art forgery case against John Charles Lovell, David Andrews and George Cousins. Lovell owned Lovell and Co, a business with showrooms in George Street that sold expensive home decor such as rare furniture, china and artworks. An advertisement placed in the *Sunday Times* in 1895 boasts that their wares include 'works of art by old masters, some of which are very valuable'.⁵



MISS GLADYS LAYCOCK,
"Sophia."

Gladys Laycock pictured at the Sydney Literary Ball in *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 22 May 1907

Laycock was commissioned by Lovell to paint portraits of Captain James Cook, Governor Arthur Phillip and Sir Joseph Banks.⁶ The works were copies of images from the *Picturesque Atlas*, with Laycock stating that she produced approximately 20 copies. She testified that Lovell instructed her to paint the initials "H.R." on the works. F G Waley purchased one of the works in 1906 for 45 pounds, and was informed by Andrews that the artist was Sir Martin Archer Shee, the work dated to approximately 1707 and had belonged to the Duke of Edinburgh.⁷ Andrews also attempted to sell the copies to the National Art Gallery and Mitchell Library, but the library's Principal Librarian F M Bladen suspected they were fakes and contacted the police.⁸ The first trial resulted in a hung jury, with the outcome of the second unclear.⁹

This trial provides evidence of the esteem in which Laycock's artistic talents were held by members of the Sydney art community (even at this incredibly early point in her career). Lovell, an established art dealer, believed that her works were of sufficient quality to be passed off as those of old masters. The trial also speaks to Laycock's personal ethics and courage. Beginning one's career by challenging established members of the institution she wanted to become a part of would likely cause friction and scandal. Lovell was presumably surprised at the strength of character of this unknown woman artist.

SPURIOUS "OLD MASTERS."

A CHARGE OF CONSPIRACY.

Sydney, February 13.
Three men, John Charles Lovell, John George Cousins, and David Andrews, were placed on trial to-day charged with conspiracy. The Crown case was that the three accused conspired together in the manufacture of certain bogus miniatures, and then passed them off as the work of old masters, with the result that several city business men were victimised.

Gladys Laycock, a miniature painter, stated that she met Lovell and Cousins 15 months ago. She had made about 20 miniatures for the accused, all being copies. The miniature produced was, she thought, made at the request of Lovell, who sent a book to her studio, containing originals to copy from. She painted Captain Cook, Sir Joseph Banks, and Governor Philip, and she put the initials H.R. in the corner on being asked to do so.

The jury were locked up for the night.

Spurious "Old Masters": A Charge of Conspiracy in *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 14 February 1908

In 1908 Laycock had a studio in the Strand Arcade where she painted miniatures on commission.¹⁰ Miniature portraiture dates back to the Renaissance, where it was a highly respected artistic practice aimed at aristocratic and royal clients.¹¹ The aim was to provide an individual with a keepsake or memento of a loved one that could be displayed in one's home. While originally



Gladys Laycock, *A Gentleman (Colin Young Caird)* 1926, watercolour on ivory, 12.8 x 10.1 cm
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation

executed by leading male artists, women began to take up the practice in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was considered a good fit for the talents of the “weaker” sex, demanding an attention to detail, meticulousness and amount of time apparently only possessed by women.¹²

The history of miniatures in Australia is dominated by women artists. The Art Gallery of New South Wales’ miniature collection in 1906 included five works, four of which were by Australian women.¹³ In 1926 all 17 of their Australian miniatures were by female artists.¹⁴ From c1900-1930 the National Gallery of Victoria also collected miniature works, mostly by Australian women. In no other fine art medium were women so heavily represented in early 20th century Australia. The high status in which this medium was held is evidenced by the range of sitters attracted to the genre, with Laycock commissioned to paint miniature portraits of General Sir William Birdwood and Lieutenant General Sir John Monash. The investment of the AGNSW and NGV in this medium provides further confirmation of the cultural resonance of these objects.

Today the AGNSW has 20 miniature works by Australian artists, all painted by women. Highlights of the collection include works by Bernice Edwell (1880-1962), Bess Norriss Tait (1878-1939) and Florence Rodway (1881-1971). Of particular interest is a work simply entitled *Me* by Chinese-Australian artist Justine Kong Sing (1868-1960). Kong Sing is an incredibly rare example of a woman of colour who achieved success as an artist in 19th century Australia. She exhibited with the Royal Art Society of New South Wales in 1905 and from 1909-11, and at the Royal Academy in London from 1915-16.¹⁵ This work was shown at the Paris Salon of 1912.



Gladys Laycock, *The Kiss* c1922, watercolour, opaque white, gum on ivory, 9.6 x 8.3 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales

Laycock has an extensive exhibiting history, exhibiting with the Royal Art Society from 1903-1925, at the Women Painters' Exhibition in Sydney in 1919 and the Society of Women Artists' Exhibition in London in 1937.¹⁶ In an era when women artists were often criticised as second-rate amateurs, Laycock's work was singled out for praise as 'little treasures of art...her miniatures are, as usual, exquisite'.¹⁷

In 1925 she married Darcy W T Osborne. It is probably no coincidence that this year also signified a break in her artistic career. In line with the social expectations of women in early 20th century Australian society, she likely relinquished her profession as an artist to focus on her duties as a wife. A *Gentleman (Colin Young Caird)* was completed in 1926, perhaps a final commission from a wealthy patron to improve her finances before settling into married life. Osborne died six years later in 1931, leaving Laycock a widow.¹⁸ The couple had no children and Laycock never remarried.

The subject of Laycock's miniature is Colin Young Caird, a wealthy Scottish-Australian businessman and patron of the arts. While the work was completed in 1926, the label on the back suggests Laycock was working from a photograph of Caird from 1898. The image of a 60-year-old Caird, just two years away from death, commissioning an artist to paint his portrait using a photograph of himself as a 32-year-old man is one that suggests a level of vanity and concern with his appearance. Caird was clearly conscious of how he would be viewed by others and wished to preserve a younger version of himself. From the waist up he is a typical Australian businessman, dressed in a black velvet dress jacket, crisp white shirt and matching bowtie. His Scottish heritage is evident from the waist down with the addition of a richly patterned kilt, dress sporran and a plaid that wraps around his left shoulder and arm. A reference to the work can be found in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Friday 8 May 1931, with a review of an annual exhibition of women painters noting 'an uncatalogued portrait of a Scotsman in full Highland dress, painted on ivory, by Gladys Laycock, which shows delicate and artistic workmanship'.¹⁹

Upon his death in 1928 Caird left significant amounts of his fortune to artistic institutions and endeavours. He gifted his Double Bay mansion Innelian, its contents and 4,000 pounds to the then-President of the Sydney Society of Women Painters, Mrs Marie Irvine.²⁰ Irvine was present at the exhibition where Laycock's miniature of Caird was shown. During his life Caird was a strong supporter of the Society and often hosted parties for women artists at his home. Upon his death, Irvine mourned him as an art lover who 'developed to a remarkable degree the collector spirit'.²¹ She also references a 'fine portrait' of Caird painted by the previously mentioned miniaturist Florence Rodway. He left 1,000 pounds to the McLean Museum and Art Gallery in Greenock, Scotland (the city where his father was born), which allowed for the purchase of more than 40 works of art.²² At the time of his death, his estate was valued at 45,785 pounds. It would be worth almost four million Australian dollars today.

During her lifetime, Gladys Laycock developed a reputation as a talented portraitist and miniaturist. In 1921 *The Sun* newspaper referred to her as a 'brilliant young Australian with a London and Paris art reputation'.²³ In the same year she was commissioned to paint miniature portraits of 63 Australian generals including General Sir William Birdwood and Lieutenant General Sir John Monash.²⁴ It is unclear if the portraits ever came to fruition. The

National Art Gallery of New South Wales (known today as the Art Gallery of NSW) purchased at least five of her works: one in 1913 for eight pounds 8 shillings, one in 1914 for 10 guineas, *The kiss* and *The sisters* in 1916 for 25 and 20 guineas respectively, and *Study of a head* in 1919 for 10 guineas.

In the same era, the Art Gallery's negligence led to the destruction of three paintings by Australia's first international woman artist Adelaide Ironside. Gifted to the gallery by her mother after her death, when Francis Adams found them two decades later they were 'housed in a sort of shed behind the temporary Picture Gallery. On one side of it the windows were open to the dust and rain'.²⁵ This neglect shows a great difference in the treatment and perceived worth of works by different women artists by artistic institutions during this period. Today Laycock has three works in the Gallery's collection, including the aforementioned *The kiss* and *The sisters*.

While being part of the collection of a major Australian art gallery is an important achievement for women artists that highlights the quality of their work and the high regard in which they were held, it is questionable how beneficial such purchases are without additional exhibition and research. The AGNSW's three Laycock miniatures have been exhibited once since they were purchased and have not been accorded anywhere near the same prominence as works by Australian men.

Gladys Laycock died in 1958 and is buried in the same cemetery as her husband.

Annabelle Mentzines

WOMAN JOURNALIST'S WINDFALL

Marie Irvine Gets £4000 and a Sydney Mansion

ENTERPRISING QUEENSLANDER'S VERSATILE CAREER

MR. CAIRD left an estate the net value of which was £22,834. Of this he left £4000 to Mrs. Irvine and his property, "In-nellan," Double Bay, together with all the furniture and other contents, as an expression of his "long and sincere friendship high regard and esteem" for Mrs. Irvine.

Included in the bequest is a highly prized art collec-

NOW THAT MRS. MARIE E. IRVINE, one time journalist, of Craigend Street, Darlinghurst, has received a substantial windfall in the shape of £4000 and a valuable house property at Double Bay, in all probability her pen will be used not to chronicle social functions, but to issue or accept invitations to gatherings of this kind.

AT ONE BOUND Mrs. Irvine has passed from a recorder of news to that happy state of being news—social news—herself.

THIS TRANSFORMATION has been effected by the will of the late Colin Young Caird, aged 62, bachelor, an investor within business hours and a dilettante without, who died last May.

went over to the "Daily Mail."

Marie Irvine then came to Sydney. For a while she was on the staff of the "Sun," and then went down the street to the "Daily Telegraph." Her husband died somewhere abroad.

She went to England and was there during the war years. On her return to Australia she became associated with a

Woman Journalist's Windfall: Marie Irvine Gets £4000 and a Sydney Mansion in *Smith's Weekly*, 6 October 1928

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Elma Roach (1897-1942)

Sanary, South of France is a relaxing picture: still, and beautiful in its vision of the French coastal towns and villages that inspired generations of women artists and expatriates from the 1920s – and notably among them Elma Roach. The work recalls the views of picturesque buildings and remote landscapes embodied by Australian artists like Stella Bowen, Madge Freeman, Isabel Hunter Tweddle and Dora Wilson: en plein air using impressionist methods of light, sketchy brushstrokes. Yet the leisurely feeling of this painting as it captures a time of holiday and pleasure veils a much more serious story about women artists' commitment to working overseas as professionals rather than hobbyists per se.

Elma Roach, or "Dinah" to her friends, was born in Shepparton, Victoria in 1897 to a prominent family of writers and artists.¹ Her father was Charles Robert and her mother Cora Valentine Roach née Liardet.² She was a descendant of the 17th century diarist Sir John Evelyn, who first introduced mezzotint art to England.³ Her maternal great grandfather, Captain Wilbraham Liardet, was both a founder of Port Melbourne in 1839 and a watercolourist whose topographical sketches are regarded as important colonial artworks to this day.⁴ Forty-five of his watercolours are currently preserved in the State Library of Victoria collection.



Elma Roach pictured in *The Bulletin*, 11 November 1936

Roach attended the National Gallery School from 1913 to 1921. She won second prize for still-life work in 1917.⁵ Fellow artists to graduate from the school were Ada Wright, Adelaide E. Perry, Ethel Spowers and Madge (Francis Margot) Freeman, who became a lifelong friend. Roach's training under Lindsay Bernard Hall and Frederick McCubbin speaks to the inter-generational links between Into the Light artists Jo Sweatman, Janie Wilkinson Whyte and Elsie Barlow, who shared mentors at the School.⁶ From 1916 she also trained under William McInnes, who taught her on a more permanent basis from 1918 after McCubbin's death and his formal appointment to the position of drawing master in 1920.

In the absence of details surrounding Roach's time at the School, it is difficult to gauge what aspects of Hall, McCubbin and McInnes' respective teachings she did or did not agree with, and thus influenced her later work. However, she shared the progressive vision led by Hall in particular, who dismissed subject painting and its traditional emphasis on illusionism and moral storytelling.⁷ Amongst his students, Hall discouraged the use of dark, 'stage-like' interiors and contrived poses typical of the work of George Folingsby who embodied the 'dull mediocrity of the art establishment'.⁸ Hall was a modern painter and the style of his teaching was innovative and informed by sources which were multiple and global. He shared his interest in pure tone with pupils Max Meldrum, Hugh Ramsay and Alice M. Bale, much as he was inspired by impressionism under Manet and Whistler, Aestheticism and Art Nouveau, and the British and American Symbolist movements under George Frederick Watts and Elihu Vedder.⁹ His textual sources ranged from the writings of Pater and Ruskin to the world of 12th century Persian mystical poetry.¹⁰

No doubt the very cosmopolitan art education Roach received under Hall played a significant role in cultivating her openness to art outside Australia. This was such that soon after her arrival in Paris in 1932, she remarked to the *Herald* that students on the whole were 'progressing and getting away from 'Victorianism' which ha[d] been such an enemy to Art' whilst being open to the 'modern art' of Van Gogh, Cézanne, Pissarro and Matisse, who were 'very much appreciated'.¹¹

Roach spent almost her entire working life and artistic career travelling abroad (leaving for Europe as early as 1923), but not before establishing her reputation in Melbourne's art circles. She, like others, demonstrates the way many women remained consciously connected to Australian art through their extensive networks and professional associations. In 1920, she joined the Victorian Artists Society (VAS) which was the first to exhibit her work when it showed *Malmsbury*.¹² Entries on her from the State Library of Victoria's index of VAS exhibitions do not account for the period between 1926-1929, when she travelled between Paris, Brittany and North Africa.¹³

In 1921, Roach held the first of two craft exhibitions with Madge Freeman. "Madgelma Ware" was shown in 1925 (solo) and 1936 (joint) and included hand-carved woodwork painted with



Elma Roach, *Sanary, South of France* 1934, oil on canvas, 37.7 x 45.9 cm,
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation

enamels to resemble glossy china.¹⁴ Designs included 'travelling mirrors, photograph frames, reading lamps, toilet sets and crinoline lady powder bowls' with fruits and floral patterns modelled on glass.¹⁵ Roach also exhibited her craft in 1927 with her sister at Cheyne Gallery and in 1928 with 50 of her watercolours at Margaret Maclean's.¹⁶ Roach's activities demonstrate how wood-working allowed women to thrive not only as artists, but entrepreneurs who could support themselves financially. In a review of her 1925 show, the *Herald* described them as 'two enterprising gallery students' who had found precisely that 'commercial avenue'.¹⁷ That Roach showed craftwork and watercolours in the same room (as she did in 1925) reflects this, as without a doubt she saw craft as a valid and legitimate part of her artmaking.

This is Elma Roach, a Melbourne girl who has made herself a place in the artistic world with her craftsmanship in stained wood. Her ware is known by its beautiful glaze. Candlesticks, boxes and the like decorated with floral designs and shining like glass are among her fancies. Just a month or two ago she returned from a three years' tour, chiefly on the Continent, and she has added to her repertoire designs in bas-relief and a fine French enamel finish. Though now known chiefly for her stained wood brie-à-brac, of which she is the originator here, she is also a painter, and some of her water-color sketches of scenes in Italy were hung at the last art show of the year at the Athenæum Gallery. While in France Elma had lessons at a famous arts and crafts school in Paris. She intends to hold an exhibition soon.



Elma Roach pictured in *The Bulletin*, 10 February 1927

In 1923, she joined the Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors (then the Women's Art Club). Fellow members included Jessie Traill, Clarice Beckett, Alice M. Bale and Ethel Spowers as well as Dora Wilson and Madge Freeman. Roach exhibited with the Society from 1923-24, 1927-28, 1933-38 and in 1940 at the Athenæum Gallery. Her oil paintings in the Society's 1936 exhibition were well-received, with *Herald* critic Basil Burdett singling out 'two fresh, trim little landscapes' for their 'refreshingly different' and 'sharp, clear-cut treatment'.¹⁸ She was also a member of the Lyceum Club, and her paintings

were among 60 works shown in a 1927 exhibition that featured Clara Southern, Jessie Traill, Wilson and Elsie Barlow.¹⁹ In 1940, she joined the Independent Group, where Burdett praised the 'developing painter' for a still-life study (catalogued as no. 39) that was 'excellent in balance and color'.²⁰ Six of her paintings were exhibited in this 1940 show.²¹

Roach exhibited watercolours with Madge Freeman in 1922 and May 1923 at the Fine Art Society's Gallery. The 1923 catalogue, held in the Victorian State Library, counts 33 of her works which featured landscapes at Longwarry, Mooroolbark and Malmesbury.²² She held two solo exhibitions: in May 1925 at the Melbourne Book Club, and in July 1927 at the Fine Art Gallery where she showed 68 works.²³ In 1930 and 1931, she exhibited with Harold Herbert and Blamire Young at Cheyne.²⁴ Though she exhibited oils in the late 10s and early 20s, watercolour had been her preferred medium. This was changing by the 1930s, as she began to paint more regularly in oils.

In 1932, she showed paintings alongside Wilson, Violet M. McInnes, Clifford Orme, Ernest Buckmaster and Victor Greenhalgh at Collins House.²⁵ In November 1938, one of her still-life oil paintings appeared in the Australian Academy Exhibition.²⁶ Reviews praised Roach for her execution of colour, which was described, albeit in generic terms as 'pleasant', 'delicate', 'dainty', 'facile' and 'charming'.²⁷ One critic went as far as to say that 'it would not be possible to mention Australian watercolourists who have a greater mastery over their medium than Miss Roach'.²⁸ The irony of this statement is that only ten works from her extensive oeuvre and even fewer watercolours have been represented in public collections.²⁹

Certainly Elma's exhibition history in the early 20s and 30s veils an artist who prioritised painting overseas. Between 1923 and 1926, she shared flats in London and Paris with Madge and a studio with Gwen Horne in Cornwall. In London in 1923, she trained under Kington Hammond, returning in 1930 to paint under Frank Bramley at the Grosvenor School of Modern Art.³⁰ The Grosvenor School in particular encouraged modernist experimentation from other women students like Ethel Spowers, whose linocut prints featuring avant-garde techniques such as rhythmic design have been recognised for their contribution to modern art and design in Australia.³¹

However, it was Paris that had the most profound impact on her practice, marking her encounter with the works of Van Gogh and the French Post-Impressionists who she would later cite as sources, and presenting opportunities to show her work at prestigious institutions including the Salon, the Salon des Tuileries and the Salon des Indépendants.³² Indeed it was the Paris that had emerged during the Belle Époque of the 1880s as a global centre for the arts and continued to attract visiting and aspiring students from London, Rome and America as well as Australia. Agnes Goodsir, Bessie Gibson and Kathleen O'Connor were among Australian students in the decades prior. Paris' status was propped up in its early days by attractions like the Louvre with its extensive collection of Italian paintings and sculptures gathered from Napoleonic conquests, the annual Salon exhibitions and as state-subsidised schools like the Beaux-Arts with its elite prize system based on the canonical model of representation (the nude and history painting being at the top).³³ Beyond the 'training, the criticism [and] the opportunities for life work', it was the milieu that attracted young people, and Elma found an unprecedented sense of freedom in *vie de Bohème*.³⁴ Here, she

perused the galleries and bookshops dotted on every picturesque corner of Montparnasse and Montmartre:

The art shops, too, are most awfully entertaining... art books, prints, paints, are artistically arranged and most tempting...there is a cafe called the "Coupole" where one takes coffee for an excuse to study the people, and students make quite a lot of money there sometimes sketching portraits.

Roach returned to Paris for the second time in 1931, sharing a studio with Madge and New Zealand artist Helen Stewart, who studied under Thea Proctor. Elma's account highlights the sense of emancipation experienced by women who shared studios and apartments, as social opportunities themselves became a source of new and foreign ideas:

[Our studio] is entered by a small courtyard which leads also to seven other studios. Most fascinating models from all corners of the globe find their way here.

Elma and Madge separated briefly in 1926, when Madge moved to North Africa to marry an English engineer. When he died of malaria shortly after in 1928, she returned to Melbourne while Elma stayed on to sketch with Lilian White in Concarneau, Brittany. When the two reconvened in Paris in 1931, they painted with the Polish artist Abram Adolphe Milich, while Helen Stewart studied under the French cubist André Lhote. The agency with which these women artists clearly made decisions about where and with whom they studied counters the idea that Australians' interest in French post-impressionism was the result of a faulty modernist education rather than a more active experimentation which saw them select from a range of sources.

Citing her enthusiasm for van Gogh and the French School, most scholars view Roach as a classical modernist.³⁹ Problematic however is the mythology that post-impressionism as expounded by its perceived forerunners (the so-called 'modernist trinity' of Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh) only appealed to Australians who failed to understand cubism, that is, the real, radical and legitimate modernism of artists like Braque and Picasso.⁴⁰ Helen Topliss in particular has blamed Australian students' conservatism on their study under either English artists with some form of Royal Academy training (who taught modernism via Anglo example), or French lightweights like Lhote who seemed to base their cubism on a system of classical geometry that remained ultimately sympathetic to the genres of the nude and the landscape.⁴¹

Elma's approach to modernism can be described as traditional to the extent that what she admired most about van Gogh, Matisse and Cézanne was their 'simplicity and beauty of color'.⁴² She expressed relief that in 1936, 'art in France [was] reverting to realism, after having discarded many other isms'.⁴³ Elma's was just one of many responses to Cézanne in particular, and which can be compared to contemporaries Grace Crowley and Anne Dangar. Crowley and Dangar's study under Lhote in 1927 and 1928 shaped what was a scientific interest in Cézanne's use of colour based on the ancient method of dynamic symmetry.⁴⁴ Their visits to his studio in Aix-en-Provence in 1926 inspired Dangar to study at the School of Cézanne, and Crowley to write lectures on academic cubism for the National Art School's journal.⁴⁵ Though Roach did not launch as consciously into the

mathematical aspects of Cézanne's study, she still found means of personal expression in his art. One only needs to compare her *Still Life – pomegranates and jug* 1935 with Cézanne's *Apples and Oranges* 1899 to appreciate his singular influence on her creative output.

That many women artists preferred to follow individual artists rather than movements explains what emerges as a pattern of women artists' tutelage under a male master or professional.⁴⁶ However, the reality was also that women who were also foreigners were more attentive and compliant than their male counterparts, not because of their gender or lack of skill, but because of their status as geographic outsiders who often relied on the names and associations of friends and contemporaries. As historian Siân Reynolds has explained, many of these women were prepared to 'start from scratch' as a testament to their willingness to remain students, 'not being in a hurry to exhibit at the Salon', as was the case for the so-called (male) 'roller through Paris'.⁴⁷ Not until 1930, more than a decade into her career, did Roach show at the Salon, and the same was true for the Royal Academy in London.⁴⁸



Elma Roach, *Still life – pomegranates and jug* c1935, oil on canvas, 46.3 x 55.3 cm, Castlemaine Art Museum

Content in her capabilities as a professional artist, it was maintaining her spirit of adventurousness that was her life's work. *Sanary, South of France* 1934, as it captures the natural beauty and charming architecture of the Cote d'Azur, was probably painted during the four-to-five-year period Elma travelled with Madge and Milich. Although purchased as *Sanary, South of France*, modern photographs taken from the jetty showing the same angle looking back to the palm trees on the Grand Marché confirm the location as Sanary. It is a straightforward picture as far as it attempts a realistic portrayal of the scene; the houses retain their form and the composition is evenly distributed if not entirely symmetrical. However, there is a balance between direct representation and abstraction as evidenced by the cloissonist outlines of the roof and the corners of the building which are emphasised discreetly for the sake of the formal qualities of the picture.

The sense of overall balance and harmony in this work reflects a classical interpretation of modernism that rather derives blended

boldness and spontaneity from colour applied in a mix of flat and blended strokes, and here, in soft contrasts of peach, blue and lilac. This rather ordinary street scene is not immediately topographically recognisable, just as Elma preferred to paint remote and unknown places, and yet it speaks profoundly to an artist who was intensely at home in France, painting 'what the other French artists painted' – sentiment, not sites.⁴⁹ In this way, Roach reflects those expatriate artists who were more interested in the 'free painting environment' offered by the gardens, nature and intimate old surrounds, rather than the 'iconic structures' of places like 'Notre Dame, the Louvre and the Seine', so telling of one's experience as a tourist and ultimately outsider.⁵⁰

What she rather creates here is a memorable iconography through colour and brushstroke, evoking time of day. The patches of lilac which appear to dissolve into sky, the shadows that make way for sunlight to the left of the frame, and the yellow highlights which mimic glare fractured through the trees all seem to indicate morning. There is an immediacy to this work which feels personal and becomes poignant as the last time Roach visited France, for she returned to Melbourne shortly thereafter in 1936.⁵¹ She painted mostly landscapes before sadly dying of cancer in 1942. Though she had the satisfaction of seeing her works acquired in her lifetime by the Art Gallery of New South Wales and Castlemaine and Geelong Galleries in the 1930s and 40s, her death at the age of 45 was widely reported and seen to have cut short an artistic career that was just beginning.⁵²

In 1943, the Independent Group held a Memorial Exhibition for her at the Athenaeum Gallery. Only seven of the works included were painted overseas, eclipsing much of her artistic achievement that occurred outside of Australia.⁵³ Fascinating to note however is that above these pictures hung a portrait of Roach titled *Dinah in Student Days*, painted by Dora Wilson:

Daffodils, rhododendrons, and massed flowers in low bowls stood on a table in front of a collection of Elma Roach's pictures, below Dora Wilson's picture of her... her pictures are as full of life as is the portrait, which Dora Wilson did when they were Gallery students together. The portrait catches Miss Roach's smile and is a fascinating study in greens and browns.⁵⁴

Though the current whereabouts of this portrait is unknown, it is no strange coincidence that the press comment of Roach's wearing green and characteristic smile corresponds with a recently surfaced portrait by Dora Wilson. Wilson's *Portrait of a lady in green*, was probably the work hung at her memorial, for photographs of Elma which capture this expression and her brunette hair styled into a shoulder bob correspond with both the



Dora Wilson, *Portrait of a lady in green* n.d., pastel on paper, 39.5 x 31.5 cm, courtesy Leonard Joel

subject's appearance and the press description. However, *Portrait of a Lady in Green* shows a later (and more glamorous) Elma; the green jersey with its plain, high-necked collar recalls the fashion of the 1930s and 40s, and the passport-style portrait with its high-colouring corresponds more with Wilson's pastels of the 1940s and 50s, when she worked closely with Janet Cumbrae-Stewart. That Wilson attended the Gallery School from 1901-1907 more than a decade before Elma, furthermore opens up the possibility that she painted her on more than one occasion. Nevertheless, the portrait is a testament to the impact Roach had on her close network of friends and artists, which deserves to be remembered along with her work.

Maria Karageorge

Notes

- 1 Jim Alexander, *Dora Wilson (1883-1946), Elma Roach (1897-1942), Eirene Mort (1879-1977)*, exhibition catalogue, Jim Alexander Gallery, East Malvern, 1982, p. 3.
- 2 'Last Member of Liardets Looks Back', *Smith's Weekly*, 14 July 1932, p. 20.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 'Death of a Woman Painter', *The Age*, 26 June 1942, p. 3.
- 5 'Annual Exhibition of Student's Work', *The Leader*, 22 December 1917, p. 39.
- 6 Jim Alexander, *Elma Roach (1897-1942)*, p. 3.
- 7 'Art in Paris: Melbourne Student's Impression', *The Herald*, 8 February 1932, p. 12.
- 8 Jonathan Watkins, 'Australian Painting in the Late Nineteenth Century', *The Royal Society for Arts, Manufactures and Commerce*, vol. 136, no. 5379, 1988, p. 178.
- 9 Denise Mimmocchi, *Australian Symbolism: The Art of Dreams*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2012, p. 51.
- 10 Ibid, p. 55.
- 11 'Art in Paris', *The Herald*, 1932, p. 12.
- 12 Jim Alexander, *Elma Roach (1897-1942)*, p. 3.
- 13 Elma Roach, Australian Art and Artists File, The State Library of Victoria Archives, Melbourne, pp. 20-26.
- 14 'Artist Works in Wood: Secures Glaze like China', *The Herald*, 18 May 1925, p. 11.
- 15 'Melbourne Chatter', *The Bulletin*, vol. 49, no. 2512, 4 April 1928, p. 46; 'Miss Roach's Art Applied and Depictive', *The Age*, 30 March 1928, p. 7.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 'Artist Works in Wood', *The Herald*, 1925, p.11.
- 18 Basil Burdett, 'Talent and Mediocrity in Women Painter's Show', *The Herald*, 6 October 1936, p. 8.
- 19 'Melbourne Chatter', *The Bulletin*, vol. 48, no. 2489, 27 October 1927, p. 47.
- 20 Basil Burdett, 'Three Art Shows to Open Tomorrow: Wide Range of Expression', *The Herald*, 10 June 1940, p. 12.
- 21 Joyce McGrath, 'Request for information on the artist Elma Roach', [letter to unknown recipient], Australian Art and Artists File, The State Library of Victoria Archives, Melbourne, 18 September 1986.
- 22 *Exhibition of Water Colour Drawings by The Misses Elma Roach and Madge Freeman*, exhibition catalogue, Fine Art Society's Gallery, Melbourne, 1923, p. 2.
- 23 Her exhibition at the Melbourne Book Club is mentioned in 'Artist Works in Wood', *The Herald*, 1925, p. 11 and 'Water-colour Display', *The Argus*, 21 May 1925, p. 14. Her 1927 exhibition is mentioned in JS MacDonald, 'Two Exhibitions: Mr Macgeorge and Miss Elma Roach', *The Herald*, 5 July 1927, p. 24.
- 24 'Water Colours at Cheyne Gallery', *The Age*, 9 September 1930, p. 11.
- 25 This 1932 exhibition is mentioned in two newspaper articles. See 'Art in Australia: Local Artists Praised', *The Age*, 25 August 1932, p. 10; and 'Exhibition of Pictures', *The Argus*, 1 September 1932, p. 7.
- 26 *Australian Academy of Art Exhibition First Exhibition, April 8th-29th, Sydney*, exhibition catalogue, Education Department Gallery, Sydney, 1938, p. 17.
- 27 See 'Water-colour Display', *The Argus*, 1925, p. 14; 'Miss Elma Roach's Water-Colors', *The Age*, 20 May 1925, p. 15; 'Water Colors at Cheyne Gallery', *The Age*, p. 11; 'Water Colorist', *The Age*, 5 July 1927, p. 7.
- 28 'An Australian Water Colorist', *The Age*, 5 July 1927, p. 7.
- 29 Her works are represented in Castlemaine Art Museum (three oils and two watercolours), Broken Hill City Art Gallery (one watercolour), Geelong Gallery (two watercolours), Art Gallery of NSW (one watercolour), Queensland Art Gallery (two watercolours) and Shepparton Art Museum (one oil).
- 30 'Exhibited at Famous Salons', *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 10 October 1936, p. 3 mentions Knighton Hammond.
- 31 Lorraine Sim, 'The Linocuts of Ethel Spowers: A Vision Apart', *Modernist Cultures*, vol. 15, no.3, 2020, p. 355.
- 32 'Artistic Beauty of Spain: Impressions of Miss E. Roach', *The Herald*, 3 February 1936, p. 10.
- 33 Siân Reynolds, 'Running Away to Paris: Expatriate Women Artists of the 1900 Generation, from Scotland and Points of South', *Women's History Review*, vol. 9, no.2, 2006, p. 328.
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- 35 'Art in Paris: Melbourne Student's Impression', *The Herald*, 1932, p. 12.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Jim Alexander, *Elma Roach (1897-1942)*, p. 4.
- 38 'Personal and Social Melbourne', *The Home*, 1 November 1928, p. 7.
- 39 Juliette Peers, *More than just Gumtrees: a Personal, Social and Artistic History of the Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors*, Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors in association with Dawn Revival Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 268.
- 40 Helen Topliss, *Modernism and Feminism: Australian Women Artists 1900-1940*, Craftsman House, Roselle, 1996, p. 69.
- 41 Topliss, *Modernism and Feminism*, p. 69.
- 42 'Artistic Beauty of Spain: Impressions of Miss E. Roach', *The Herald*, 1936, p. 10.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Dianne Ottley, *Grace Crowley's Contribution to Australian Modernism and Geometric Abstraction*, M.Phil Thesis, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2007, p. 51, <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/2254> accessed 16 December 2022.
- 45 Ibid, 36.
- 46 Bettina & Desmond MacAulay, 'Artists and Movements' in Karen Quinlan, Tansy Curtin & Juliette Peers (eds), *The Long Weekend: Australian Artists in France 1918-1939*, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, 2007, p. 15.
- 47 Siân Reynolds, 'Running Away to Paris', p. 336.
- 48 'Exhibition of Art Being Held in London: Australian Women Excel: Eve Hewn from a Tree', *Barrier Miner*, 25 February 1930, p. 3.
- 49 Bettina & Desmond MacAulay, *The Long Weekend*, p. 26.
- 50 Ibid, p. 27.
- 51 'Artistic Beauty of Spain', *The Herald*, 1936, p. 10.
- 52 'Artist Remembered', *The Age*, 2 September 1942, p. 3.
- 53 *Memorial Exhibition of Paintings by Elma Roach*, exhibition catalogue, Athenaeum Gallery, Melbourne, 1943, pp. 2-3.
- 54 'From Melbourne', *The Bulletin*, vol. 63, no. 3265, p. 24.

Louise Thomas (1883-1946)

Louise Thomas (née Johnson) was born in 1883 in Stawell, Victoria, located near the Grampians region north-west of Melbourne. At age 19 she married John Selway Thomas, a blacksmith, with whom she went on to have two children, Gwenllian and Gwladys.¹ Records show the Thomas family lived across Williamstown and Newport, where her husband worked at the Newport Railway Workshops. Thomas herself worked as a dressmaker, evidence of her creativity and technical skill preceding her art practice.

The daughter of a miner, Thomas did not come from a wealthy background. Exhibiting history shows she developed her career as an artist later in life; she was primarily active from the early 1930s until her death in 1946. Although she may have painted more casually prior to this, there are no records of earlier works. Despite the relatively short timeframe of her practice, Thomas was a prolific exhibitor amongst the growing modernist scene in Melbourne from the 1930s onwards, at a time that saw many artists shifting from traditional academic styles to a more experimental modernism influenced by European artists.

Thomas was actively involved with many artist groups throughout the 1930s and was a long-time member of the Bell-Shore School in Melbourne. She joined the Bourke Street Studio upon its opening in 1932, and was an active participant, exhibitor and student under Shore and later Bell, encouraging contemporaries such as Marjorie Woolcock to join the School.² Despite painting little, at least publicly, before her involvement with the School,³ from this time onwards she exhibited prolifically in shows with the Independent Group of Artists, Melbourne Contemporary Artists, Group Twelve and the Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors (MSWPS). Thomas was known as one of the more senior members of the Bourke Street group. Her presence was described as 'warm'⁴ and 'motherly',⁵ and she was well-liked by younger artists who came in to contact with her, whether through the Bell School or the MSWPS. However, she undoubtedly came from a different social background than the majority of Bell School artists, who were more commonly from middle and upper-class families, affording them the time and resources to follow artistic pursuits. This financial difference may account

for Thomas coming to painting later in life, when she likely had more time and income to dedicate to art than when working and raising children.

Thomas' works show the strong influence of the Bell-Shore School and the associated growing popularity of European modernism in Melbourne. Bell's teachings encouraged experimentation with different styles and both free and set compositions.⁶ He was significantly influenced by the flat planes and simplified forms of Cézanne,⁷ as well as other prominent modernists and movements such as cubism. Although European styles of modernism were filtered through many layers of translation before they reached Bell's students in Melbourne, these explorations were still considered radical at the time.⁸ Critic Basil Burdett noted when singling out Thomas in his essay 'Modern Art in Melbourne' in 1938, as one of 'the younger generation' of exciting modernist artists, 'Her work, always sensitive, has shown the influence of Shore rather than of Bell up till recently, when she began to paint along more severe, formal lines.'⁹

Although there is no evidence of Thomas herself travelling overseas and it would have been unlikely given her financial circumstances, this was an increasingly common occurrence for artists of the period. The modernist influence was strong amongst the Bell School. Not only were artists travelling overseas and returning with the knowledge of what they had seen, but postcards and reproductions were available throughout the Bourke Street Studio as examples. The direct impact of European works on Thomas' style can be clearly seen in her work *Fish* 1937, which draws on Vincent van Gogh's *Still life*, exhibited in the 1937 Loan Exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria (lent by Sali Herman).¹⁰ This work was singled out by Basil Burdett in his review of a 1937 Group Twelve exhibition as '...perhaps, the most accomplished painting outside the work of Mr Bell and Mr Shore – delicate in colour and restrained in handling and altogether charming'.¹¹

After the Bourke Street Studio closed, Thomas shared a studio with other former Bell students Mabel Crump, Marjorie Woolcock, Genevieve Harrison, Grace Gardiner and Caroline Bell into the 1940s.¹² She also exhibited with the Melbourne Contemporary Artists (MCA) from 1941 until her passing in 1946. The MCA was created by Bell after a split with John Reed regarding their desires for the Contemporary Art Society (CAS), which they had formed in 1938.¹³ The MCA was formed by Bell to create distance from the perceived left radicalism of Reed's CAS,¹⁴ though shared similar aims of fostering and exhibiting modern artists. After her death, Thomas' work *Painting* was included in the 1947 MCA exhibition in the 'In Memoriam' section, alongside Isabel Tweddle and Rupert Bunny, demonstrating her significant role within the group.

Outside of Bell's orbit, Thomas was also a longstanding member of the MSWPS, with whom she exhibited from 1934-1946.¹⁵ Similarly to the Bourke Street School, the MSWPS was both a social and educational resource for artists, and distinctly modernist during the years of Thomas' involvement. Lectures and talks by



Louise Thomas, *Apples* c1933, oil painting, reproduced in *Art in Australia*, 15 December 1933



Louise Thomas, *Minehead* c1938, oil on cardboard, 34.9 x 41.7 cm,
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation



Louise Thomas, *Fish* 1937, oil on canvas board, 35.3 x 41.6 cm, reproduced in *Classical Modernism: The George Bell Circle*, 1992

fellow artists provided the opportunity for those who did not have the funds to travel to learn about international art movements and styles.¹⁶

These influences and tutelage are clearly demonstrated in Thomas' work *Minehead*. *Minehead* was previously owned by curator and gallery director Simon Klose, who had the painting reframed in its current frame. The work depicts the stilted buildings to an open mine (a "mine head" being an entrance to a mine). The buildings are strongly outlined and block-like, flattened forms without much depth. The colour palette is limited to muddy browns and greys with a tinge of moss green the only reminder of lush nature in the brown cut away hill. The brushwork is mottled, the greys and ochres of the sloping hill dabbed in block colours with the white ground still peeking through. The sky is a more blended and soft grey mass, ominous clouds covering the horizon.

In line with the growing influence of Bell's modernism around the time the work was painted, *Minehead* demonstrates a severe use of line, flattened planes and non-naturalistic representation of the landscape. The dark outlines of the buildings are different from early examples of Thomas' works which are typified by soft, mottled floral still lifes. Thomas may have also be influenced by contemporaries such as Danila Vassilieff. Vassilieff arrived in Melbourne from Russia in 1937 and as a close friend of Bell's was often held up as an example to Bell's students.¹⁷ He is best known for his depictions of Melbourne buildings, street life and the working class. Characteristic elements of his works such as a muted colour palette, black outlines and thick, expressive brushwork share similarities with Thomas' *Minehead*. It is unclear where *Minehead* was painted exactly, given the generic title. Notably, the industrial subject matter appears relatively unique amongst her exhibited works. All of Thomas' works tended to be similarly generically titled (and often titles would be reused, such as *Portrait*, *Landscape* or *Flowerpiece*). In April 1944 Thomas had a solo exhibition at Athenaeum Gallery.¹⁸ Here she exhibited 50 works that exemplify the range of subject matters she explored, from still-lives of flowers or food, to portraits and landscapes. Works including *Macedon* from this exhibition suggest Thomas also may have engaged in en plein air painting,

travelling to other sites to explore new subjects. However even in this large survey there are no examples of any industrial subject matter. *Minehead* is a unique title within her catalogued works, suggesting this subject may have been experimental for Thomas. However, the subject of the mine likely also held personal interest for her, having been born in Stawell, a town founded during the gold rush with long-running gold mines, and as the daughter of a miner. Furthermore, her husband's trade as a blacksmith and her working class background would have given her familiarity with these industrial sites.

This exploration of industrial subject matter further reflects a wider trend of women artists in the 1930s exploring more "masculine" subjects. Women artists traditionally worked within what is considered "feminine" subject matter: portraiture, still life and domestic scenes. Historically this has largely been due to issues of access and what subjects were considered socially acceptable for women to engage with. Many women artists experimented and innovated within these formats, Margaret Preston being a prominent example with her novel depictions of floral still-lives.¹⁹ However, the 20th century also shows Australian women artists exploring new subject matter. This included engaging with the masculine scenes of the bush and en plein air painting,²⁰ as well as new sites of industrialisation within a modernising Australia. In Sydney, this was most prominently symbolised by the Sydney Harbour Bridge, constructed from 1923 to 1932.²¹ This national symbol was memorialised by many artists, with some of the most celebrated depictions by women such as Grace Cossington Smith and Jessie Traill.

In Victoria, whilst there is no image as iconic as the Harbour Bridge, artists similarly explored industrial scenes. Popular for Victorian artists was the Yallourn Power Station. Located in the Latrobe Valley east of Melbourne, the original power station was built in 1921. The most noteworthy depictions of Yallourn are arguably by Ethel Spowers, who explored the works in both linocuts and watercolours in the 1930s and whose depictions represent some of the optimism surrounding the power station as a symbol of employment during the Great Depression.²² Yallourn was also a frequent subject for Jessie Traill shortly after its construction in the 1920s. In New South Wales, Nancy Borlase was another artist to explore industrial scenes, completing many depictions of the Ryde Brickworks throughout the 1940s. These scenes of towers, billowing grey smoke, and machinery are a far cry from "feminine" subjects of intimate domestic scenes and floral arrangements expected of women artists.

Futurism and vorticism were also influences coming from artists' travels to Europe and increasing knowledge of European art movements in Australian art circles.²³ These movements celebrated the "machine age", focusing on concepts of speed and new technologies associated with industrialising cities. They emphasised strong lines, sharp angles and repetition to create a sense of movement and dynamism, characteristics evident in the prints of Eveline Syme and Ethel Spowers.²⁴ Thomas' work does not display the stylistic cues of sharp repeated lines or a sense of speed of Spowers' prints for example, but *Minehead* does represent a shift from soft domestic still lifes to the grey scenes of man-made industrial sites that was also a growing subject of interest in works coming out of Europe.

Unlike triumphant depictions of the Sydney Harbour Bridge arching into the sky, Thomas' industrial site is a glum scene with a muddy hillside mine beneath grey skies. The site is still, with

no evidence of workers, production or movement at the mine. A representation of workers was more typical of artists engaged with social realism or labour politics, such as Noel Counihan, Vic O'Connor and Nutter Buzacott (the latter two did exhibit alongside Thomas at some stages and were intermittently involved with Bell's School). Bell himself was averse to 'communist' politics,²⁵ and more interested in form and representation than symbolism.²⁶ In line with this thinking, Thomas' work does seem to be more of a form and subject-based experiment than a symbolic exploration of the politics of industrialisation. This is not to discount the strong sense of place and feeling Thomas has created, with the bleakness of the heavy clouds and dulled site strongly removed from typical depictions of Australian outdoor scenes such as naturalistic landscapes, and obviously influenced by her own exposure to such scenery.

Minehead is an example of not only the style and skill of the artist, but exemplifies a wider trend of women artists of the time

exploring non-traditional subject matter in their works. It demonstrates the technical influence of George Bell's teachings and his translation of European Modernism, and the impact of modernism on the subject matter explored by Australian artists. Running parallel to this was a changing Australian landscape. No longer governed by the classic image of the Australian bushman, the collective imagination of the Australian terrain was shifting to include new images of construction, mining and infrastructure. Thomas' exploration of an industrial site also holds personal significance, as it is undoubtedly influenced by her own background growing up in a mining town and familiarity with these sites. *Minehead* is a compelling illustration of these larger collective shifts in subject matter and style, as well as a display of the unique eye of Louise Thomas.

Eliza Burton

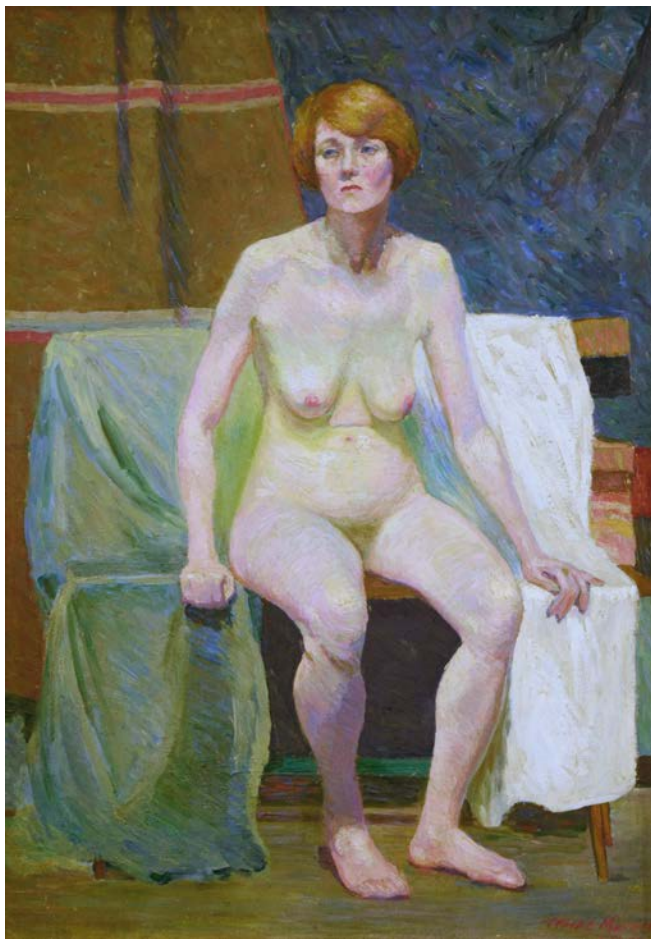
Notes

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- 3 Basil Burdett, 'Modern Art in Melbourne' in Sydney Ure Smith & Leon Gellert (eds), *Art in Australia*, John Fairfax and Sons, Sydney, 1938, pp. 12-23. Quoted on p. 22: '[...] Louise Thomas, whom I include here because, although she belongs to an older generation, she is a comparative newcomer to painting'.
- 4 Juliette Peers, *More than just Gumtrees: a Personal, Social and Artistic History of the Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors*, Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors in association with Dawn Revival Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 281.
- 5 Mary Eagle & Jan Minchin, *The George Bell School*, p. 166.
- 6 Felicity St John Moore, *Classical Modernism: The George Bell School*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1992, p. 18.
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Tempe Manning (1897-1960)

Constance Tempe Manning – or Tempe Manning as she was known – was a successful early modernist painter. Almost completely neglected by art historians to date, Manning's work was progressive in colour and technique, and unconventional at the time for her prolific representations of the nude figure. Her influence on the birth of modernism in Sydney was far greater than has been recognised thus far.

Manning was born in Bowral, New South Wales on 16 November 1896. She was the daughter of wealthy surveyor Harold Clyde Manning¹ and the grandniece of the prominent barrister and politician, Sir William Montague Manning. Sir William was vocal about his belief in the value of a liberal education and the progression of women's rights in Australia. In 1878, he was elected Chancellor to the University of Sydney and fought for the admission of women into all university privileges² – something that no doubt influenced Tempe Manning's own upbringing.



Constance Tempe Manning, *Seated nude* 1915, oil on canvas, 74 x 53 cm, courtesy Davidson Auctions

Manning had four siblings: Hope, Penelope, Florence and Nugent. Sadly, her older sister Hope died before Manning was born, at the age of three.³ The family lived together at The Folly, a house on Merrigang Street in Bowral, which they purchased the year of Manning's birth.⁴

Artistic pursuits began at a young age for Manning, who showed a promising talent in drawing, painting and musicianship. In the later years of her life, Manning reflected that, 'drawing and painting has been my chief interest [...] ever since I could hold a pencil'.⁵

In 1900, Harold Manning moved his business and family to Mosman in Sydney but kept ownership of The Folly⁶. Following her school years, her father sent young Tempe Manning to Paris in 1912 at the age of 16 to formally study art and music, accompanied by her mother and sister.⁷ In a statement she made for the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1952, Manning recalls this time:

In 1912 my father sent me abroad with my mother and sister to further my studies. In August we were settled in Paris and I commenced my serious art studies under the tuition of the famous French artist Jean Paul Laurens, at the Academie Julian. Three months later I was moved from the antique class to the life class which apparently created a record for that time. Most students stayed a year in the antique class.⁸

The Academie Julian was popular with Australian artists, with past students including Julian Ashton, Hans Heysen and E. Phillips Fox.⁹ The school's somewhat conservative teaching enabled Manning to refine her technical drawing and painting skills. Her experimentation with colour would come later when she had settled back into the Sydney art community.

Manning's technical ability to draw the human figure was polished in the Academie Julian's life class. The nude figure would go on to become one of her favoured subjects, to which she brought a unique authenticity that was absent in the works of her male counterparts. Unlike their overwhelmingly sexualised depictions of the female nude, Manning captured the character of her subjects, often representing women in "unappealing" poses, where the sitter might be slouched, in thought and/or serious. Needless to say, these qualities were not historically prioritised in the representation of nude women, or women in general for that matter.

As seen in her work *Seated nude* 1915 the subject is presented front-on and slouched, turning her head slightly away from the viewer with a gaze that is listless, even melancholy. The close proximity of the foreground and the background push the woman closer to the viewer, with her foreshortened knee almost extending beyond the canvas. Rejecting a more traditional lounging or coy pose, Manning has positioned her subject in a way that is confrontational for this subject matter.



Constance Tempe Manning, *Untitled (Self-portrait in sunhat)* c1940s, watercolour, 33 x 26.5 cm,
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation

The influence of post-impressionism is evident, with loose brush strokes and a heightened saturation of colour. The touches of green and lilac on her flesh and flicks of crimson in the background echo the work of her contemporary and personal friend, Grace Cossington Smith.

This painting clearly shows Manning's talent in handling colour and the human form. Manning's preference for this subject matter is shown in her selection of this work over a portrait entitled *Portrait of a woman in riding clothes* 1915 on the verso, now somewhat obscured by the frame. Given her family's wealthy background, it is unlikely this choice was made to conserve art materials. It is more likely that Manning preferred the nude over the portrait and framed it accordingly.

In 1914 Manning and her family members returned to Australia seeking distance from the uncertainty of Europe pre-World War I.¹⁰ After settling back into Sydney, Manning joined the life class of the prominent Sydney teacher Antonio Dattilo Rubbo. Soon afterwards she was appointed head of the class and later won the studio scholarship as *masiere* (head of the class).¹¹ As *masiere* she had considerable responsibilities, including instructing the other students and keeping order in the class.¹² Manning also studied at the Royal Art Society School under Norman Carter, and later took landscape painting lessons with Will Ashton.¹³

In 1916 Manning began exhibiting in the Royal Art Society.¹⁴ In the same year, prominent Australian artist, critic and journalist Howard Ashton embraced Dattilo Rubbo, Roland Wakelin and Manning as members of the same tendency. He wrote, 'The three of them [Dattilo Rubbo, Wakelin and Manning] splash merrily with spots of crimson and green and vermilion and yellow, and the results are certainly amazing'.¹⁵

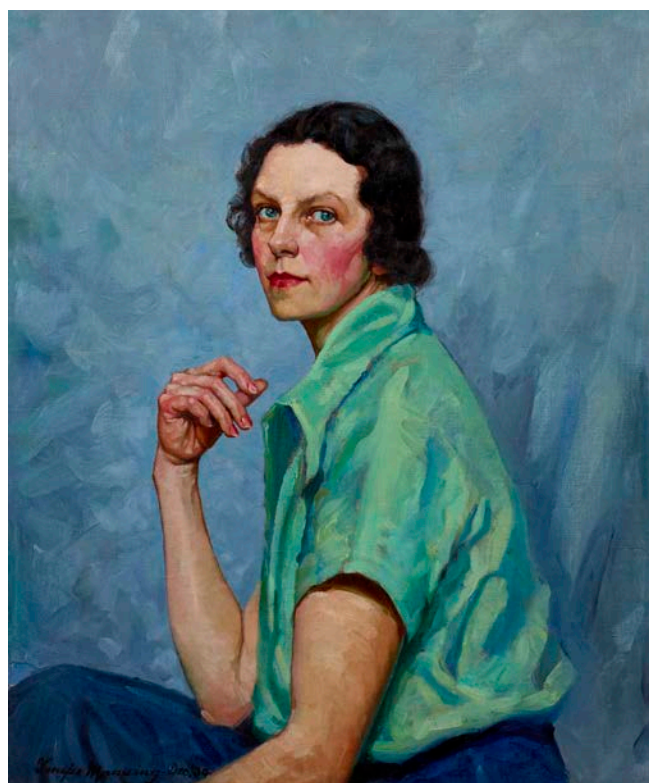
Following her days as a student, Manning was invited by Dattilo Rubbo to exhibit a painting in an exhibition in Naples, Italy.¹⁶ This exhibition included artworks from all over the world by Italian artists who had migrated to other countries and their pupils who had established a reputable name in the art world.¹⁷ Manning's work was singled out by the Italian press in this exhibition and given the highest praise.¹⁸

After the death of her father in 1924, the family moved back to The Folly in Bowral.¹⁹ Thanks to her family's wealth, Manning boarded in Sydney to continue her studies,²⁰ while hosting art classes in Bowral in her spare time to earn an income.²¹ In 1938, Manning had her first known solo exhibition at Hordern's Gallery in Sydney, which received ample positive attention from the press and Sydney art community.²²

Although she worked predominately with oil paint, Manning was also a highly proficient watercolourist. As evident in *Untitled (Self-portrait in sunhat)* c1940s, Manning is a skilled portraitist, capturing the nuanced shadow on the subject's face with a delicate yet confident handling. The artist's experimentation with colour is also evident in this work. The checked primary colours on her blouse have been dabbed hastily onto the paper, with a purposeful absence of tidying or toning.

It is likely that this work is a self-portrait. Manning has depicted herself wearing a sunhat and what would have been recognised as casual, outdoor clothes for the time. It is likely this is the attire Manning would have worn when painting *plein air*. With no extra frills or unnecessary ornamentation, this painting is a working

artist's self-portrait. It captures not only a rare glimpse into Manning's technical ability with watercolour, but also an insight into the artist herself.



Constance Tempe Manning, *Self-portrait* 1939, oil on canvas, 76 x 60.5 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales

Manning's love of portraiture naturally led her to be a frequent entrant in the Archibald Prize. One such entry, entitled *Self-portrait* 1939, was acquired by the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2021. It was one of the 26 works that the artist exhibited in the Prize between 1931 and 1955²³. This self-portrait represents Manning at the peak of her exploration of modern colour relationships. Her palette of intensified, high-keyed colour is seen in her peach cheeks and coral lips contrasted against the teal shirt. As curator Natalie Wilson from the Art Gallery of New South Wales wrote, 'Manning renders an assured elegance and confidence in her pose and bold gaze, alluding both to George Lambert's hand gestures and Henry Hanke's stance in his 1934 winning portrait'.²⁴ Despite her loose divisionist brushwork, the influence of innovative modern practices doesn't take away from the technical accuracy of the self-portrait. In portraiture, Manning believed in capturing the essence of a person to portray a real 'likeness'. She wrote about this approach to portraiture in 1950:

By the word likeness I don't mean to imply a purely superficial representation, but something that goes deeper and portrays the character of the sitter as shown in both face and hands. This is only something which concentrated study and careful handling can reveal.²⁵

The portrait most significant to Manning's career was commissioned in 1945 by the Historical Memorial Committee.²⁶ The Committee commissioned Manning and fellow artist Mary

Edwards to paint the two first women elected to the Australian Parliament, Senator Dorothy Tagney (painted by Manning) and Dame Enid Lyons MHR (painted by Edwards). These portraits would ultimately become part of the National Portrait Gallery Collection.²⁷ Upon completing the commission, Manning received praise from the Senator who said she was thrilled with the portrait.²⁸ Manning also received praise from the Royal Portrait Painter Maurice Codner, who sent her a letter of congratulations.²⁹ He described the work as 'an excellent portrait... grand composition and general good planning of the whole canvas'.³⁰

Despite this, Manning and Edwards' works were rejected for being 'unsatisfactory' by the Commonwealth Arts Advisory Board.³¹ Their works were replaced with portraits by A.D. Colquhoun and William Dargie.³² Such a profound public rejection made a tragic impact on both artists' careers and caused quite a scandal in the newspapers. In an issue of the *Angry Penguins Broadsheet*, writer John Reed wrote about this sad incident:

When this decision was made, everyone must have known perfectly well what sort of portraits would even-tuate; but unfortunately for the artists, between the date of the commissions and the date of their completion there had been a conscious, and even official, movement of appreciation away from the work of artists such as these...the whole incident brings out the intrinsic rottenness of the system on which things depend.³³



Constance Tempe Manning, *Senator Dorothy Tangney* c1945, courtesy State Library of New South Wales

Manning's portrait was likely destroyed. The only remaining evidence of the portrait is a black and white photocopy from an old newspaper. In an interview published in *The Western Australian*, Manning stated that:

It is a bit upsetting but evidently, they disapprove of my portrait. Although Senator Tagney told me that she was thrilled with it, and she is not the sort of person to say that if she did not mean it.³⁴

Mary Edwards was similarly not pleased. Following the rejection, she made a public statement saying:

The first I heard of the rejection of my portrait was a curt note from the Committee I received last Saturday. Honestly, when I was opening it, I thought it would be the cheque. We have been shockingly treated. They cannot make fools of us like this'.³⁵

Known as having a 'dramatic and eccentric' character,³⁶ Edwards didn't take this decision lightly. After telling everyone she could that politicians 'know nothing of art',³⁷ she moved permanently to Fiji and was henceforth known as Mary Edwell-Burke. Right up to her death in 1988, she denied any connection to 'Mary Edwards', including any attribution to her artworks.³⁸

Although she didn't flee the country, the embarrassment from this scandal made a considerable impact on Manning's career and life. She turned her back on the Sydney art community³⁹ and instead became active in the arts scene in the Southern Highlands, where she grew up. Here, Manning continued to pursue a living through commissioned portraits, judging art prizes and running art classes.⁴⁰ She was known in the area as a highly competent artist and received frequent commissions. Two notable commissions during this time included a new coat of arms for the township of Bowral commissioned by the Mayor in 1955,⁴¹ and a year later a commission to paint a portrait of the Mayor of Bowral Herbert (Bert) Venables, who served as Mayor for 15 years.⁴²

In 1952, Manning had a solo show at Kozminsky Gallery in Melbourne.⁴³ This exhibition received excellent reviews from the Melbourne press, including *The Age* which wrote, 'Her eye for an interesting subject is allied with an impressionistic technique, which notes mood and atmosphere with speed and charm'.⁴⁴ Manning was also a founding member of the Berrima District Art Society and held the position of president from 1957 until her death in 1960.⁴⁵ Archival records of the BDAS recall Manning as 'an energetic and charming person with an ability to enthuse others'.⁴⁶

Manning had a considerable impact on Australia's art history canon. Her pioneering of modernist techniques is to an equal if not greater standard to her contemporaries. Her prolific figure paintings that capture a sense of reality and character in their subjects are a rarity that deserve to be celebrated. And despite the success she earned in her career, the scandal leading to its downfall and ultimately to her erasure from the Australian art history canon, is representative of how strong bias and discrimination against women was for artists in her day.

Stephanie Cusick Markerink

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Polly Hurry (1883-1963)

Mary “Polly” Hurry was born in Kyneton, Victoria on May 2, 1883, to Mary Herring and Henry Hurry. Educated at a private, all-girls school in Kew – Ruyton Girls’ – Hurry came from an upper-middle class background as the daughter of a country solicitor. From an early age, she was trained in watercolour painting with the Scottish-born artist John Mather (1848-1916). Furthering her interest in art, she began life drawing studies at the 1859 Old Temple Court in Melbourne. There, she became increasingly involved with Melburnian art circles in the early 20th century, mingling with fellow artists of the likes of Frederick McCubbin (1855-1917), Dora Wilson (1883-1946), Janet Cumbræ Stewart (1883-1960), Norah Gurdon (1882-1974) and A.M.E. Bale (1875-1955) – many of whom were associates of the influential Australian painter and theorist Max Meldrum (1875-1955).

It was around the year 1916 that Hurry approached Meldrum himself, who had just established the Meldrum School of Painting in Melbourne after returning from his travels in Europe. Hurry became one of Meldrum’s first students and a prominent proponent of Meldrum’s theories of art and perception.¹



Max Meldrum, *Japanese vase with flowers* c1922, oil on canvas, 66.6 x 56.2 cm, Benalla Art Gallery

Disapproving of the ‘decadence’ of European modernisms, Meldrum had promoted a concept of ‘depictive’ painting as a pure, optical science-the most essential component of which was tone.² The movement came to be known as ‘Tonalism’ and was

colloquially coined ‘Meldrumism’ after its controversial figure-head. Soon to become known as the alternative school to the National Gallery School in Melbourne, directed by Bernard Hall (1859-1935), Meldrum’s supposedly more conservative counterpart, Tonalism garnered both praise and harsh criticism. In one especially unsympathetic article, the movement is described as a ‘malignant growth.’³ Amid this ongoing rivalry in the Melbourne art world, Meldrum’s students were often referred to derisively as ‘Meldrumites’.⁴

Despite its unfavourable repute in the early 20th century, Tonalism was later reappraised as a formative moment in accounts of an evolution of Australian modernist art.⁵ Even still, the visibility of Meldrum as the figurehead of the school continued to overshadow his other ‘associates’. Hurry, although prolific and frequently singled out for praise by reviewers, often appears in such scholarship only as a footnote to Meldrum’s life and career. The gendered nature of such periodisations of Australian art as well as extant commentaries on Tonalism, produced both contemporarily and in retrospect, is clear. As immersed in the vanguard of the movement as Hurry and other prominent women artists of the period were, a hostility toward women remained in the professional art world. In 1939, Meldrum stated in response to the question of whether a woman could be both a good artist and a wife:

Men and women are differently constituted. Women are more closely attached to the physical things of life, and to expect them to do some things equally as well as men is sheer lunacy [...] A great artist has to tread a lonely road. He becomes great only by exerting himself to the limit of his strength the whole time. I believe that such a life is unnatural and impossible for a woman.⁶

The institution of marriage constrained the careers of women artists in more than one sense. After Hurry’s marriage to a fellow student of Meldrum – John McCormack Farmer (1897-1989) – in April 1921, reviewers of her work began to refer to her as ‘Mrs John Farmer’-parenthesising her name as an afterthought.⁷

In spite of such barriers, Hurry enjoyed a remarkably successful career as an artist, even exhibiting her works in London in 1925 and at the Paris Salons in 1933. Owing to her affluent and well-educated background, Hurry could afford to travel internationally, visiting Europe twice. Perhaps more atypical of her time however, Hurry also travelled around East Asia in 1921-22. While London, as the metropole to the colony, had been a popular destination for Australian women artists seeking markers of professional success at the turn of the century, the horizons of such prospective travellers were only just beginning to pivot toward the Asia Pacific.⁸ Amongst this early wave of artists visiting Asia, Hurry produced several works that spoke to a range of cross-cultural influences in her practice which extended well beyond the rivalries of pro- and anti-Meldrumites in Melbourne, as well as an emergent sense of what it might mean to be a successful and modern (white) woman in 20th century Australia.



Polly Hury, *Daffodils* c1950s, oil on canvas on masonite, 38 x 30.4 cm,
Into the Light Collection 2021, Sheila Foundation

By the 1920s, a xenophobic attitude toward Asian migrants had settled into the political sphere and among the general populace and was most clearly reflected in active enforcement of the racially exclusionary White Australia policy. This was in part due to growing fear and anxieties of Japanese invasion, after an unprecedented show of the naval strength of Japan – a small and obviously non-white island nation – in its complete victory over the Russian fleet in the 1905 Battle of Tsushima.

Paradoxically, in the realm of culture and art, a new penchant for Japanese aesthetics was on the upturn, paralleling the growth of Japonisme in Europe and an increase in demand for Japanese export goods. In April 1932, *The Home*, an Australian architectural magazine, featured photographs of a tea garden built in Warrawee, Sydney by Professor Arthur Sadler, a well-known scholar of Asian studies who had also acquired an extensive collection of ukiyo-e prints.⁹ Many artists residing in Sydney and further afield in Australia would have had access to Sadler's collection, including some of the most prominent women artists of the time, such as Thea Proctor (1879-1966), Margaret Preston (1875-1963) and Ethel Spowers (1890-1947).¹⁰

Although it is uncertain whether Hurry ever encountered such collections in Sydney, she was likely aware of Meldrum's admiration for Asian art, which he elaborated on in his own writings. Praising Japanese art for its supposed simplicity, Meldrum went so far as to proclaim that 'no greater or purer art has ever existed.'¹¹ At the time, the National Gallery of Victoria was also expanding their collection of Asian art.¹² By 1968, the Gallery had designated a display space for Asian art, providing a source of inspiration and intrigue for many collectors, artists and art enthusiasts in Melbourne.



John Farmer, *Peking* 1921, oil on cardboard, 31 x 24 cm
Castlemaine Art Museum

Eventually in 1921, Hurry travelled to China, South Korea and Japan on her honeymoon with her new husband. Passing through Hong Kong, the pair visited Shanghai and Peking (Bei-

jing), taking a particular interest in the latter's distinct architecture. This is observed in a painting by Farmer titled *Peking* 1921, which renders a view of a temple in the familiar misty, atmospheric painting style of Australian Tonalism. The couple then visited Mukden (the capital city of former Manchuria) and Seoul, before staying in Kyoto for a considerable amount of time. Little documentation of the trip exists, but a painting by Hurry titled *Temple Lantern at Nikko* 1921 and exhibited by the Twenty Melbourne Painters Society in May 1922 indicates that the pair would have made the trip to Nikko, a scenic, mountainous locale to the north of Tokyo. There is little record of Australian artists travelling in Asia in the 1910s-20s, but by the start of the 20th century, the mountain shrines of Nikko had become a popular destination for foreign tourists who could obtain the correct visa and newly available English-language guidebooks.¹³

In *Temple Lantern at Nikko*, the stone lantern (*tōrō*) is treated with the care of a still-life study, but without the aura of contrivance and domesticity one might consider common to the genre. Instead, a commonplace ornamental feature in Japanese gardens is transformed, through the artist's foreign eyes, into an object of curiosity. While Hurry refers to the familiar earthy greens and browns of her landscapes, the subtle perfusion of autumnal tones into the composition hints at a quality of deciduousness in the natural environment under observation – a horticultural abnormality in the native Australian landscape. At the same time, the characteristically Tonalist impulse to depict, through minimalistic brush strokes, an "essence", or a "truer" version of the painting's subject matter is foiled somewhat by the sculptural intricacy and visual intrigue of the lantern's five-part structure, a feature which Hurry seems reluctant to surrender.

This fascination with the foreign continued to appear in Hurry's art after her return to Australia. In *Hydrangeas* 1926, the pale blue hue of the flower petals complements the cool gleam of a glazed porcelain bowl, likely acquired as a souvenir from China. Not long before she painted the work, Hurry and Farmer had moved to 17-19 Williams Road, Olinda, into a cottage and studio designed by Justus Jorgensen and Ole Jorgenson, and which they named Miyako, after the hotel they stayed at in Japan.¹⁴ Perhaps only coincidentally, Miyako was also the name of a luxury hotel in Kyoto which was famously popular amongst diplomats, celebrities and well-to-do foreign tourists. A 1918 article details the interior scene of the Miyako dining room:

As one enters the long glassed-in dining room which overlooks the city of Kyoto, the artistic arrangement of the flowers – the fragrant iris, carnation, chrysanthemum, or other grouping of flowers such as is known only to the Japanese artist – catches the eye. The rolling of the napkins, standing upright in each glass upon the table, seems too to harmonize wonderfully with the art expressed in the arrangement of the flowers.¹⁵

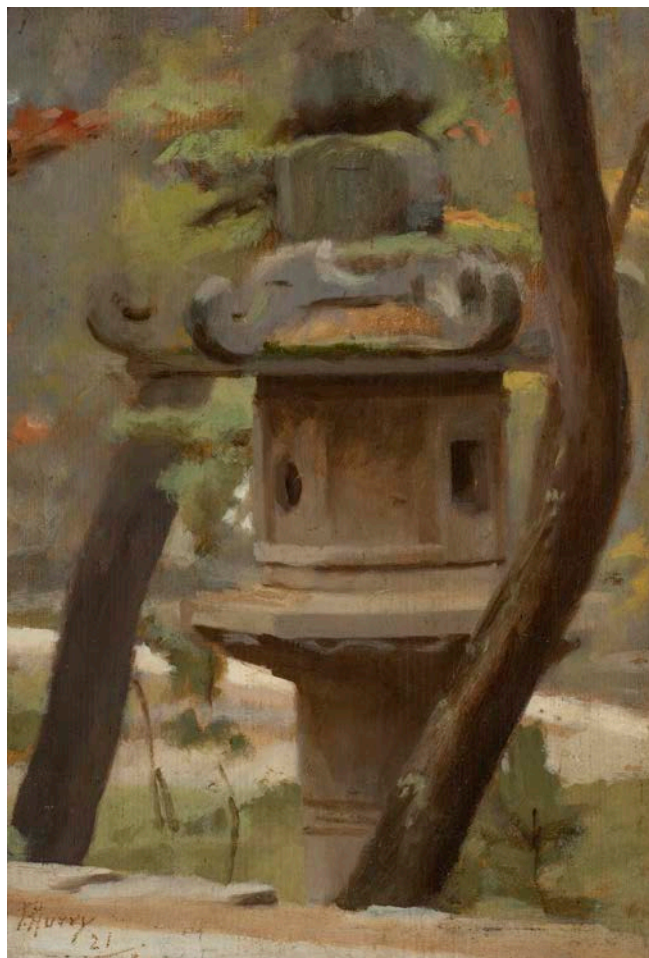
While it is unknown if Hurry visited Miyako in Kyoto, she did develop a fondness for the Japanese art of flower arrangement (*ikebana*). In addition to hosting tea ceremonies (*chadō*) for artist friends – another traditional practice considered to be a classical art of refinement in Japan – Hurry practised *ikebana* in Miyako, Olinda. This burgeoning interest in *ikebana* can be gleaned in *Daffodils*, an undated work recently acquired by the Sheila Foundation. With the sparsely arranged daffodils tightly framed within the composition, it is a somewhat unconventional flower study,

which relies less on the opulence and fullness of a multi-colour, multi-variety floral display for visual interest, than it does on the subtle spatial divisions created by the upright stems of the flowers, made visible by the transparent glass vase. The simplicity of this arrangement draws parallels to the Nageirebana ("thrown-in flowers") style of ikebana, which loosely follows the classical principle of a triangular structure but embraces a sense of spontaneity, making it a congenial design for novices to the artform. Here in *Daffodils*, there is a marriage of the painting methods Hurry learnt under Meldrum with the aesthetic philosophies of ikebana; in the careful treatment of light and shadow, the subtle tonal variations in the yellow blooms, the attention paid to line and negative space, and in the simplicity of the composition.

So admired was Hurry's Miyako and the floral artistry which took place within the cottage, that many of her artist friends who had come to visit or stay would produce works inspired by the arrangements. Meldrum himself, who rented Miyako in 1933-34, painted several floral studies that included Japanese porcelain vases, one of which – *Japanese vase with flowers* 1922 – displayed an elegant arrangement of camellias with clear ikebana influences in its triangular design and emphasis on verticality. In the same year, Clarice Beckett (1887-1935) – another prominent woman artist of the Tonalist movement-produced *Gladioli* 1922 after witnessing Hurry perform a formal tea ceremony and flower arrangement during her stay at Miyako.¹⁶

A prolific and deeply involved artist of her time, Polly Hurry enjoyed a successful career that was not only marked by her close affiliation with prominent figures of the art world, but also by her engagement with novel and cross-cultural sources of inspiration of the time and her active role in forging a sense of artistic community in Melbourne. Importantly, her works speak to a rapidly expanding, modernising world in 20th century Australia—one in which visions of colonial modernity and an urbane (white) feminine identity and agency would become increasing intertwined with cross-cultural experiences and transnational mobility.

Jennifer Yang



Polly Hurry, *Temple Lantern at Nikko* 1921, oil on wood, 43 x 30.5 cm, Castlemaine Art Museum

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- 9 A. L. Sadler, "The Way of Tea," *The Home*, April 1, 1932, 34-35, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-383388543/view?sectionId=nla.obj-386929167&searchTerm=sadler&partId=nla.obj-383629822#page/n33/mode/1up/search/sadler>.
- 10 Maria Tornatore-Loong, "The remarkable Professor Sadler: Japan, Sydney and Australian modernism," in *Japan in Sydney: Professor Sadler and Modernism 1920-30s*, ed. Ajioka Chiaki and Maria Tornatore-Loong (Sydney: University Art Gallery, The University of Sydney, 2011), 24-28.
- 11 Meldrum and Colahan (eds.), *Max Meldrum*, 79.
- 12 The National Gallery of Victoria first made the decision to collect East Asian art in the early 1920s, at the instigation of Bernard Hall, then-Director. Throughout the 1920s, the gallery acquired several pieces of East Asian art objects, mostly Chinese porcelain. Although comparatively smaller in size and scope, the Japanese art collection at the NGV expanded to include several 19th century Japanese prints and drawings, lacquer-wares, and screen paintings. See Ann Galbally, *The Collections of the National Gallery of Victoria* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1987), 255-270.
- 13 Luke Gartlan, "Japan Day by Day? William Henry Metcalf, Edward Sylvester Morse and Early Tourist Photography in Japan," *Early Popular Visual Culture* no. 8, 2 (2010): 133. 125-146.
- 14 The local historian Volkhard Wehner interviewed John Farmer c. 1975 and compiled his notes in an article published in *Ranges Trader Mail* in 2000. Wehner suggests that Miyako was named 'after the hotel in Tokyo where [the Farmers] had spent many happy days.' Quoted in "Ridgewalk: A History of Culture, Artists and Creativity in the Dandenong Ranges," a cultural report prepared by Bronwyn Hanna History and Heritage for the Yarra Ranges Shire Council, November 2017, file:///Users/jenniferyang/Downloads/RidgeWalk.CulturalReport.IllustratedCatalogue.2017-compressed.pdf.
- 15 — "Short Journeys in Pacific Lands," *The Journal of Electricity* 40, February 15, 1918 --
- 16 See also Bronwyn Watson, "Public Works," exhibition review in *The Weekend Australian*, March 6-7, 2021, 10, <https://powerhousemuseumalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/6-7-March-C-Allen-Weekend-Aust-Steam-Revolution-Exh-review.pdf>.

Framing Gladys Laycock's miniature

A Gentleman (Colin Young Caird) 1926

Miniature painting is a technique of portraiture which originated from the methodology of Medieval illuminators and Renaissance Europe portrait medal makers.¹ The tradition has existed in the Netherlands and France since before the late 15th century and became an established technique in England in the early 16th century.²

The popularity of miniature paintings has declined and been revived several times between its establishment and the final decline in the 20th century.³ During the 17th century its popularity dwindled. A revival manifested in the mid-18th century. In this period the technique transformed from typically gouache on vellum (sheep or calf skin) stuck with starch paste onto card to watercolour, applied in thin layers onto a translucent piece of ivory.⁴ This transformation was introduced by Rosalba Carriera (1675-1757), a distinguished Rococo painter from Venice, Italy.⁵ During the early to mid-19th century miniature portraiture 'entered a more public domain', appearing in both art society exhibitions and within the home, and including both socially renowned as well as intimate subjects.⁶ The introduction of miniatures into the public exhibition sphere impacted the framing of these works. Frames utilised to house miniatures now needed to be able to hang for exhibition, in addition to stand upright in domestic contexts, possibly on a bed-side table or in a cabinet. Many frames in the Art Gallery of New South Wales' (AGNSW) collection have both a hanger and a fold out flap, much like a picture frame.

It was in this period that the British tradition was transmitted to Australia. Prominent Australian miniaturists such as Bernice Edwell, Bess Norriss Tait and Justine Kong Sing often trained and exhibited in France and England and had stylistic affiliation to the British tradition. This stylistic relationship was identified in an examination of Eveline Corbould-Ellis' work, whose delicate watercolour miniatures on ivory bear a strong similarity to the Australian works in the AGNSW collection of miniatures.⁷

The popularity of miniatures regressed again with the invention of photography, which presented a perfectly accurate representation of the subject. Photography was also cheaper and allowed the same portable, sentimental size as a miniature portrait.⁸

The final revival of miniature paintings took place in the late 19th and early 20th century with its concluding decline in popular art tradition taking place by the mid-20th century.⁹ The Royal Miniaturists Society was founded in Britain in 1895 with the explicit intention of driving a revival.¹⁰ Women artists were prominent during this resurgence. Despite the formal obsolescence of miniatures due to the accessibility of photography, women artists in Australia enthusiastically adopted this medium as their primary form of artwork and achieved some degree of success and public recognition for their work.¹¹ This indicates the prevailing significance of the miniature during 20th century art practice.¹²

Australian miniatures, following British tradition, were sentimental keepsakes. Their subject matter was almost exclusively intimate portraits commissioned by a close friend or family mem-

ber.¹³ These subjects tended to be women or children, lending the technique to the greater general interest of decorative art.¹⁴ Similarly to the British tradition the intimate status of these works required alternative framing solutions which allowed them to be displayed outside of a gallery context. These specific framing requirements makes accurately framing them in a contemporary context a somewhat challenging task.



Bernice Edwell, *Child* n.d., watercolour and opaque white on ivory, 5.3 cm diameter (circular), Art Gallery of New South Wales

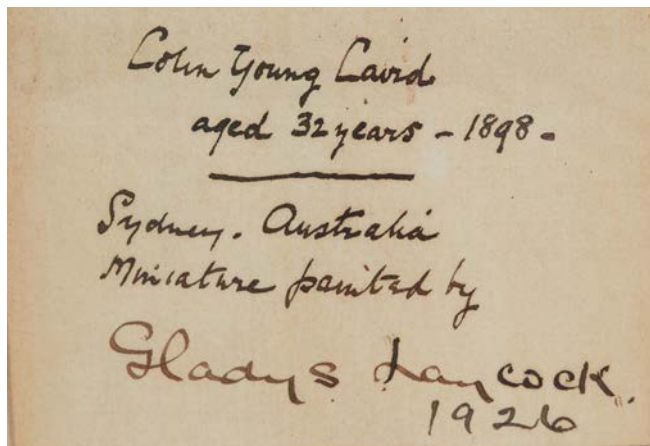
In mid-2021 the Into the Light Acquisition Fund acquired a watercolour on ivory miniature by Gladys Laycock (1882-1958). This artwork, *A Gentleman (Colin Young Caird)*, was painted in 1926 and is likely based on an unknown photograph of the subject from 1898, as indicated on a label in the artist's hand inserted behind the ivory panel.

Despite studying art at both the Hetherly Art School in London and in Paris under Senor Seniorina, Gladys Laycock is a little-known artist today.¹⁵ But she was a prominent miniaturist during the early 20th century with a studio in the Strand Arcade in Sydney where she painted on commission.¹⁶ Laycock exhibited with the Royal Art Society of NSW (1903-1922), at the Women Painters Exhibition in Sydney in 1919, and in London at the Society of Women Artists Exhibition in 1937.¹⁷

A Gentleman has not required much conservation work and is in good condition, with one minor crack on the right corner. The challenge of this work is in the framing. The small, portrait type, nine carat white gold Hardy Bros frame holds the ivory support directly on the metal rebate, with a label sitting between the support and the timber back-board and hinge. There are two holes at either end of the frame through which two small nails go into the timber back-board, to hold the entire picture sandwich together.



Gladys Laycock, *A Gentleman* (Colin Young Caird) 1926, in a new frame by David Butler



Label inserted behind ivory panel of Gladys Laycock miniature, *A Gentleman* (Colin Young Caird) 1926

The date of the extant frame is unknown. Other examples of Laycock's miniatures are housed in cast metal frames of a more elaborate, earlier type, for example *The sisters* c1916 which is in the AGNSW's miniatures collection. The inconsistency between the two types of frames suggests *A Gentleman* may not be in its original frame. However, even if the frame is original, it would be preferable to offer the ivory more adequate support and clearance from the glazing. Additionally, the current frame creates issues for exhibiting the work, leaving it vulnerable to theft and moisture damage.

Before addressing these possible issues, the originality of the frame needs to be determined through comparative examination of the extant frame and the AGNSW's miniature collection's frames. The Australian miniatures in the collection date between 1905 and 1920 and were purchased between 1905 and 1964. The frames range from elaborate cast metal adornments to simple metal outlining, much like the frame housing *A Gentleman*. Both the ivory and the frames which house them take either a circular, oval or rectangular shape. Most of the frames have a stand or a place in which a stand could be attached to allow the work to be displayed in a domestic context. Some are specifically made to be pinned to a shirt. Other frames have a loophole detailed into the top of the frame design which could be used to pin the work onto a board or hang it for exhibition. Many of the frames are also Hardy Bros frames. Amongst these frames, there are consistencies with the existing Laycock frame. Most of the rectangular and Hardy Bros frames in the collection have a similarly simple design to the Laycock frame. Some have holding pins which the Laycock frame also accommodates. Additionally,

the double hanging style and Hardy Bros brand which is seen in many of these frames are also features of the Laycock frame. These accumulative features convey significant consistencies between the AGNSW's miniature collection's frames and the existing Laycock frame. This indicates the frame housing the Laycock miniature is original.

The Into the Light Acquisition Fund also had its frame conservator David Butler analyse the frame. He concluded that although there is no way of proving authenticity without provenance it can be concluded that the frame is original. The elements of the frame, artwork and original notes all fit together perfectly in a frame which a modern framer could not make. As seen in the AGNSW's collection, the extant frame is a type of frame one would expect this kind of artwork to be housed in. Hence, it is very unlikely that the frame isn't original.

Into the Light will keep the extant frame due to its originality. However, the challenges related to its vulnerability to theft, moisture damage and installation into an exhibition remain. As a result, David Butler will create a secondary frame to house the ivory and the original frame to mitigate these issues. This shadow box will protect the original frame and artwork during travel and installation, as well as make the whole work larger to avoid theft. It will no longer be necessary to have glazing on the original frame as it will be moved on to the encompassing frame which will prevent exposing the artwork to rapid humidity and temperature change. This will protect the artwork from warping, splitting and humidity damage. David has chosen to design a simple shadow box in order avoid any distractions from the work itself. He will sit the artwork and the original frame on a black background and build a black frame around it.

A Gentleman is a stunning watercolour on ivory miniature which celebrates Laycock's art practice and the tradition of Australian female miniature artists from the early 20th century. The work depicts the subject on a plain light blue background which highlights Laycock's skilled detailing and apt use of vivid colour. The layers of watercolour on the ivory produce an organic glow which is enticing. The classic metal frame beautifully borders the artwork so it can be observed without distraction. The metal enhances the subtle radiance emitted through the interaction between the watercolour and the ivory. David Butler's conservation efforts will keep the work safe and allow the frame and artwork to stay together for the Into the Light Collection. Having this frame kept with the work enriches the viewing of the work due to its beautiful interaction and originality.

Bridget Hoban



Gladys Laycock, *The sisters* c1916, watercolour on ivory, 9 x 11.4 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales

Notes

- 1 *Focus on The Collection Series: Australian and European Miniatures*, 1st edn., Trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2000.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 'New Acquisition: Florence Rodway, Stella Rodway', *Look Magazine*, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2022.
- 4 *Focus on The Collection Series*, Trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, p.1.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid, p. 2.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 'New Acquisition', *Look Magazine*.
- 10 *Focus on The Collection Series*, Trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.
- 11 Ibid, p. 2.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid, p. 4.

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- The Art Gallery of New South Wales, *Focus on The Collection Series: Australian and European Miniatures*, 1st edn., Sydney, Trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2000.
- The Art Gallery of New South Wales, 'New Acquisition: Florence Rodway, Stella Rodway', *Look Magazine*, 2022, p 66-67.

SHEILA FOUNDATION

Into the Light Acquisition Fund 2021

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

Eliza Burton

Researcher/writer

Eliza has a Bachelor of Arts (English and Cultural Studies and History of Art) from the University of Western Australia and a Master of Art Curatorship from the University of Melbourne. She is passionate about the ongoing research and rediscovery of Australian women artists and completed a thesis exploring gender-focussed art collecting through a case study of the Sheila Foundation. She has also blogged for the Sheila blog. Currently based in Melbourne, Eliza works as Front of House Manager for auction house Deutscher and Hackett. She has experience in arts writing, exhibition management and commercial operations through her work for Sculpture by the Sea and volunteer work across several Melbourne arts institutions, including Gertrude Contemporary and the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.

David Butler

Framer

My introduction to framing began with commercial picture framing upon arrival in Australia in 1976. I began working for the AGNSW in 1987, initially as an assistant conservator under the guidance of Malgorzata Sawicki. This gradually became a mixture of conservation work and replicating new frames derived from photographs in the AG's archives. I moved to the Blue Mountains in 1991 and had a home studio built on our property. In 1995, I began job sharing with Bassia Dabrowa, after which I devoted my time entirely to fabricating new frames from my home studio. Working part time for the AGNSW enabled me to work for other clients, mainly public institutions. Public collections for which I've made frames include the National Gallery of Victoria, National Gallery of Australia, NSW National Trust, Historic Houses Trust, State Library of NSW. I have a particular interest in the replication of 19th century frames but also have considerable experience in framing works of 20th century and contemporary artists. I ceased working for the AGNSW in 2017 and currently confine my work to a few select clients, with whom I have an established working relationship.

John Cruthers

Publication editor

John Cruthers is an art adviser, collector and gallerist. Working from 1974, he and his mother Sheila Cruthers assembled the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art. It was gifted to the University of Western Australia in 2007 and is Australia's largest stand-alone collection of women's art. In 1985 he began working professionally with Australian private collectors, including Rupert Murdoch and TV producers Reg and Joy Grundy. His enthusiasm for southeast Asian art was kindled in 2013 and he has travelled widely in the region learning about its art and artists. In 2019 he opened 16albermarle Project Space to share his passion for southeast Asian art with Australian audiences. His work on Sheila's Into the Light Acquisition Fund allows him to continue the collecting he began with his mother almost 50 years ago, and to support and mentor young researchers and art historians.

Anne Gaulton

Paintings conservator

For Anne Gaulton, in her role as conservator, working with artists, curators and art historians has become an essential and most loved part of her practice. The Into the Light project offers such a wonderful opportunity (even though the artists are long gone) to discover something of their lives, artistic intentions and the arts and social fabric of the day. In a similar role, but with living contemporary Australian artists, Anne regularly works alongside artists to assist with conservation aspects of art making, long term maintenance and installation. She sees increasingly that the conservation profession itself also has a social context, despite its valid technical and material concerns, both in terms of what is valuable enough to be conserved and who does the conserving. The art object can no longer be treated as a singular thing but must be understood in terms of its complex historical and contemporaneous relations.

Bridget Hoban

Researcher/writer

Bridget Hoban is a student at the Australian National University studying International Relations and Art History and Curatorship. She has a keen interest in women artists in Australia and the transformation of art historical lenses to fully understand and appreciate these artists and their work. Bridget has spent time this year working with paintings conservator Anne Gaulton on condition and treatment reports. This work has introduced her both to the Into the Light project and conservation. Bridget will be writing an essay on the framing of the Gladys Laycock ivory portrait as a part of the 2021 Into the Light project.

Robyn Johnston

Researcher/writer

Robyn Johnston is a writer, curator and producer of creative projects. She brings to her work a keen sense of audience, developed over a long career as an arts broadcaster and producer for ABC Radio National. Working as a freelance curator of multi-disciplinary exhibition and event projects enriches her practice as a researcher and storyteller. The drive is to create experiences, whether on the page or in the space, that not only offer insight and real information, but have the power to move people. The pursuit of History of Art studies at the University of Western Australia arose from a lifelong engagement with the visual arts. Robyn has a deep interest in Italian art and culture, and an abiding connection with the landscapes and artists of Western Australia.

Maria Karageorge**Researcher/writer**

Maria Karageorge is a Sydney-based writer and researcher interested in the early modern decorative arts of China and southeast Asia, material culture and women's histories. In 2021 she completed her Honours in Art History at the University of Sydney, after graduating with a Bachelor of Commerce (Liberal Studies) majoring in Marketing. She was awarded the Francis Stuart Prize for her work on Export History and visuality in 18th century Canton. She has worked with the Department of Art History, University of Sydney, researching women-centred exhibitions for Womanifesto and the legacy of the 1933 Carnegie report on museums and galleries in Australia. Previously, she worked for Bonhams Australia, the National Art School and the Powerhouse Museum, and collaborated with the Art Gallery of New South Wales to produce video content for ArtExpress.

Stephanie Cusick Markerink**Researcher/writer**

Steph Markerink is a Sydney-based writer and researcher, currently working in marketing and communications for the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA). Prior to joining the MCA, Steph worked in curatorial and communications teams in several Australian arts organisations including Arts Project Australia, the Sheila Foundation and Brunswick St Gallery. Steph received her Master of Arts and Cultural Management from The University of Melbourne in 2022, and her Bachelor of Arts Majoring in Art History and English Literature in 2020. In her research projects, Steph works to overturn gender bias in the arts by sharing and celebrating the contribution of Australian women and non-binary artists, both historical and contemporary. This is most evident in her research project, WAWA (Wonderful Aussie Women Artists), an online community where free resources on Australian women artists are shared in an accessible and engaging format.

Annabelle Mentzines**Researcher/writer**

Annabelle Mentzines graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Sydney in 2022 with a double major in History and Art History. She is currently completing her Art History honours under Professor Mark Ledbury. Her research interests include understanding the structural reasons for and research approaches that can help challenge the lack of prominent female artists in art history, particularly within an Australian context. In her internship with the Sheila Foundation in 2022 she has compiled biographical and analytical information about the artists from the Into the Light Acquisitions for 2021. This includes research on Constance Tempe Manning, Beatrix Colquhoun, Theo Anderson, Polly Hurry, Elma Roach and Aline Cusack.

Alexandra Mitchell**Researcher/writer**

Alexandra Mitchell is a Sydney based researcher, writer, artist, curator and program facilitator. Mitchell has a Master of Curating and Cultural Leadership (2018) and Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours)/Arts (2016) from UNSWADA/UNSW. As Intern for Sheila Foundation in Sydney from 2019-21 she has researched and written biographies on Into the Light collection artists including Alice Muskett, Aline Cusack, Jessie Scarvell, Annie Potter, Gladys Gibbons, Edith Wall and Erica McGilchrist. In 2022 she returned to Sheila Foundation as a writer/researcher to revisit the career of Aline Cusack after an exciting donation of a painting by Cusack to the Foundation. Mitchell has curated numerous exhibitions including Elizabeth Rankin: Pyjama Girl at Murray Art Museum Albury. She has exhibited her work in group exhibitions including at Critical Animals, The Lock Up Newcastle and Hazelhurst Regional Gallery, Gympie.

Dr Juliette Peers**Art historian/mentor**

Juliette Peers is a creative thinker, historian, curator and cultural producer. Her interests span classical art and design history, popular culture, feminism and cultural politics. They favour unstable, outlying, queer and feminist narratives, engage with images and mythologies of the feminine and traverse film, literature, dance, celebrities, fandoms, royalty, statues, public monuments, fashion and dolls. She taught design history at RMIT University from 1994-2019 and has worked as a curator on projects with public galleries in Australia and Europe, Britain and North America, as well as employment at the National Gallery of Victoria and the McClelland Gallery. She is on the editorial advisory board of *Artlink* magazine and has published recently with *Artlink* and *Art Monthly Australasia*.

Jennifer Yang**Researcher/writer**

Jennifer Yang graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) majoring in Art History in 2022. Her research centres on east and southeast Asian modern and contemporary art, and her dissertation on the contemporary Chinese-Indonesian artist Tintin Wulia was awarded with the University Medal. Jennifer has interned with Museum MACAN's curatorial and collections department in 2019-20, worked collaboratively with the Art Gallery of New South Wales' public programs team for the 2021 ArtExpress Exhibition, and has been awarded for her speech responding to Samoan-Australian artist Angela Tiatia's work at the AGNSW's 2021-22 Matisse retrospective. Her recent work includes an essay on contemporary southeast Asian photography, published by the University of Colombia's *Undergraduate Journal of Art History*, and an article on the "forgotten" Chinese-Indonesian painter Chiang Yu Tie written with the support of the Sydney Southeast Asian Centre and published by *New Mandala*.

Artworks purchased and restored with the support of our donors 2021

Ethel Anna Stephens, *Roses on Panel: Marie van Houte* 1893, oil on cedar panel, 61 x 19 cm
Theo Anderson, *Violets* 1895, oil on canvas, 25.5 x 40.9 cm
Beatrice Colquhoun, *Flowers* 1908, oil on canvas, 30.5 x 36 cm
Aline M Cusack, *Pat* 1911, oil on canvas on board, 31.3 x 25.7 cm (panel)
Daisy Rossi, *Fairy Waters, Hawkhurst* 1911, oil on canvas, 17.7 x 35.7 cm
Gladys Laycock, *A Gentleman (Colin Young Caird)* 1926, watercolour on ivory, 10.1 x 12.8 cm
Elma Roach, *Sanary, South of France* 1934, oil on canvas, 38 x 46 cm
Louise Thomas, *Minehead* late 1930s, oil on board, 31 x 41.5 cm
Constance Tempe Manning, *Untitled (Self-portrait in sunhat)* c1940s, watercolour, 33 x 26.5 cm
Elizabeth Colquhoun, *The artist's mother* c1950, oil on canvas on board, 49.5 x 39.5 cm
Elizabeth Colquhoun, *Self-portrait* c1960s, oil on canvas on board, 44.2 x 35 cm
Polly Hury, *Daffodils* c1950s, oil on board, 36 x 30.4 cm

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Katrina and Craig Burton
Marilyn Burton
Elaine Baker and John Cruthers
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McClements Foundation
Sue McDonald
Alexandrea Thompson

Acknowledgements

Paintings conservation	Anne Gaulton
Works on paper conservation	Rosemary Peel
Framing	David Butler
Photography	Jenni Carter
Research and writing	Eliza Burton
	Bridget Hoban
	Robyn Johnston
	Maria Karageorge
	Stephanie Cusick Markerink
	Annabelle Mentzines
	Alexandra Mitchell
	Dr Juliette Peers
	Jennifer Yang
Editor	John Cruthers & Dr Juliette Peers
Image research & rights	Annabelle Mentzines
Design	Josephine Kurniawan
Printing	Darkstar Digital

