
PRIMARY RESOURCE

INTRODUCTION



Capital and country: the Federation years 1900–1914 is an exhibition of paintings from the national art collection. The exhibition considers the parallel stories of Federation landscape painting in Australia and the art produced by Australians living and working in Europe from 1900 to 1914. This period in Australia has become known as the Federation era. It encompasses the Edwardian era in Britain and the last years of the Belle Époque in France – the two main art centres in Europe at the time.

Capital and country is the first exhibition from the National Gallery of Australia to explore the richness and diversity of paintings in oil by key Australian painters working in this important era of the nation's history. The selected works take us on a journey across continents, from everyday events to those of historical significance, and from sunlit gum trees in the Adelaide Hills to dimly lit artists' studios in Paris where sophisticated portraits were conceived.

In Australia, the dominant subject matter became the Australian landscape bathed in sunlight. Australian audiences were keen to experience Federation landscapes in increasingly popular public galleries and through their own private patronage. Representations of bush, grazing and farmland, in good seasons and in drought, provided the nation's mainly European settler citizens with a sense of identity and belonging in this vast southern continent. Ideas of what might characterise a 'typically Australian' landscape, and an Australian 'school of painting' became a widely debated topic amongst artists, critics and viewers alike.

Concurrent with this enthusiastic nationalism was a continuing veneration of European culture. A pilgrimage to visit the great museums of Paris and London was considered something of a rite of passage for the serious Australian artist. A number of major Australian painters of the era lived, studied and worked in Europe for extended periods, trying their hand at success on this international stage. Portraiture and figure painting dominated the popular art scenes in which Australian expatriates sought acceptance.

The jubilant creativity of the first fourteen years of the new century was brought to an abrupt end with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. The nature and scale of human sacrifice during the war dramatically altered perceptions and values in Australia and around the world.

Looking back from contemporary, multicultural Australia, it can be difficult to see these paintings within the context of their time. In celebrating the Federation era one hundred years later, *Capital and country* seeks to encourage their appreciation as important works of art made with optimistic fervour as a new nation was born.



SUMMARY

In Years 5 and 6, students make and respond to works of art both independently, and with their peers, teachers and community. Students investigate subject matter to represent what they see and experience in the real world. They use available materials, media and technologies to make art in a range of forms and practice the particular artistic traditions they have learned about, including drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking and digital works. Students respond to their own, their peers' and artists' works of art. They explain the meaning behind their art. They also talk about the skills artists need to make art. They recognise that different people interpret works of art in different ways and that these people include artists and audiences.

MAKING

6.1 Experiment with and create 2D, 3D and 4D images and objects based on imagination and a deepening understanding of their world

- creating images, objects and spaces based on personal experience, knowledge and identity
- exploring how the natural and man-made world is a source of ideas for visual artists
- assembling materials in a variety of ways to create works of art about what they see and experience in the real world
- exploring subject matter of personal and social interest from particular viewpoints including issues, objects and the imaginary world

6.2 Select and use different media and techniques to explore visual arts ideas

- selecting and using different media techniques when combining traditional and digital technologies, media, materials and processes
- using different artistic concepts, for example colour, tone, light, scale and abstraction, in the interpretation of subject matter

6.3 Develop art-making skills and techniques utilising media, visual arts practices and viewpoints suitable to particular purposes

- investigating a range of art-making techniques to explore and develop skills, including traditional and digital technologies, media, materials and processes

6.4 Make works of visual art as representations of self and others across places, times, cultures and societies

- collaborating to create works of art, for example building an installation of a sculpture, designing and painting a mural, making a video
- justifying and refining decisions when responding to a creative challenge

RESPONDING

6.7 Investigate values and meanings in their own and others' works of visual arts

- comparing and contrasting how various representational forms evoke reactions, values and meanings that may differ from their own
- analysing how artists construct meaning, recognising skills, techniques, materials and forms
- applying visual and spatial terminology and principles when communicating reasons for preferences about their own and others' works of art

6.8 Identify and discuss a range of works of art and how they may be interpreted in different ways

- investigating traditions and conventions in works of art, such as genres and techniques, suited to the representation of different subject matter
- discussing how interpretation of works of art is affected by cultural, social and environmental factors and by the family
- considering the rights and responsibilities of artists and designers when representing and critiquing their own ideas and those of others

6.8 Identify and analyse ways that societies, cultures and eras of Australia, the Asia region and the world are represented by artists and designers

- identifying beliefs that audiences and artists hold about taste, tradition, expression and creativity in visual arts
- discussing the functions of a range of works of art in communities and environments
- exploring how works of art have been re-conceptualised across cultures, times and places



THE AUSTRALIAN COLONIES

SUMMARY

The Year 5 curriculum provides a study of colonial Australia in the 1800s. Students look at the founding of British colonies and the development of a colony. They learn about what life was like for different groups of people in the colonial period. They examine significant events and people, political and economic developments, social structures, and settlement patterns.

KEY INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- What do we know about the lives of people in Australia's colonial past and how do we know?
- How did an Australian colony develop over time and why?
- How did colonial settlement change the environment?
- What were the significant events and who were the significant people that shaped Australian colonies?

STRAND: HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

- The nature of convict or colonial presence, including the factors that influenced patterns of development, aspects of the daily life of the inhabitants (including Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples) and how the environment changed
- The impact of a significant development or event on a colony; for example, frontier conflict, the gold rushes, the Eureka Stockade, internal exploration, the advent of rail, the expansion of farming, drought.
- The role that a significant individual or group played in shaping a colony; for example, explorers, farmers, entrepreneurs, artists, writers, humanitarians, religious and political leaders, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

STRAND: UNDERSTANDING AND HISTORICAL SKILLS

- Chronology, terms and concepts
 - Sequence historical people and events
 - Use historical terms and concepts
- Perspectives and interpretations
 - Identify points of view in the past and present
- Explanation and communication
 - Use a range of communication forms (oral, graphic, written) and digital technologies

AUSTRALIA AS A NATION

SUMMARY

The Year 6 curriculum moves from colonial Australia to the development of Australia as a nation, particularly after 1900. Students explore the factors that led to Federation and experiences of democracy and citizenship over time.

KEY INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- Why and how did Australia become a nation?
- How did Australian society change throughout the twentieth century?
- Who were the people who came to Australia? Why did they come?
- What contribution have significant individuals and groups made to the development of Australian society?

STRAND: HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

- Key figures and events that led to Australia's Federation, including British and American influences on Australia's system of law and government.
- The contribution of individuals and groups, including Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islanders and migrants, to the development of Australian society, for example in areas such as the economy, education, science, the arts, sport.

STRAND: UNDERSTANDING AND HISTORICAL SKILLS

- Chronology, terms and concepts
 - Sequence historical people and events
 - Use historical terms and concepts
- Historical questions and research
 - Identify questions to inform an historical inquiry
- Perspectives and interpretations
 - Identify points of view in the past and present
- Explanation and communication
 - Develop texts, particularly narratives and descriptions, which incorporate source materials
 - Use a range of communication forms (oral, graphic, written) and digital technologies

Curriculum information can be found at:

<http://www.acara.edu.au>

<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au>



Frederick McCUBBIN

Triumphal Arch at Princes Bridge, Melbourne 1901



painted in Melbourne
oil on pine panel, 26 x 34.4 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, given by Hugh McCubbin to the Commonwealth as a first-hand record of a great historical event and to mark the centenary of the birth of Frederick McCubbin 1955

The large Triumphal Arch dominates this small composition, dividing the dark, scumbled foreground from the luminous golden light of the sky. Although there are no people depicted in this sketch by Frederick McCubbin, he has managed to convey a sense of their presence, and has captured an air of grandeur and importance about this particular moment on Princes Bridge in Melbourne, in May 1901.

Five months previously, on 1 January 1901, the federation of Australia's six states to form the Commonwealth of Australia had been formalised and celebrated in Sydney's Centennial Park. In May, in Melbourne, the first Federal Parliament was opened. The Duke of Cornwall and York visited Australia to officiate at the ceremony, confirming the place of the new nation as still very much a part of Britain. On 9 May, the day of the opening, the Duke and Duchess travelled through Australia's temporary capital city of Melbourne from St Kilda to the Exhibition Building in Carlton Gardens. Their path was decorated by flags, streamers and a number of large temporary archways, and attended by crowds of onlookers.

McCubbin painted this sketch on the spot, capturing the excitement surrounding this historical event. *Triumphal Arch at Princes Bridge, Melbourne* is McCubbin's first response in paint to the great national occasion of Federation. He would go on to paint some of his most significant and personal responses to the landscape during the Federation years.

Born in Melbourne in 1855, Frederick McCubbin is among the first generation of Australian painters who were both born and trained in this country. From the late 1800s through the Federation years, McCubbin contributed to the story of Australian art as a teacher and major landscape painter. McCubbin was passionately patriotic and one of a number of artists who were excited about the possibilities of a 'national art', and about exploring what might comprise a 'school of painting' that could be considered distinctively Australian in subject matter and style.

DISCUSSION

Discuss the concept of a 'national art' or an 'Australian school of painting'. Key ideas to consider include: Do you know of other 'schools of painting' from art history? What are some of the characteristics of a 'school of painting'? Why might ideas of an 'Australian school' have been important at the time of Federation? What might artists have been looking for to characterise an Australian school? (Look around the exhibition and see if you can pick up some key ideas.) Does this include Aboriginal Australian painting? How might it differ from contemporary ideas of Australian art?

There are a number of paintings in the exhibition by Frederick McCubbin. Find the other paintings and compare them. How are they different? How are they similar?

RESEARCH

In 1901 Australia celebrated Federation and became the Commonwealth of Australia.

What did Federation mean to Australia? Research the process of Federation and other related works of art. Construct a timeline showing the important milestones.

A significant part of the federation process was the development of a Constitution for Australia. What is a constitution? What other countries have one? Compare our constitution to the Constitution of the United States of America. How is ours different from or similar to theirs?

Research other art that relates to Federation. This might include, for example, the invitations designed for the opening of the Federal Parliament, paintings of key events, or designs for the Australian flag.

ACTIVITY

Create a painting or drawing of a particular moment of interest in the story of Federation. This might be in the years leading up to 1901, or the events of the Federation era from 1901 to 1914. How might you convey the feeling at that time with colour, subject matter and composition?



Rupert BUNNY

Shearing: Australia House sketches c.1914



painted in La Rochefoucauld, France
oil on cardboard, 34 x 45.2 cm (composition)
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
acquired 1969

Rupert Bunny always wanted to paint a mural. The closest he came to such a dream was being invited to develop designs for the famous Parisian tapestry-weaving workshop, Manufacture des Gobelins. (However, this never eventuated, as it would have required renouncing his Australian citizenship; something Bunny was not willing to do.) When he heard about the possibility of a mural competition for the proposed Australian diplomatic mission in London, he must have been very excited. Australia House was Australia's first international diplomatic presence and, built between 1913 and 1918, it became the first formal building constructed to represent the new nation following Federation.

Bunny was working in France at this time, and may never have received a copy of the formal terms for the Australia House mural commission, gazetted in London and throughout Australia. Advertised in early 1914, the competition was open to Australians both at home and abroad, but was suspended shortly afterwards due to the outbreak of the First World War. Regardless, Bunny painted and submitted a number of oil sketches on themes of Australian life, based on what he understood to be themes for the decorations intended for six key rooms.

Bunny painted two scenes depicting the populace of the Commonwealth, with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, alongside farmers and soldiers, children, animals and mythical figures in a joyful procession. The sketch *Shearing: Australia House sketches* is one of Bunny's four thematic scenes focusing on the bounty of Australia's natural resources and the economic significance of pastoral production, including gold panning, fishing and wheat harvesting. In each of these scenes Bunny also inserted a mythical figure relevant to each theme; for example, in *Shearing: Australia House sketches* he includes Pan, a Greek god who watched over shepherds and their flocks in Arcadia.

By the time Rupert Bunny completed these sketches he had been living and working away from Australia for almost thirty years. Departing Australia for Europe in 1884 he studied in Paris under famed Salon artist Jean-Paul Laurens, and made just one return visit in 1911, before his formal return in 1933. Bunny became the most successful Australian expatriate artist of his time in France. He was the first Australian artist to exhibit at the Paris Salon, in 1888, and the only Australian painter to have work acquired by the French Government before the First World War.¹

DISCUSSION

Do you think Bunny conveys a sense of Australian life in his painting *Shearing: Australia House sketches*? Why or why not?

There is one other painting in the exhibition by Rupert Bunny. Compare these two works. How are they different? How are they similar?

Examine the brushstrokes in the painting. Describe how Bunny has applied paint and what overall effect it has on the painting.

RESEARCH

Australia House was designed not only to represent Australia as the High Commission, but also as a 'home away from home' for Australians abroad.²

Research Australia House, its development, exhibitions that were held there and some of the other works commissioned for this mission.

ACTIVITY

Design a mural to represent contemporary Australia for the interiors of rooms in your home or school.

¹ David Thomas, 'Bunny, Rupert Charles Wulsten (1864–1947)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University [http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bunny-rupert-charles-wulsten-5422/text9195].

² Olwyn Pyke, 'Australia House', in Melissa Harper & Richard White (eds), *Symbols of Australia: uncovering the stories behind the myths*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney and National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2010, p. 129.



Hans HEYSEN

The saplings 1904



Painted in Adelaide
oil on canvas, 120.5 x 90.3 cm,
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
bequest of Millie Hay Joyner 1993

In *The saplings*, a subtle morning glow envelops a stand of shaded young eucalypts in an area of the Adelaide Hills known as The Meadows. Hans Heysen's composition encourages our eye to travel through the trees to the warmth of the sunlight on the grassy patch beyond. This new light of morning, like the fading romance of the end-of-day, had captivated Australian landscape painters during the late 1890s and continued to do so into the early Federation years until around 1908.

Hans Heysen spent almost four years studying and painting in Europe, from 1899. Returning to Adelaide in 1903 he was struck by the clarity and brightness of Australian light and set about capturing in paint the effects of light on the landscape in the Adelaide Hills. He noted later in a letter to friend and fellow-artist Lionel Lindsay (20 March 1912), that in Europe, 'you look at scenery through a veil of atmosphere; in Australia you so often look straight through to the scene without anything interposing between you and it.'¹

In *The saplings* Heysen draws our attention to the rough texture of peeling bark and the variety of colours and tones in the trunks of the gum trees. The painting represents one of Heysen's early close observations of the eucalypt, which became the central subject of his art from this time. Heysen is now most well known for his role in re-envisioning the image of the gum tree in Australian art, and in helping the tree to become a symbol of Australia.

DISCUSSION

What do you think is the most important visual element in this work (colour, line, shape, form, tone, texture, scale)? Explain why you chose this element.

'It represents a typical Australia scene', wrote one South Australian reviewer about Hans Heysen's first images of gum trees in 1904.² Do you think this looks like a characteristic Australian scene? Why or why not?

RESEARCH

Research some of Heysen's later works of gum trees and compare them with *The saplings*. How is this painting similar? How is it different?

Research the works of other Australian artists from this era who were fascinated by the effects of sunlight. Compare and contrast these with painters of the 1880s and 1890s, now known as the Australian Impressionists, and then again with more contemporary Australian artists.

ACTIVITY

This painting depicted a 'typical Australian scene', when it was created in 1904. Consider what might be a modern 'typical Australian scene' and create your own version. Consider how technology and art materials have changed since 1904 and incorporate these new options into your work.

Using a technique called frottage (rubbing of texture onto paper), take rubbings of bark from a range of trees from around your school. Working with a partner or in a small group, compare the different patterns, markings and effects that have been created using this technique.

¹ Cited in Colin Theile, *Heysen of Hahndorf*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1969, p. 288.

² 'Hans Heysen's brush: a visit to the studio', *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 18 May 1904, p. 6.



HARRY GARRISON 1876

Harry GARLICK

The drover 1906



likely painted near Orange, NSW
oil on canvas board, 60.8 x 45.4 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
purchased 1972

Harry Garlick painted *The drover* in response to the 'Federation drought' (1895–1903), which reached its climax in the summer of 1901–02. The drought had a devastating effect on the sheep, cattle and wheat-farming industries throughout much of Australia.

Garlick conveys the heat of the midday sun on this arid stock route with a simplified, bleached colour palette. The artist's use of perspective emphasises the distance between the drover and his flock and the hills on the horizon. Although this represents a generic, unidentified parched landscape, it is likely that Garlick painted *The drover* in the Orange/Bathurst region of western New South Wales where he grew up.

As a young man Garlick travelled each week from Orange to Bathurst to attend painting classes with Sydney painter Arthur Collingridge. After relocating to Sydney from Orange in 1896 he attended night classes with Julian Ashton, worked as a clerk and published drawings and cartoons in the *Bulletin*, often featuring as well as introduced Australian animals.

DISCUSSION

Compare this painting with Florence Fuller's *Dawn landscape* c. 1905 and Rupert Bunny's *Shearing: Australia House sketches* c. 1914. Examine each artist's technique, use of perspective, colour, brushstrokes and composition. How are they different? How are they similar? Discuss the styles of painting and how they suggest different interpretations of pastoral production.

Discuss the artist's use of a simplified tonal palette and one-point perspective to give the impression of a vast, open landscape.

RESEARCH

Research Australia's climate from 1901 to now. Look at how it may have changed over time, and investigate significant periods of drought in our past. How do these changes in weather affect the land and the animals and people that inhabit it?

Use the National Gallery's website (<http://www.nga.gov.au/Collections/>) to research some contemporary paintings by Australian artists, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who have responded to weather effects. Describe how these paintings are different to *The drover*.

ACTIVITY

Create a landscape drawing using one-point perspective. This could be a landscape you are familiar with (within your home or school) or one from your imagination. Think about using perspective, colour, brushstrokes and composition to suggest the season, weather or time of day.



W.C. PIGUENIT

Near Liverpool, New South Wales c.1908



Painted in Sydney
oil on canvas, 74.2 x 125 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
acquired with the assistance of the Masterpieces for the Nation Fund 2005

W.C. Piguenit was a Romantic realist, inspired by a love of the landscape in Tasmania and New South Wales. Born in Hobart in 1836 he became Australia's first locally born and trained professional landscape painter. He is recognised for a career that straddles the colonial and Federation periods in style and subject matter.

Piguenit's late colonial images explore a sense of the sublime in nature, with soaring mountain ranges and formidable expansive vistas. At the time of Federation, Piguenit was Australia's most senior professional landscape painter and he responded to the significance of the occasion with a grand picture of the new nation's highest mountain, Mount Kosciuszko. Piguenit then turned his attention towards capturing the atmospheric effects of Australian light and weather over the cultivated plains around the Sydney region.

In *Near Liverpool, New South Wales* Piguenit creates a dramatic study of billowing clouds with impasto and a boldly white palette. By contrast, in the foreground, he captures a herd of cattle grazing calmly on the fertile green plains. Piguenit's inclusion of a cluster of gum trees in the left of the picture firmly locates this striking, lush pastoral scene in Australia.

DISCUSSION

Describe some of the features that you can see in this landscape. Discuss the effect of colours, composition, perspective and subject on the mood of the picture.

What is the 'sublime'? Do you think this picture has sublime elements? Discuss this concept as a class or in small groups.

RESEARCH

Piguenit was born in Hobart to a convict father. Numerous convicts were artists, or had taught themselves to be artists in the colonies. Investigate artists from Australia's convict past. Where did many of the convicts come from? Why were they sent to Australia? What happened to them once they arrived in Australia? What did they paint?

Research Piguenit's colonial landscape paintings and other Federation era works (you might find these in the library or online through the various state gallery websites). Discuss some of the differences between colonial landscape painting and the Federation era landscapes.

Investigate the key concepts and ideas of the movement known as 'Romantic realism' that inspired a number of Australian painters. Give examples of its key concepts and those involved with the movement across the arts (music, visual arts, and literature).

ACTIVITY

Using Romantic realism as your inspiration, depict a scene that illustrates drama and emotion. This can be done with a medium of your choice (paint, pencils, photography).

Create a painting that uses the impasto technique.



Frederick McCUBBIN

Flood waters 1913



Painted in Melbourne
oil on canvas, 92.5 x 182 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
purchased 1973

In 1907 Frederick McCubbin spent six months abroad in Europe. He saw first-hand for the first time major works of European art, and was most inspired by the Romantic landscapes of British artists J.M.W. Turner and John Constable. On his return to Australia he saw his home landscape afresh. Rather than the grey-green palette he had conveyed in his early work, he now saw his surrounds in the colours of the Australian opal: purples, pinks, blues, yellows, reds and a range of vivid greens. This new vision and opalescent palette can be seen in works after this time, such as *Flood waters* 1913.¹

In works such as *Flood waters*, McCubbin used a ground of lead white to create luminosity in his colours. He also employed a technique of painting, scraping off, layering and reworking the surface for complex and striking effects of colour and texture.²

McCubbin painted his most sophisticated and personal images during the Federation era. He began to explore a freer approach to representing the landscape, with more emphasis on conveying atmosphere and his sense of place rather than on the purely literal.³ *Flood waters* was inspired by one of the views near McCubbin's property in South Yarra, looking from his neighbour's land, the 'Como' estate, over the swollen banks of the Yarra River.

DISCUSSION

How has McCubbin created atmosphere in this painting?

How does McCubbin's choice of colours affect the overall mood of the painting?

Despite the significant influence of his visit to Europe, McCubbin advocated that 'the Australian artist can best fulfil his highest destiny by remaining in his own country and studying that which lies about him...'⁴ Discuss this statement. What do you think McCubbin means? Why do you think McCubbin would encourage artists not to leave Australia? Why do you think many artists wanted to leave Australia at this time?

RESEARCH

McCubbin was particularly moved by the Romantic landscapes of British artists J.M.W. Turner and John Constable that he saw in Europe in 1907.

Using the internet, research works by Turner and Constable. Can you see any similarities between these British artists' work and paintings by McCubbin?

What are some of the differences?

Explain what role Turner and Constable played in the landscape tradition. Are there other artists in this exhibition that have been influenced by these painters?

Is their influence still felt?

Research 'Romantic landscapes' and describe their key characteristics.

ACTIVITY

Create a work of art that conveys your feelings about your home or the area surrounding your home. It could be a drawing, painting, photograph or collage. Pay particular attention to features that are special to you.

¹ Gray, *McCubbin: last impressions 1907–1917*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2009, p. 58.

² Gray, 2009, p. 54.

³ Gray, 2009, p. 55.

⁴ Fredrick McCubbin in J.S. MacDonald, *The art of Fredrick McCubbin*, Lothian Book Publishing Co., Melbourne, 1916, pp. 91.



Richard HAYLEY-LEVER

A haven beneath the hill, St Ives c.1908



Painted in St Ives, England
oil on canvas, 140.5 x 164.5 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
purchased 1968

Born in Adelaide in 1876, Richard Hayley-Lever studied at Norwood Art School, under marine painter James Ashton. Ashton had spent time painting in the artists' colony at St Ives on the Cornish coast of Britain in the 1880s, and he likely inspired Hayley-Lever to travel to Europe to further his study. With the support of family, the young artist left for Europe in 1898 and settled in St Ives in 1899 where he lived and worked until 1911.

In this light-filled painting, *A haven beneath the hill, St Ives*, Hayley-Lever captures the atmospheric sea haze over the harbour and morning activities in this old fishing village. Lever applied his paint in a rhythmic, impressionistic manner, with small, colour-laden brushstrokes building up the form, depth and texture of the picture.

St Ives had attracted a steady influx of artists from the late 1800s, and by the turn of the century it was a lively cosmopolitan arts hub. The painting school that developed in the artists' colony emphasised the importance of painting *en plein air*, and a number of Australian painters there spent time capturing the local landscape through the region's heyday until the end of the first decade of the twentieth century.

DISCUSSION

Have you ever tried to paint or draw *en plein air*? What do you think would be some of the challenges in painting outside?

RESEARCH

Research the art movement known as Impressionism. What were its key concepts? How did the British, French, Australian and American Impressionists differ from each other? What are some of the similarities?

ACTIVITY

Create your own painting *en plein air*.



Hilda RIX NICHOLAS

Snow, Montmartre c. 1912



Painted in Paris
oil on canvas mounted on cardboard, 58.5 x 48.5 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
purchased 2008

Hilda Rix Nicholas lived and worked abroad from 1907, returning to Australia just before the end of the First World War in 1918. Based in Paris for nine years, she produced a strong body of figure studies and street scenes painted in locations from Paris to Tangier, developing a freer handling of paint, bold composition and a high key palette that suggests an understanding of Post-Impressionism, in addition to her exposure to French Impressionism.

The urban scene in *Snow, Montmartre* is likely a view from Hilda Rix Nicholas's Paris studio. She paints the intersecting rooftops, flattens the picture plane and, using quick short brush strokes, emphasises strong, simplified shapes. Her crisp, luminous, cool palette conveys the cold and stillness of the scene. The bright morning sunlight is captured in the stark, almost reflective quality of the white snow, which produces long blue shadows.

When Rix Nicholas returned to Australia in 1918, she turned her focus to the bush, and from the 1920s created distinctive nationalistic images of the Australian rural life; a genre primarily dominated by male painters. A tough, independent-minded painter, Rix Nicholas declared in an interview in the *Daily Telegraph* (9 June 1927) that '[w]omen should be allowed to do everything they prove themselves capable of. The work is the thing that matters, and not who does it.'

DISCUSSION

Discuss Nicholas's use of color and the application of white paint. What words would you use to describe its effect on the overall painting?

Describe the characteristics of this scene that make it look European rather than a typical Australian landscape.

RESEARCH

Research Post-Impressionism as an art movement and discuss its key concepts. What influence did Post-Impressionism have on modern art? How was this influence felt in Australia?

Compare this painting with some of Nicholas's later works that have been described as 'distinctive nationalistic images of the Australian rural life'. How are these images different to *Snow, Montmartre* c. 1912 and other paintings she created while abroad? How are they similar?

ACTIVITY

Using a digital camera, take a photo of a view from a window, such as Nicholas has done in *Snow, Montmartre* c. 1912. This might be from a window in your school, home or local shopping centre. Use this photo to create a drawing that emphasises distance and composition.



Ethel CARRICK

The quay, Milsons Point 1908



Painted in Sydney
oil on artists' board, 26.4 x 34.9 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
purchased 1975

A group of women and children have their backs to us, waiting for a ferry at Milsons Point on Sydney Harbour. It is 1908. The children's voluminous white frocks and the women's stylish daywear, sporting low, narrow waists, broad shoulders and wide-brimmed decorated hats, reflect the popular fashions of the day. Ethel Carrick rarely dated her paintings, yet her attention to capturing such details in these quick impressions has often provided historians with clues to when and where a work was completed.

The quay, Milsons Point is characteristic of Ethel Carrick's light-filled sketches of everyday moments in modern urban bourgeois life. Carrick has divided the composition with the band of green water. Her stylish, colourful figures are tonally balanced across the subdued lower foreground and, while she suggests distance through scaling and the faded, soft forms in the background, the bold forms and textured surface flatten the picture plane.

English-born and trained, Carrick visited Sydney for the first time in 1908 with her husband, Australian painter E. Phillips Fox. Following their marriage in 1905, the pair travelled widely from a base in Paris, painting lively impressions on small portable boards, in locations through France and Cornwall, Spain and North Africa, returning to Australia again in 1913.

DISCUSSION

How has the artist created texture in the painting?

How does the scene tell us something about the period in which it was painted?

Compare this image with Hans Heysen's *The saplings*. Do the colours and subject matter make Heysen's picture seem more 'characteristically Australian' than Carrick's?

Find a similar work by E. Phillips Fox painted one year later in France around 1909, and discuss some of the similarities and differences.

RESEARCH

Investigate the use of colour and light by the European Impressionists. How did this influence Australian artists?

ACTIVITY

Carry a sketchpad with you for a week and make sketches each day of everyday life. This might include friends in the schoolyard during lunchtime, or after school, people on the streets, in cafes or in shops or family members on the weekend.

In groups of 3 people: Take a piece of paper and fold it into three. Without unfolding the paper, the first person draws the foreground, the second draws the middle ground and the third draws the background. (Don't forget to think about the differences in scale, colour and detail.) Once you have finished, unfold the paper to reveal the whole drawing.



George W. LAMBERT

The sonnet c.1907



painted in London
oil on canvas, 113.3 x 177.4 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
bequest of John B. Pye 1963

George W. Lambert was known for his flamboyant personality and strong personal magnetism, which were important attributes for a popular society portrait painter of his time. On one occasion he is reported to have cartwheeled out of a party! Lambert became the most successful Australian expatriate figure painter working in London in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Born to an American father and an English mother in St Petersburg, Russia, Lambert spent his early years in Germany, and arrived in Australia aged 13.¹ In Sydney Lambert studied painting with Julian Ashton; in 1899 he was awarded a travelling scholarship allowing him to study abroad in Paris for two years before moving to London, where he lived and worked until 1921.

The sonnet was inspired by catching a glimpse in his London studio of three regular visitors: two of his fellow expatriate artists, Arthur Streeton and Thea Proctor, as well as one of Lambert's regular models, Kitty Powell. Lambert was reminded of a work he had seen in the Musée du Louvre in Paris, and wrote, 'it seemed to me a modernized version of Giorgione's "Fete Champetre"'. Now attributed to early Titian,² the original *Le concert champêtre* c. 1509 depicts two nude women in an Arcadian setting, conjured by the imagination of two young men as they listen to music and read poetry.

Like most expatriates, Lambert revelled in the opportunity to view important European works of art in the major museums of London and Paris. He became increasingly interested in the fashions within figure painting for making reference to the works of European Old Masters, and was excited by the possibilities of adding resonance to his contemporary imagery by paying homage to long-established conventions and sources.

DISCUSSION

How does Lambert suggest both the real and the imagined in the composition of this painting?

Look carefully at the way Lambert has painted the fabric. Describe the technique he has used to make it look so realistic. How is it different to the way he has painted the sky and the skin tones?

RESEARCH

Find out who the artist Julian Ashton was and why he was so important in the development of Australian art during the early and mid 1900s.

Investigate the other two artists who are featured in this painting, Arthur Streeton and Thea Proctor. Who were they? What was their relationship to Lambert? Research their lives and work and write a brief biography for each of them.

Using the internet, find an image of Giorgione/Titian's *Le concert champêtre* c. 1509. It has also been suggested that in *The sonnet*, Lambert makes reference to the French painter Edouard Manet's work *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* 1863, held in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.³ Research these two works and compare them with *The sonnet*. What are some similarities? How are they different? Discuss some of the allegorical meanings and interpretations of *Le concert champêtre* that Lambert may have intended by referencing this image.

ACTIVITY

Draw or paint a portrait of a friend or family member. Incorporate elements of both the real and the imagined. This could be in relation to the setting, background, colour or composition.

If you were to make reference to a work of art in your own work, what would it be and how might you do this?

¹ Ron Radford in Anne Gray, *George W. Lambert retrospective: heroes and icons*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2001, p. vii.
² Lambert in his unpublished 'Autobiography of George Lambert' [1924], Lambert Family Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney, ML MSS A1811, cited in Anne Gray, *George W. Lambert retrospective: heroes and icons*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2007, p. 102.
³ Gray, 2007, p.102.



Rupert BUNNY

Qui vient? [*Who comes?*] c.1908



Painted in Paris
oil on canvas, 81 x 54.2 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
bequest of John B. Pye 1963

Rupert Bunny first travelled to Europe aged 19 and spent nearly fifty years as an expatriate. He became one of the most successful Australian expatriates in France in his own time, aided by a firm command of the French language and early successes in the Old Salon (Salon de la Société des Artistes Français).

Bunny possessed exceptional qualities as a decorative artist and colour painter and has become most well known for the sumptuous compositions of women at leisure that he painted during this era. Works such as *Qui vient?* [*Who comes?*] were first shown in London under the title, 'Days and nights in August'.¹ These paintings reveal Bunny's intuitive feeling for colour and impressionist pleasure in the effects of light on everyday subject matter.

Qui vient? [*Who comes?*] evokes a mood described as one of 'intimacy and luxurious leisure; of perfume, poetry and distant music'.² The colours in the painting are few – white, black, brown, red, yellow – and have been orchestrated so that small colour accents are played off against a basic theme. Warm sunlight, filtering through a boldly striped blind, colours the upper part of the picture whereas in the half-light below the blind, the flounced skirts shimmer translucently.

DISCUSSION

Compare Bunny's *Shearing: Australia House sketches* that are also in the exhibition. How has Bunny's technique changed over time?

RESEARCH

Using the National Gallery of Australia collection search [<http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/>] look at some of Bunny's other paintings. How does Bunny's subject matter differ from his Australian colleagues painting at the same time?

Research the period in French history known as the Belle Époque. What were the key characteristics of this period? How was its influence felt by Australian artists?

Research some of the artists that influenced Bunny such as Rubens, Velázquez, Gauguin, Bonnard, Moreau, Puvis de Chavannes, Degas and Picasso.

ACTIVITY

Create a collage of an interior space. Search for and collect images from photos, magazines and reproductions from this exhibition that can be found online at the Gallery's website. You might also use a digital camera to take photos that you could use in the collage. Think about the atmosphere you would like to convey, and how you might use colour, light and composition.

¹ Mary Eagle, *The art of Rupert Bunny in the Australian National Gallery*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, 1991, p. 60.

² Mary Eagle in Anne Gray (ed.), *Australian art in the National Gallery of Australia*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2002, p. 107.



Tom ROBERTS

Madame Hartl 1909–10



Painted in London
oil on canvas, 114.5 x 76.6 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
purchased 1969

The years before the First World War were the heyday of fancy dress in Edwardian England. Clubs and societies, like the Chelsea Art Club, held regular, lively events requiring a costume, such as the annual ball held at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in 1909.

Tom Roberts arrived at the ball dressed as a 'sundowner' or 'swagman'; the romanticised itinerant bush worker lauded in his nationalistic Australian paintings of the previous decade. Fellow Australian expatriate George W. Lambert, by comparison, fancied himself as the Flemish Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens.¹ Roberts's friend Ruby Hartl attended the ball elaborately attired as La Tornabuoni, the wife of Giovanni Tornabuoni, fifteenth-century Italian patron of the arts. Later in 1909, Roberts asked Ruby Hartl if she would pose for him in this striking costume.

Roberts had recently spent a large amount of time in the National Gallery in London, studying and copying a portrait titled *Philip IV of Spain in brown and silver* 1631–32 by the Spanish Old Master, Diego Velázquez. Inspired by Velázquez's masterful approach to colour, composition and realism, Roberts used his portrait of Ruby Hartl as an exercise in revitalising his approach to paint and portraiture.² His efforts were well-rewarded when the portrait was selected for display in 1910 in the famed annual Royal Academy exhibition in London. To his great joy, the work was the first work, in the first room of the exhibition, just one above the centre line of the 'salon hang'.

DISCUSSION

Look at the face and posture of Madame Hartl, the subject of this portrait. What words would you use to describe her?

Roberts was a good friend of the artist Frederick McCubbin, who is also featured in this exhibition. Compare the approach, technique and palette of works done by Roberts with those of McCubbin. What differences can you see? How are they similar?

RESEARCH

Research the life and work of Spanish Old Master artist Diego Velázquez. Look at his painting *Philip IV of Spain in brown and silver* 1631–32 as well as other portraits he painted. Study their composition and the application of paint. Why was Velázquez so popular in the late 1800s and into the twentieth century? Who are some of the other Australian painters who were influenced by his art (hint – there are several in this exhibition)? Compare the works by Velázquez and other Australian expatriates with Roberts's works and document the similarities and differences.

What is the Royal Academy? Why do you think it might have been so important for artists to have their work displayed in major exhibitions such as those held by the Royal Academy and the Paris Salons (Société des Artistes Français and Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts)? What is a 'salon hang'?

ACTIVITY

Draw yourself, a friend or family member in a costume of your choice. This might be from life, from photos or from your imagination.

1 Mary Eagle, in Anne Gray (ed.), *The Edwardians: secrets and desires*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, p. 216.

2 As above.



Violet TEAGUE

The boy with the palette 1911



Painted in Melbourne
oil on canvas, 175.5 x 108.5 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
gift of U.S. Teague 1976

The boy with the palette is one of Violet Teague's best-known paintings. It is a striking example of her adventurous, yet sophisticated approach to paint, form and composition. Teague's portraits from this time predominantly depict family, friends and other acquaintances, such as musicians and intellectuals from her upper middle-class Melbourne social circle. The boy depicted here is Theo Scharf (1899–1988), the son of a prominent Melbourne family. Scharf often painted with Teague in her Melbourne studio, and she portrays the young prodigy, here aged 12, with an assertive gaze and studied stance; with palette in hand, she shows him to be conscious of his talent and future.¹

Violet Teague was one of a group of financially independent middle-class Edwardian women who never married and devoted their lives to the pursuit of the then 'somewhat daring existence' of being 'a serious female artist'.² Women were in the majority of students trained in Australia's art schools from the late nineteenth century, yet only a small number of strong women painters came to the fore in this male dominated profession during the Federation years. Teague's economic independence allowed her to travel widely and to study in Brussels and England before returning to Melbourne.

Throughout the Federation era, despite the growing popularity and demand for images of the Australian landscape and a 'nation-building' sentiment, Teague continued to paint and exhibit society portraiture. Her works of this time reflect her interest in European trends in the traditional and the modern, as well as a strong influence from the works of Diego Velázquez and James Abbot McNeill Whistler that she had seen abroad.

The boy with the palette received favourable reviews in the press when it was first exhibited in the Federal Art Exhibition in Adelaide in 1913, and then the Women's Painters Exhibition in Sydney in the same year. Teague subsequently submitted the portrait to the esteemed New Salon (Salon de la Société des Artistes Français) in Paris in 1920 and was awarded a silver medal (also held in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia). In 1921 the work was selected to hang 'on the line' at the Royal Academy in London, next to a portrait by the much admired American-born, London-based painter John Singer Sargent.³

DISCUSSION

If you were having your portrait painted, how would you like to be represented?
How would you pose? What would your setting be? Would you be holding something?
What would it be? What would you wear?

RESEARCH

Research some of the artists whose work influenced Teague; this could include Velázquez and Whistler. Using the internet, find additional works by Teague in other collections.
Can you see how these artists influenced her work?

How has the representation of women artists changed over the past century? You might like to construct a timeline including some key female painters.

Research other Australian women artists from the Federation era. Select one artist and write a brief biography of her life, including the role of her art.

ACTIVITY

Create a portrait of a friend or family member. Add features that tell the viewer something about the sitter. Think carefully about the setting you might place them in, their pose, how they might be dressed or what they might be holding.

1 Anne Gray, 'Violet Teague: *The boy with the palette* 1911', cited in Anne Gray (ed.), *Face: Australian portraits 1880–1960*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2010, p. 78.

2 As above

3 Jane Clark, 'Introduction', in *Violet Teague*, The Beagle Press, 1999, p. 9.



Penleigh BOYD

The Federal Capital site 1913



Painted in Melbourne
oil on canvas, 151 x 274 cm
Historic Memorials Collection, Australian Parliament House, Canberra
purchased 1913

Following Federation in 1901 the search for the site in which to locate the Australian Federal Capital was played out with great controversy over almost a decade. While Melbourne remained the temporary capital until 1927, it had been agreed in the late 1890s that a capital city would be located with New South Wales, but no closer than 200 km to Sydney. In the early years of the new century possible locations were surveyed all across New South Wales, from Bombala to Orange, and from Hay to Tenterfield.¹ By 1908, the Federal Parliament finally reached a decision on the Monaro plains near Yass, now known as the Australian Capital Territory, with the capital to be named Canberra.

To positively publicise this hotly-contested decision, in 1912 the Historic Memorials Committee established a competition for artists to paint the selected region. The terms of the competition specified an oil painting of 4 feet by 6 feet (approximately 1.5 x 2.5 m), and a topographically accurate scene bathed in the bright clear sunlight of the 'midday effect'.² The specification of the midday effect reflects the popularity in the late Federation years of sunshine, and its growing acceptance as one of Australia's 'icons'. Around 1913, for example, the Australian government actively promoted Australia's sun to prospective British immigrants, as one of the healthy, attractive features of this country. (Until around 1908 the preference had been for the depiction of more ambient atmospheric morning and evening effects, possibly motivated by the serious nature of Federation.)

Two entrants to the Historic Memorials Committee competition were Sydney-based W. Lister Lister and Melbourne-born Penleigh Boyd. Both artists painted sun-drenched, grand vistas in tones of blue and gold, laden with national sentiment. Both images look across to the form of Black Mountain on the right, a significant central feature of modern day Canberra. In 1913 Lister Lister was awarded the first prize, and Boyd a surprise second prize. Both works were acquired by the Historic Memorials Committee and are now part of the Australian Parliament House Art Collection in Canberra.

Boyd was a Melbourne landscape painter, known for his grand, poetic pastoral scenes, mountain ranges and seascapes. Boyd studied in Melbourne before travelling to Europe in 1911 where he had success at the famed London exhibition venue the Royal Academy before returning to Australia in 1912.

DISCUSSION

Describe the technique, colour and use of light in this painting. How is it different to other paintings in the exhibition? How is it similar?

RESEARCH

Research the story of Canberra and its construction. Who designed the city? Can you find some of the drawings for the city online? What were some of the key ideas for this city?

The Boyd family is considered to be an Australian artistic dynasty, with members of the family establishing themselves over several generations as painters, artists, illustrators, sculptors, ceramists, writers, architects, graphic designers and musicians. Carry out a research project on the Boyd family in Australia. Using the information you have gathered, create a family tree of the Boyd family. This may be done using a computer or as a drawing.

ACTIVITY

Take a copy of this work from the National Gallery's website, or photocopy the reproduction on this card. Using black pens, fine liners and felt-tipped pens, construct a city within the landscape.

¹ Lionel Wigmore, *Canberra*, 2nd edn, Dalton Publishing, Canberra, 1971, p. 26

² A. Fisher, 'Notice to landscape artists', *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, no. 80, 21 December 1912, p. 2639, cited in Ron Radford, *Our Country: Australian Federation landscapes 1900–1914*, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2001, pp. 123–124.



Tom ROBERTS

Sketch for 'Opening of Federal Parliament 1901' 1901



Painted in Melbourne
oil on academy board, 30.3 x 45.6 cm
National Library of Australia, Canberra

Through the 1890s, Tom Roberts had become one of the most enthusiastic exponents of promoting a 'home-grown' Australian visual culture, and became known for his heroic, nationalistic images of rural Australian life. Born in Britain, Roberts arrived in Australia with his family in 1869, aged 13. He trained at the National Gallery of Victoria School in Melbourne from 1874 until 1880, and in London between 1881 and 1885.

Roberts became a great supporter of the Federation movement and on 9 May 1901 was delighted to be able to attend the opening of the First Federal Parliament of Australia by the Duke of Cornwall and York, in Melbourne's Exhibition Building. He wrote to his son Caleb:

When the great day came your mother and I went to the hall of the Exhibition Building, and without getting seats walked quietly at the very back, and climbing up some rails, I was able to see that immense gathering of people from all Australia, and from so many parts of the world. It was very solemn and great. The heads on the floor looked like a landscape stretching away...¹

Two weeks later Roberts received the most significant and meaningful commission of his career: to depict this historic occasion in paint. The lively *Sketch for 'Opening of Federal Parliament 1901'* captures his obvious enthusiasm and excitement about the event. By contrast the large final work took over two years to complete, measured over 3.5 by 6.5 metres, and was nicknamed 'The Big Picture', the '17 foot Frankenstein', and 'the machine'.²

Where the sketch includes a blur of faces to suggest mass and scale, the final commission includes over 250 individual portraits of the dignitaries who were in attendance. Roberts travelled widely around the country to make individual sketches and then to London, where his last studies included that of the Duke himself, and where Roberts finally finished the work in 1903.

Roberts presented *The Opening of the First Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia by His Royal Highness the Duke of Cornwall and York (later King George V), 9 May 1901* 1903 to King Edward VII in 1903. Since 1988 it has been displayed in Australia's Parliament House in Canberra, on permanent loan from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

DISCUSSION

What mood does Roberts capture in *Sketch for 'Opening of Federal Parliament 1901'*? Explain your answer by referring to the subject matter, technique and colour.

RESEARCH

Using the internet, find an image of the finished painting, *Opening of the First Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia* by H.R.H. The Duke of Cornwall and York (Later King George V), May 9, 1901 1903. Compare the finished painting with the sketch. Are there elements in the final painting that were not in the sketch? What are the main differences between the sketch and the final painting?

If Parliament House is in Canberra, why does this sketch depict the opening of the first Parliament in Melbourne? Research the Federation process in Australia, identifying key moments in time and significant decisions that led to Australia eventually federating in 1901.

Australian identity was topical for artists and writers in 1901. Investigate why this was the case and reference other works by Roberts with a nationalist theme.

ACTIVITY

Imagine painting the portraits of over 250 important people!

Sketch a large group of people in a formal setting – you could take photos of friends or family and then sketch them from the photos, or use a pre-existing formal photo (for example, a family photo or a class photo). You may need to do some smaller, individual sketches of the faces in the group before compiling them into a larger drawing.

¹ See Leigh Astbury, *Sunlight and shadow: Australian Impressionist painters 1880–1900*, Bay Books, Sydney, 1989, p. 206; and Roberts's letter to S.W. Pring, undated, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MLMSS 1367/2: Letters from Tom Roberts, 1893–1931, cited in [http://www.artistsfootsteps.com/html/Roberts_letterbigpicture.htm].



Florence FULLER

Dawn landscape c.1905



Painted in Perth
oil on canvas, 44.5 x 60 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
purchased 2011

Florence Fuller lived and worked in Perth between 1904 and 1908, where she became an influential painter, celebrated for her impressions of Western Australian life and landscape. Paintings such as *Dawn landscape* convey her interest in rural vistas, depicting Western Australian flora, Australian skies and the evocative potential of poetic quietude at dawn and dusk.

Born in South Africa in 1867, Florence Fuller moved to Victoria as a child in 1872. She studied art at the National Gallery of Victoria School in Melbourne and subsequently with her uncle Robert Dowling, who was Melbourne's most sought-after portrait painter in the mid-1880s. In 1889, Fuller was awarded the Victorian Artists' Society prize for the best portrait by an artist under the age of 25.

Like many artists of the time, Fuller wanted to further her studies in Europe, however the major scholarships to study abroad were not open to women until later in the twentieth century. Fuller was lucky to have the support of family and her own finances to fund her periods of travel and training abroad, in Paris between 1894 and 1904. After leaving Perth in 1908 she again travelled widely through Europe, as well as visiting the home of theosophy in India and returning to South Africa.

DISCUSSION

What mood is captured in *Dawn landscape*? Explain your answer by referring to the subject matter, technique and colour.

Compare this painting to *The Federal Capital site* 1913 by Penleigh Boyd. What are the main differences between these works?

RESEARCH

When Fuller was a student in Melbourne there was a group of artists who are now known as the Australian Impressionists. Research this period of Australian art. What were its main features? Who were some of the artists that were part of it? What influence did it have on Australian art? Compare and contrast the landscapes by key Australian Impressionists with those of the Federation era.

ACTIVITY

Pick a natural landscape and create drawings of it at different times of the day, such as morning, noon and early evening. How does the changing light affect the colours that you use?