

# COASTLINE

Ann Stephen



# INTRODUCTION

*Coastline* reveals profoundly different perceptions of the liminal space where land meets sea. Over centuries, artists have represented its changing appearance and meaning – sometimes as part of a journey, sometimes as a site of contact or work, sometimes just for contemplation.

In Australia, the only nation that is an island continent, the coastline plays a highly symbolic cultural role defining identity, while demarcating the border as an exclusion zone. Today, with global warming causing rising sea levels and eroding shorelines, the coast has become a highly-charged space demarcating potential zones of conflict and loss.

This collection-based exhibition offers an art historical overview of the role of maritime representations across more than three centuries. The salon-hang reveals the crucial role that shipping played in the economic life of the Australian colonies with the work of artists such as Nicholas Chevalier, the convict William Gould and Conrad Martins who arrived on our shores as fully trained academic artists. The picturesque beauty of Sydney Harbour captivated generations of artists from the colonial period to the Sydney moderns and beyond.

Absent is any trace of the Dharug and Eora people on whose land Sydney was built. The exhibition aims to begin a process of decolonising vision by exposing these absences. The Indigenous busts animated by Fiona Pardington's photographic series confront the 17th century Dutch sea captain or ship-owner, who stands at the exhibition entry beside the globe that charts the earliest colonial explorations. Indigenous forms of navigational charts are the basis of a major painting by Daniel Boyd, whose father's family are descended from 'black-birded' Kanaka labor.

The exhibition also charts the significant role that expatriatism has played in our art history, as artists of different generations – from Arthur Streeton, Rupert Bunny, JW Power and Jeffrey Smart – endured long sea journeys in search of wider cultural horizons. The significant group of seascapes by Power demonstrate his evolving status as a cubist in the interwar year, amongst two of his French peers.

The contemporary artworks by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Catherine Rogers and Simryn Gill all look out onto the ocean as a force that washes across the arbitrary, man-made borders of national states.

Ann Stephen, Senior Curator, University Art Collection, Chau Chak Wing Museum

# COLONISING THE GLOBE

*The World of our ancestor was a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves ... peoples and cultures moved and mingled, unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers.*

Epeli Hau'ofa, *Our Sea of Islands*, 1993



[*Sea captain*] c.1650

oil on canvas

donated by Sir Charles Nicholson, 1865

UA1865.16

While neither the artist nor the sitter is known, the portrait's grand scale and the sea captain's musk coloured suit, adorned with silver gilt lace, indicates great wealth and prestige. It was painted at the height of the so-called 'Dutch Golden Age,' when their maritime empire extended to Batavia (now Jakarta). He stands beside Jansson's 1650 globe of *Mar del Zvr* (Sea of the South).



'The Nicholson centrepiece' (epergne) 1855  
manufacturer: Smith & Nicholson, London  
silver  
donated by Sir Charles (Archibald) Nicholson, 1924  
University General Collection, XC2008.126.1–12

This elaborate table centrepiece is testimony to Sir Charles Nicholson's achievements, including the governance of colonial New South Wales and the University of Sydney. The allegorical figure of Sydney, standing on the globe wearing a crown and kangaroo skin, extends a victor's wreath (now lost) to a kneeling student who represents Learning and Religion and, by inference, Nicholson himself. Under his foot is a book inscribed with the University of Sydney motto, *sidere mens eadem mutato* (the same mind under different skies), an allusion to British education in a colonial setting. The other two female figures represent Abundance (with an overflowing cornucopia), and Law and Order. Other colonial attributes include the crown and anchor of Britain's maritime power.

*I now once more hoisted English Coulers and in the Name of His Majesty King George the Third took possession of the whole Eastern Coast ... by the Name of New South Wales ... After which we fired three Volleys of small Arms which were Answered by the like number from the Ship.*  
Lt James Cook, Endeavour journal, 22 August 1770



**William Gould**  
born 1801 Liverpool,  
England, died 1853 Hobart  
*Mount St Michaels,*  
*Cornwall* c.1840  
oil on canvas on board  
Neville Holmes Grace  
bequest, 2018  
UA2018.66

Gould trained in England before being sentenced in 1826 to “seven years beyond the seas”. He arrived in Van Diemen’s Land the following year and was granted his freedom in 1835. This scene, on the southwest coast of England, was a popular subject for painters, including JMW Turner. The most likely source for Gould’s rare seascape is an engraving from Clarkson Stanfield’s book *Coast Scenery*, published in 1836.



**Conrad Martens**  
born 1801 London,  
arrived Sydney  
1835, died 1878  
*Woollahra House*  
1863  
watercolour on  
paper  
donated by  
University of  
Sydney Union,  
2019  
UA2019.111

Woollahra House, on what is now Point Piper, was built in 1856 on the site of John Piper’s former residence.



**William Piguénit**

born 1836 Hobart, died 1914 Sydney

*View from Onions Point, Sydney 1883*

oil on board

Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018, UA2018.76

One of the earliest professional painters born in Australia, Piguénit was mainly self-taught. His view of Onions Point, now known as Woolwich Point, looks southeast across the Parramatta River towards Balmain and Birchgrove, and beyond that to Darling Harbour and Glebe. On the horizon is the Sydney Town Hall clock tower.



**Nicholas Chevalier**

born 1828 St Petersburg, Russia, lived Melbourne 1855–67, died 1902 London

*South Sea beauty* 1881

oil on canvas

Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018

UA2018.33

Chevalier studied art in Europe before arriving in the colonies during the gold rush, where he worked as an illustrator, teacher and artist. In 1869, he joined HMS Galatea as an artist on a voyage back to London via Tahiti. It was there he made sketches at Opunohu Bay, which were the basis of his later Pacific-themed paintings, such as this one and the larger *Race to the market, Tahiti* in the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.



**Girolamo Nerli**

born 1860 Siena, Italy, lived Melbourne, Sydney

and New Zealand, 1885–1903, died 1926

Nervi, Italy

[*Mythological figure*] c.1890

oil on board

Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018

UA2018.70

Nerli was trained at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence, in a plein air style, similar to the French impressionists. He emigrated to Melbourne in November 1885 and worked alongside the Heidelberg school. Nerli is best known for his depictions of mythological subjects, like this sea nymph.



**James Carse**

born 1818 Edinburgh, Scotland, died 1900 Sydney

[*Sailing ship in storm, South Head*] c.1878

oil on board

Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018

UA2018.30

# THE LURE OF EUROPE

*Quite a cosmopolitan little colony of hard-working artists who have apartments in the same building, [with] thirty different nationalities being represented.*

Ethel Carrick Fox, *Through an Artist's Eyes*, 1925

Arthur Streeton, Rupert Bunny, Ethel Carrick Fox and Emanuel Phillips Fox were among the expatriate artists who, from the 1890s on, regularly painted in Europe's resorts.



**Ethel Carrick Fox**  
born 1872 Uxbridge,  
Middlesex, England,  
died 1952 Melbourne  
*St Mark's Square, Venice*  
1907  
oil on board  
Neville Holmes Grace  
bequest, 2018  
UA2018.52

After their marriage in 1906, artists Ethel Carrick Fox and Emanuel Phillips Fox lived in Paris and made extensive painting excursions through Europe and North Africa. In spring 1907 they worked in Venice for some months. The artist depicted on the right is probably Phillips Fox.



**Emanuel Phillips Fox**  
*[Venice afterglow]*  
c.1907  
oil on board  
Neville Holmes Grace  
bequest, 2018  
UA2018.62



**Emanuel Phillips Fox**

born 1865 Melbourne, died 1915

*On a French beach* c.1909

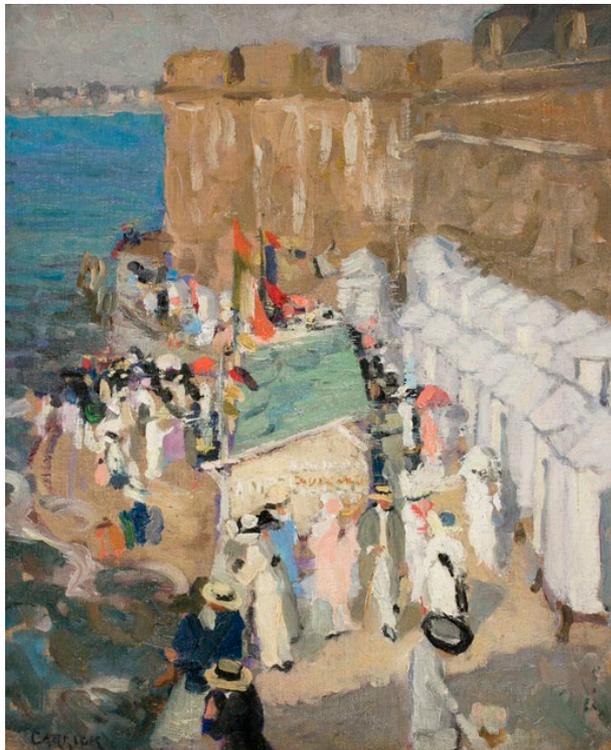
oil on board

Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018

UA2018.60

The couple visited Normandy with pupils in the summer of 1909. Together they made quick outdoor sketches on boards, often leaving patches of raw timber. These spontaneous studies catch the life and movement of the beach, with its striped tents, flags, and children at play.

In the summer of 1911, Carrick Fox and her husband Emanuel Phillips Fox spent three weeks at St Malo on the coast of Brittany. Here she captures the fashionable crowd strolling between the changing-boxes on the narrow beach, reduced by the tide and against the backdrop of the fortified walls of the old town.



**Ethel Carrick Fox**

*Quay at St Malo* 1911

oil on canvas

Neville Holmes Grace bequest,

2018

UA2018.50



**Ethel Carrick Fox**  
*La plage française*  
1919  
oil on board  
Neville Holmes  
Grace bequest  
2018  
UA2018.37

Carrick Fox returned to paint the crowds at Saint-Jeande-Luz, south of Biarritz, after the death of her husband and the end of the First World War. At these resorts, she continued painting fleeting post-impressionist studies on the beach.



**Arthur Streeton**  
*Untitled [Venice lagoon]*  
c.1908  
watercolour on paper  
Neville Holmes Grace  
bequest, 2018  
UA2018.84

Arthur Streeton made two painting trips to Venice, the first in May 1908 with his new bride, the violinist, Nora Clench, followed by another longer visit in Autumn, that same year. This watercolour channels Turner's mythological vision of a Venetian storm with the red sails of an old-style bragozzi highlighted against the luminous sky.



**Arthur Streeton**

born 1867 Geelong, Victoria, died 1943 Olinda, Victoria

*Palazzo Labia, Venice* 1934

oil on canvas

Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018

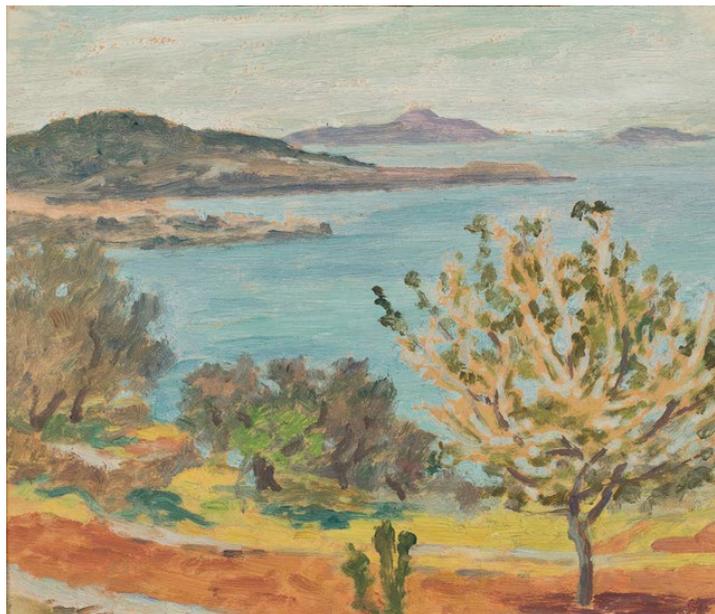
UA2018.83

In later life, Streeton returned to the subject of Venice, painting from memory in his Melbourne studio. This view across the Grand Canal to the Church of San Geremia, contrasts the dark green water and dirty brown sails with the dazzling white edifice and pastel-green dome that foregrounds the baroque Palazzo Labia, renowned for its remarkable frescoes by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo.



**Rupert Bunny**  
*Coast near Six Fours*  
c.1925  
oil on canvas  
Hon RP Meagher  
bequest, 2011  
UA2012.58

Another Australian expatriate, Rupert Bunny escaped the confines of Paris after the First World War by making regular visits to the south of France. On these winter and spring excursions he was drawn to the southern light and atmosphere. In *Coast near Six Fours*, the ploughed fields in the foreground are still barren, but the cliffs of Sanary and the distant hills are bathed in sunlight.



**Rupert Bunny**  
*Sketch for 'Almond trees flowering*  
*– Coast near Bandol, South of France'* c.1929  
oil on board  
Hon RP Meagher  
bequest, 2011  
UA2012.56

Almond trees were once grown extensively across Provence. Their delicate blossom presents a celebration of new life, yet also acknowledges transience and fragility.



**Rupert Bunny**

born 1864 Melbourne, lived France 1886–1933,

died 1947 Melbourne

*Seafront Bandol* c.1934

oil on canvas

donated by The Hon RP Meagher through the  
Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2011

UA2011.19

After the death of his French wife, Bunny returned to live in Melbourne in 1933. The following year he painted this Riviera location based on landscape sketches from his time in France.



**Roy de Maistre**

born 1894 Bowral, died 1968 London

*On the beach, St Jean de Luz* 1924–25

oil on canvas

Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018

UA2018.36

The young modernist Roy de Maistre first visited the French resort of Saint-Jean-de-Luz after receiving the New South Wales Travelling Scholarship in 1923. Unlike the earlier generation of post-impressionist expatriates, de Maistre sought to flatten his high-keyed composition by emphasising the stripes of the sun-shelter against the pale-green sea.

# A LAND OF FADED THINGS

*A Land of faded Things – of delicate purples, delicious greys, and dull, dreamy olives and ochres*  
AG Stephens, The Bulletin Story Book, Sydney, 1901

Australian painters of the Edwardian era, like Lister Lister, introduced a more subdued palette to the shimmering gold and blue of Heidelberg school paintings. Their bleached-out views of the harbour and coast were peopled by a leisure class of women shaded by parasols and long dresses.



**William Lister Lister**  
born 1859 Sydney, died 1943  
*Seaside* c. 1915  
watercolour on paper  
Robert Pickburn bequest, 1985  
UA1985.14



**Ambrose Patterson**  
born 1877 Daylesford, Victoria, died 1966 Seattle, Washington, USA  
*St Kilda Baths from the pier* c.1913  
oil on canvas on board  
Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018  
UA2018.74

The expatriate artist Ambrose Patterson, on a visit home to Melbourne, painted the new entertainment precinct of St Kilda, featuring the recently redeveloped domed Sea Baths to the right, and Luna Park visible in the central distance.



**Norman St Clair Carter**  
born 1875 Melbourne, died 1963 Sydney  
*Afternoon in the Domain* 1900–20  
oil on canvas  
Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018  
UA2018.31



**Elioth Gruner**  
born 1882 Gisborne, New Zealand, died 1939 Sydney  
*Nambucca Heads, NSW* 1920  
oil on canvas on board  
Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018  
UA2018.90



**Alfred Coffey**  
born 1869 Limerick,  
Ireland, died Sydney 1950  
*A chat on the beach* 1919  
oil on board  
Nell Buckingham bequest,  
1986  
UA1986.4

This work was painted at Thirroul beach, south of Sydney, with Sandon Point jetty visible, far right.



**Rah Fizelle**  
born 1891 Goulburn NSW,  
died 1964 Sydney  
*Sunset* c.1918  
watercolour on paper

donated by fellow students to the Sydney Teachers' College in memory of Eileen Bennett, 1919  
transferred from the Sydney College of Advanced Education, 1990  
UA1990.284

After training at Sydney Teachers' College, Fizelle enlisted in the army in 1916 and saw service in France, returning in 1919. His sunset view of a troop ship in Sydney Harbour dates to when he returned to Teachers' College, to specialize in art teaching, which would become a lifetime vocation.



**Lionel Lindsay**

born 1874 Creswick, Victoria, died 1961 Sydney

*American fleet, Pinchgut and*

*Woolloomooloo from Cremorne 1925*

oil on board

Hon RP Meagher bequest, 2011

UA2012.170



**William Ashton**

born 1881, York, England, died 1963 Sydney

*Taronga Wharf, Sydney Harbour c.1940*

oil on canvas on board

Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018, UA2018.28

# REGIONAL SEASCAPES

*I hope to get a few good seascapes – the colour is very fine at Manly.*  
Emanuel Phillips Fox, 1913



**Emanuel Phillips Fox**

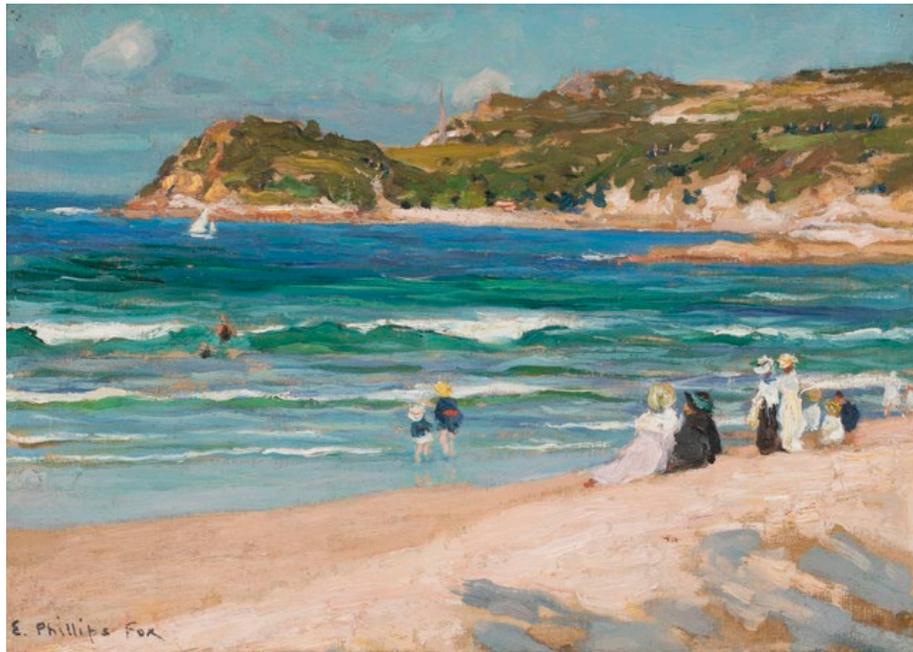
born 1865 Melbourne, died 1915

*Fairy Bower, Manly* 1913–14

oil on canvas

Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018, UA2018.57

Phillips Fox made his final return to Australia with his wife Ethel Carrick Fox in 1913. During the trip, he painted many views of Sydney Harbour and the eastern seaboard, ten of which were included in his solo exhibition at the Royal Art Society.



**Emanuel Phillips Fox**  
*Manly Beach* 1913–14  
oil on canvas  
Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018  
UA2018.54



**Emanuel Phillips Fox**  
*Gum trees on Cremorne Point* 1913–14  
oil on canvas  
Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018  
UA2018.59



**Emanuel Phillips Fox**

*Towards Rose Bay 1913–14*

oil on board

Neville Holmes Grace bequest, 2018, UA2018.63



**Norman Lloyd**

born 1895 Newcastle, NSW, died 1983 London

*Musgrave Street Wharf, Mosman c.1938*

oil on canvas

donated by University of Sydney Union, 2019, UA2019.90



**Herbert Badham**

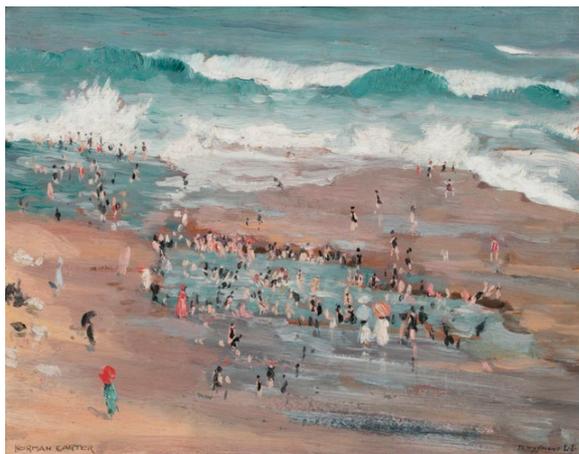
born 1899 Sydney, died 1961

*La Perouse holiday* 1936

oil on board

donated by University of Sydney Union, 2019, UA2019.10

Herbert Badham provides a fascinating view of suburban leisure in the 1930s. While his elevated viewpoint shows the teeming crowds at Botany Bay, the Indigenous community from the Aboriginal Reserve at La Perouse are absent.



**Norman St Clair Carter**

born 1875 Melbourne, died 1963

Sydney

*Bondi bathers* 1920–40

oil on board

Neville Holmes Grace bequest,  
2018

UA2018.32

Though best known as a portrait painter, Carter was a nature lover and at weekends painted landscapes and occasionally exhibited them. He also received commissions for murals, including those in the philosophy lecture room here at the University.



**Elioth Gruner**  
born 1882 Gisborne, New Zealand, died 1939 Sydney  
*Beach scene* 1918  
oil on board  
donated by University of Sydney Union, 2019  
UA2019.48

Gruner gave a modern look to his seascapes by framing them as horizontal bands. Many, including this one, were painted outdoors in the eastern suburbs of Sydney where he lived.

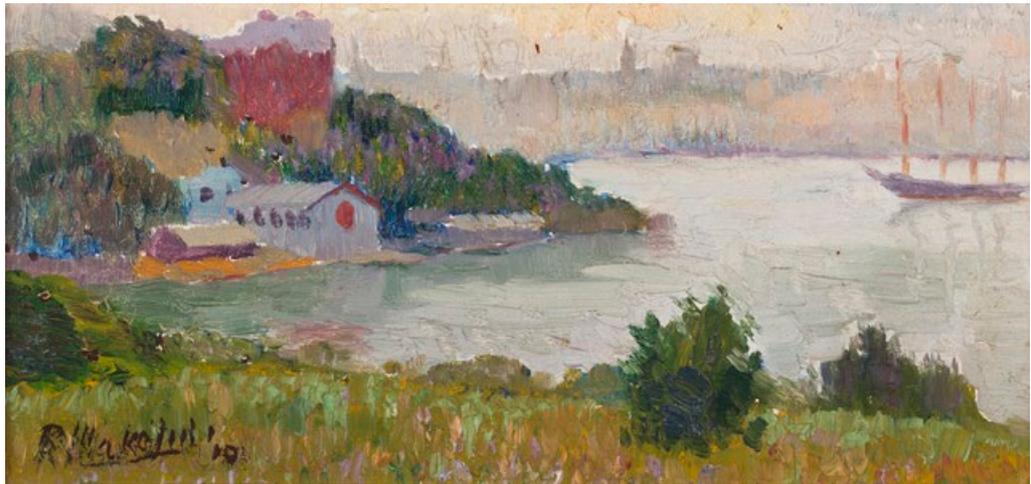


**Robert Campbell**  
born 1902 Edinburgh, Scotland, died 1972 Adelaide  
*South coast* c.1937  
oil on prepared cardboard  
donated by University of Sydney Union, 2019, UA2019.22

# LOCAL MODERNISM

*The painter ... instinctively seeks ... the particular accent of line, tone or colour which will give the vital rhythmic unity ... inherent in life.*

Roland Wakelin, 'The Modern Movement in Australia', 1928



## **Roland Wakelin**

born 1887 Greytown, New Zealand, died 1971 Sydney

*Berry's Bay* 1919

oil on board

donated by The Hon RP Meagher through the  
Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2011  
UA2011.27

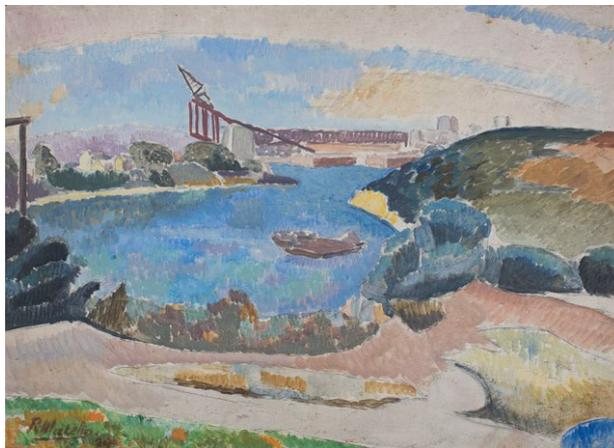
From 1916 to 1921, Wakelin lived on Sydney Harbour's north shore, where he painted many views of Berry's Bay, an area on the western side of McMahon's Point that was home to a thriving maritime industry, with boat sheds lining the shore and several shipwrights.



**Antonio Dattilo-Rubbo**  
born 1870 Naples, Italy, died  
1955 Sydney  
*Manly Beach* c.1916  
oil on board  
Robert James Pickburn bequest,  
1985  
UA1985.4

An academic painter, Dattilo-Rubbo also experimented with modernist colour in informal works such as *Manly Beach*. He wrote of how pointillism involved applying complementary colours “by numerous points and lines, similar to embroidery, over the whole surface of the canvas”. As a teacher, he fostered an interest in modernism; his brilliant students, including Roy de Maistre, Roland Wakelin and Grace Cossington Smith, all made colour the basis of their work.

During the late 1920s and 1930s, Sydney Harbour Bridge became a symbol of progress for modernists, including Wakelin who painted its construction from different vantage points.



**Roland Wakelin**  
*[Berry's Bay, Sydney Harbour]*  
1929  
pencil and oil on board  
donated by The Hon RP  
Meagher through the  
Australian Government's  
Cultural Gifts Program, 2010  
UA2010.117

This view overlooking Berry's Bay is in an unfinished state, with the pencil under-drawing delineating outlines and colour notes, while other areas are painted over with patches of intense colour.



**Roland Wakelin**

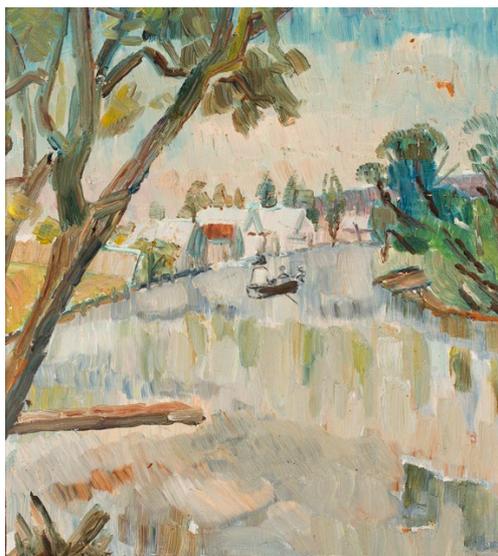
*The last panel before joining up 1930*

oil on board

donated by The Hon RP Meagher through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2011

UA2011.29

Here the view is from Waverton looking across to McMahon's Point. Wakelin was fascinated by architectural structures, and observed, "I have many of the instincts of a sculptor and love to juggle with chunks of form".



**Grace Cossington Smith**

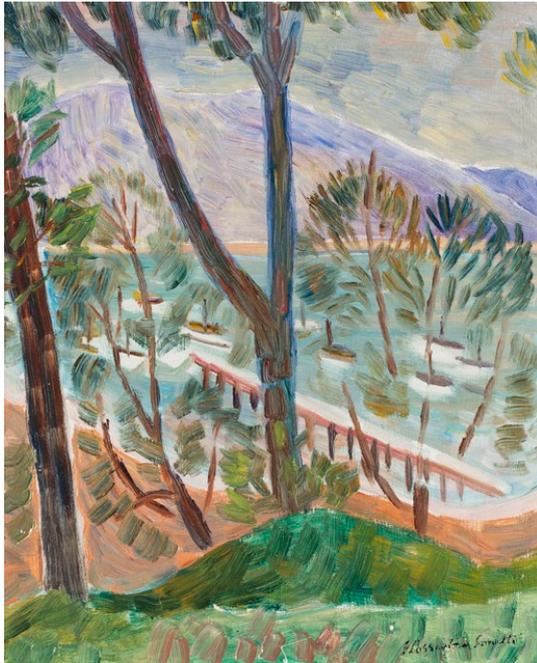
born 1892 Sydney, died 1984

*Lake Macquarie 1942*

oil on board

Hon RP Meagher bequest, 2011

UA2012.89



**Grace Cossington Smith**  
*Boats at evening, Bay View* c.1940  
oil on board  
Hon RP Meagher bequest, 2011  
UA2012.91

*Both Boats at evening, Bay View* and *Lake Macquarie* depict tidal locations north of Sydney. Bayview, a suburb on Pittwater, is close to the location of the painting Northern beach, also featured in this group. These quick impressions catch the changing effects of light: the pale sky of dawn in *Lake Macquarie*, and the purple and blue hues of dusk in *Boats at evening, Bay View*.



**Grace Cossington Smith**  
*Northern beach* c.1940  
oil on board  
Hon RP Meagher bequest, 2011  
UA2012.84

Cossington Smith regularly went on painting excursions with fellow artists; *Northern beach* was painted along the picturesque coastline north of Sydney. The view, across Warriewood to Mona Vale Beach with Bungan Head on the horizon, is now encroached by car parks, though the majestic sweep of the coast remains largely unchanged.



**Grace Cossington Smith**  
*Sand dunes* c.1933–36  
oil on board  
Hon RP Meagher bequest, 2011  
UA2012.87

After her mother's death in April 1931, Cossington Smith painted emotionally charged ocean views at Thirroul. She returned there a few years later, painting *Sand dunes*. The tiny cargo ship, with its plume of steam visible on the horizon, would be coming in to load coal from Bulli Jetty at the southern end of the beach, just out of the frame.



**Clarice Beckett**  
born 1887 Casterton, Victoria,  
died 1935 Melbourne  
*Bathing boxes, Brighton  
Beach* c.1925  
oil on board  
Hon RP Meagher bequest,  
2011  
UA2012.45

Clarice Beckett painted the southern beachside suburbs of Melbourne from her portable 'studio', preferring dawn and dusk for her evocative tonal studies inspired by her teacher Max Meldrum. Though as *Bathing boxes*, Brighton Beach testifies, she handled colour as a modernist.



**Clarice Beckett**

*Lone swimmer* c.1925

oil on board

Hon RP Meagher bequest, 2011

UA2012.46

# THE POWER OF CUBISM

*Cubism has become the very symbol of liberation and the means towards one of the purest aesthetic periods in history ... the spirit of its creative teaching is as strong as ever.*

JW Power, *Éléments de la construction picturale (Elements of Pictorial Construction)* Paris, 1932

JW Power became an expatriate artist in the inter-war years, following a Sydney childhood and medical studies here and in London. An inveterate traveller, he was drawn to coastal landscapes as he worked through cubism, inspired by the Parisian masters Pablo Picasso, Fernand Léger and Juan Gris. All works by JW Power were donated to the University by his widow Edith Power in 1961.



## **JW Power**

born 1881 Sydney, lived England 1906–20,  
Paris 1920–29, died 1943 Jersey, Channel Islands, UK

*Baigneuses (Bathers)* 1931–32

oil on canvas

Edith Power bequest, 1961

PW1961.84



**JW Power**  
*Marine* 1933  
oil on canvas  
Edith Power bequest,  
1961  
PW1961.31

The towering figure of Pablo Picasso is ever present, though his influence is mediated by Power's witty approach. Here he transforms Picasso's monstrous, surrealist bathers with spiked tongues, exhibited in Paris in the early 1930s, into gentle, plant-like creatures.



**JW Power**  
*Seascape* c.1925  
oil on board  
Edith Power bequest,  
1961  
PW1961.46



**JW Power**  
*Seaside still life* 1926  
oil on canvas  
Edith Power bequest, 1961  
PW1961.55

Three bands – of shore, sea and sky – form a shallow cubist space for a slippery game of appearances that alternates between abstract forms and seaside props. The radial symmetry of a starfish mimics Power’s pentagram signature, marking his surreptitious presence on the pebbly English beach. The geometrical order underlying this composition looks to Juan Gris’s cubism.



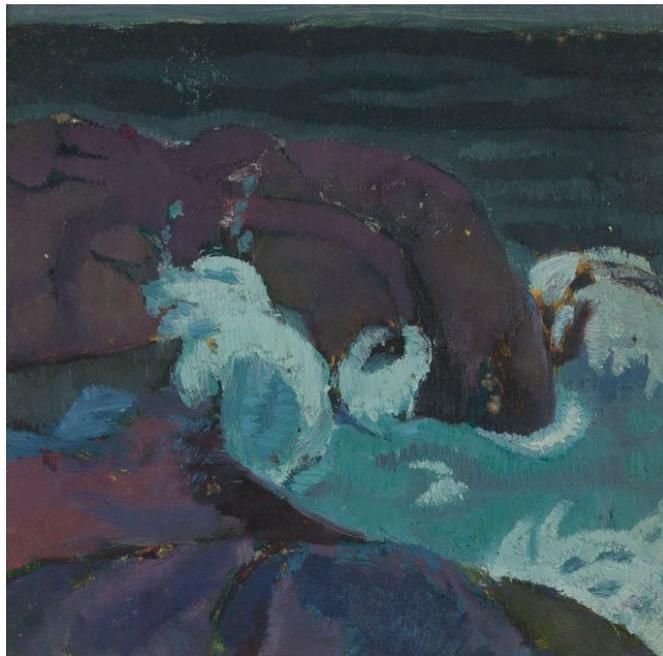
**JW Power**

*[Ship, tower and sea]* 1927

papier collé and gouache

Edith Power bequest, 1961

PW1961.35



**JW Power**

*[Purple rocks on seacoast]*

c.1913

oil on board

Edith Power bequest, 1961

PW1961.100

An early post-impressionist study, with an unusual square format, the subject and aerial perspective were informed by Japanese prints.



**Marcel Gromaire**

born 1892 Noyelles-sur-Sambre, France, died 1971 Paris

*Le port aux mouettes (Port with seagulls)* 1948

oil on canvas

donated in memory of

Leonard P Ullmann, 2010

UA2011.77

Gromaire combined cubism with a robust realism, favouring subjects of work like this scene of maritime industry. Together with his countryman Jean Lurçat, he founded the École d'Aubusson, revitalising the art of tapestry weaving in the mid-20th century.



**Jean Lurçat**

born 1892 Bruyères, France, died 1966 Saint-Paul-de-Vence

*Coast scene* 1948

gouache on paper

donated in memory of Leonard P Ullmann, 2010

UA2011.74

# THE LYRICAL & SURREAL SEA

*I always feel that the water and sky are the nearest things to abstraction. They make possible that treatment that's akin to abstract painting of the coast. I love to go and walk along the beach at dusk and would sometimes sing as I walk.*

Lloyd Rees: *An Artist Remembers*, 1987



## **Lloyd Rees**

born 1895 Brisbane, lived  
Sydney 1917–86, died 1988  
Hobart

*Gerringong, southern sea* 1970  
oil on canvas  
donated by Philip Bushell, 1973  
UA1973.1

This is one of Rees's first paintings to explore abstraction, which emerged from his close study of the waves at this beach: "That's what I felt about this picture – the joy of movement and the little ripple that was coming in, rather than heavy breakers, because I think that is a fascinating feature of the seashore."



## **Helen Lempriere**

born 1907 Melbourne, died  
1991 Sydney

*Rocky shores and shells* 1961  
mixed media on composition  
board  
donated by University of  
Sydney Union, 2019  
UA2019.84

An expatriate Australian artist, Lempriere turned to Australian Indigenous culture for her abstract seascape, reading anthropological texts for inspiration. Her use of mixed media has been likened to the surreal frottages (marks made by rubbing) of Max Ernst.



**Lloyd Rees**

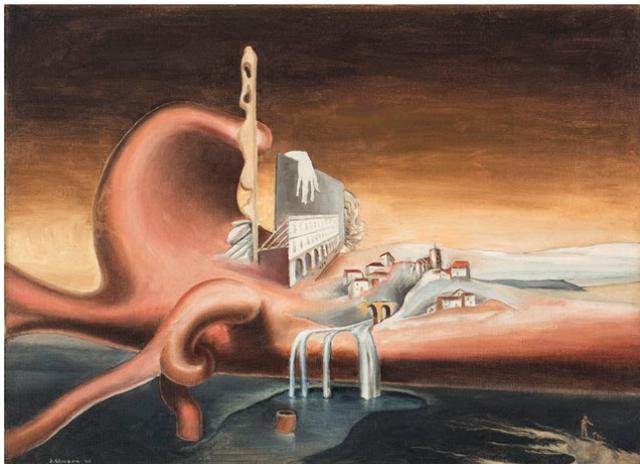
*The pool* 1958

oil on canvas

Hon RP Meagher bequest,  
2011

UA2012.220

In 1946, Rees joined the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Sydney, and for more than four decades taught architecture students. During the summer holidays, he would paint at a holiday cottage, 'Caloola', at Werri Beach just north of Gerringong on the New South Wales south coast.



**James Gleeson**

born 1915 Sydney, died 2008

*City on the tongue* 1938

oil on canvas

transferred from the Sydney  
College of Advanced

Education, 1990

UA1990.372

This painting was acquired for the Sydney Teachers' College from Gleeson's graduating exhibition. A Roman town is shown flimsily protected from self-destruction by an Arcadian facade, reflecting a deep sense of civilisation under threat with the rise of Fascism in Europe.



**Ken Whisson**

born 1927 Melbourne, lives  
Perugia, Italy

*Yachts* 1972 (alternative title:  
*Existence and form*)

oil on canvas

donated by The Hon RP  
Meagher through the  
Australian Government's  
Cultural Gifts Program, 2011  
UA2011.31

Throughout his long career, Whisson has maintained a tension between figuration and abstraction. The ocean in *Yachts* has no depth save for the horizon line. Like his other paintings from the 1970s, it echoes Sidney Nolan's wartime paintings in which figures appear to float on a tilted plane.



**John Passmore**

born 1904 Sydney, lived  
London 1933–51, died 1984  
Sydney

*Beach* 1956

oil on board

Hon RP Meagher bequest,  
2011

UA2012.209

Passmore's paintings of the 1950s include abstracted figures bent towards the sea or floating through a colour field of ocean. In 1978, he told James Gleeson that the "essence of all the sea paintings and drawings is the element of fear. Whenever I dived or swam there was always the fear of sharks or other less definite dangers".

# SUPER-REAL & SURREAL SEAS



**Sheila McDonald**  
born 1902 Sydney, died 1971  
*Quayside* c.1959  
oil and acrylic on composition  
board  
UA1960.4

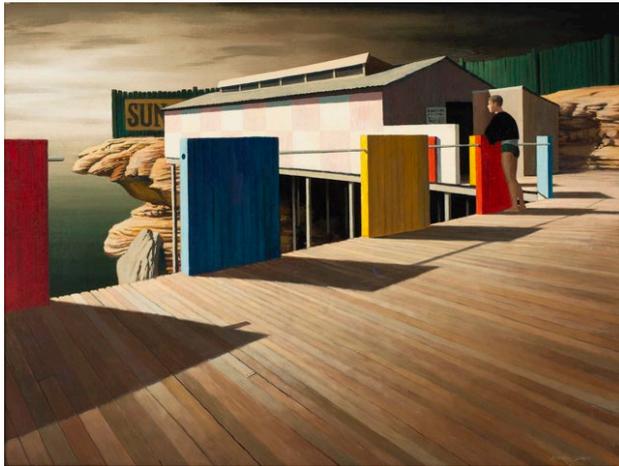
In conceiving of an aerial view of Sydney, McDonald experimented with materials, allowing her paint to drip and flow in a domestic-scaled response to abstract expressionism.



**Adrian Feint**  
born 1894 Narrandera, NSW,  
died 1971 Sydney  
*Landscape* 1957–58  
oil on canvas  
Neil McKenzie bequest, 2000  
UA2000.123

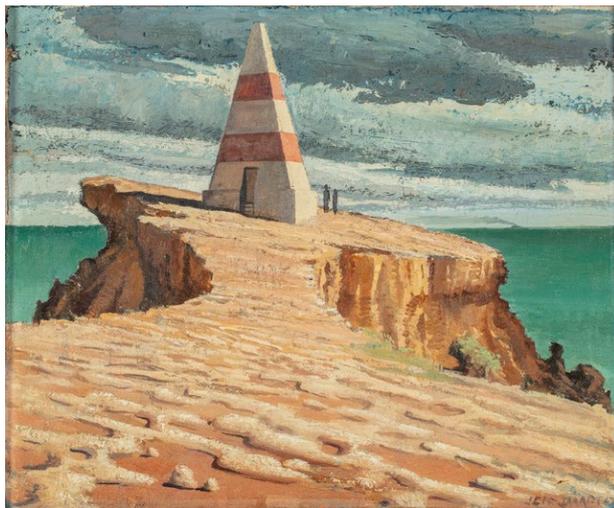
Best known for his paintings of elegant flower arrangements in distinctive vases, Feint here brings to the foreground a mysterious, surreal landscape setting.

In Sydney during the early 1960s, Jeffrey Smart produced a series of paintings exploring the world of the beach, baths and bodies.



**Jeffrey Smart**  
born 1921 Adelaide, died 2013  
Arezzo, Italy  
*Coogee baths – winter* 1962  
oil on canvas  
Alan Renshaw bequest, 1976  
UA1976.57

At the time he painted *Coogee baths – winter*, Smart was teaching life drawing at East Sydney Technical College. Here he sets a solitary male figure in the otherwise abandoned ocean baths at Coogee, the oldest in Australia, known as Wylie's Baths. A suppressed homoeroticism inhabits his surreal seascapes.



**Jeffrey Smart**  
*Cape Dombey* 1947  
oil on hessian  
Alan Renshaw bequest, 1976  
UA1976.54

This work was painted in Smart's early years in South Australia, yet the hallmarks of his favoured subjects are already present: monolithic shapes in the land, and the relative insignificance of human figures. The Robe Obelisk prevented ships from running aground; the figures looking out towards the ship on the horizon line may signal Smart's intention to travel to Europe the following year.



**Sam Richardson**

born 1934 Oakland, California, USA, died 2013 Seattle, Washington

*The sun is setting and there's a fog over the coast* 1969

synthetic polymer paint on polyurethane foam on composition board, pigmented and reinforced polyester resin with gel surface coating, tinted acrylic sheet

JW Power bequest, 1969

JW Power Collection, The University of Sydney, managed by Museum of Contemporary Art

PW1969.19.a–c

Richardson was originally a painter, but his interest in new materials, such as those used to make surfboards, led him to construct three-dimensional landscapes.

# OUR SEA OF ISLANDS



## Fiona Pardington

born 1961 Devonport, Aotearoa/New Zealand

*Portrait of a life-cast of Koe, Timor* 2010

*Portrait of a life cast of Matoua Tawai (noir)* 2010

from the series *Ahua: A beautiful hesitation*

archival ink on paper

Alan Richard Renshaw bequest, purchased 2014

UA2014.16, UA2014.17

These photographs are from a series of ten images of life casts of people of Oceania, made on Dumont D'Urville's expedition of 1837–40. The casts, now held in French ethnographic museums, were originally intended to illustrate a hierarchical and deeply racist classification of the peoples of the Pacific. The series has a personal resonance for Pardington: it includes one of her Māori ancestors from her *iwi* (tribe), Ngāi Tahu.



Map indicating D'Urville's expedition, by Allan Kynaston, courtesy of Otago University Press, from *The Pressure of Sunlight Falling*, Dunedin, New Zealand, 2011

# THE OCEANS OF AUSTRALIA

*Our islands, our homes, may no longer be habitable – or even exist – within this century.*

Anote Tong, former president of Kiribati, 2015



## **Catherine Rogers**

born 1952 Sydney, lives Sydney

*The oceans of Australia* 1978–2019

pigment ink on cotton papers

Alan Renshaw bequest, purchased 2020

UA2020.28-35

Since the 1970s, Rogers has taken thousands of photographs of the sea at various times of the day, from different heights, all halved by the horizon. She observes that her approach to this strangely deceptive subject “is a bland literal record of something which is in constant change, and that the ‘borders’ of many seas are unclear and hotly contested”.

Clockwise from top left: *Arafura Sea* 2014, *Coral Sea and coal ships* 2010, *South Pacific* 1987, *Southern Ocean/Indian Ocean* 2018, *Bass Strait* 2018, *Tasman Sea (early morning)* 2016, *Timor Sea* 2012, *Torres Strait* 2015



**Daniel Boyd**

born 1982 Cairns, Queensland, lives Sydney

*Untitled (MINC)* 2012

oil and archival glue on canvas

Alan Renshaw bequest, purchased 2012

UA2013.5

Boyd based a series of paintings on Micronesian *rebbelib* – navigation charts commonly referred to as ‘stick maps’ – made by the people of the Marshall Islands as memory aids to navigate between their 34 coral atolls. The acronym in the title MINC, stands for Marshall Islands Navigation Chart. The geometric pattern, formed by binding together strips of split coconut leaf or pandanus root, represents sea currents, with small cowrie shells or coral pebbles indicating islands, and the curved sticks representing wave patterns.



**Michael Taylor**

born 1933 Sydney, lives Cooma, NSW

*Coastal place* 1963

oil on canvas

donated by Dr K David G Edwards, 2003

UA2003.16

Taylor painted *Coastal place* after returning from three years overseas on a New South Wales Travelling Art Scholarship; it was exhibited at his first solo exhibition, at Sydney's Macquarie Galleries in 1964. Beneath the surface of dripped paint and abstract expressionist gestures are glimpses of ochre, red and blue, caught up in the whirlpool of brushstrokes.



**Simryn Gill**

born 1959 Singapore, raised Port Dickson, Malaysia, lives Sydney and Port Dickson

*Sweet chariot no. 7* 2015

silver gelatin photographs

Dr MJ Morrissey bequest fund in memory of Professor AL Sadler, purchased 2017  
UA2017.1.a-b

This work is part of a larger series of uncropped vertical panoramas taken near the artist's birthplace of Port Dickson, a port town on the Malacca Strait, the busiest international trade-shipping route in the world. The photographs were taken from a small fishing boat in a narrow section of the strait. The title evokes the mournful lyrics and swaying rhythm of the American spiritual 'Swing low, sweet chariot', which welcomes death as a release from suffering.



**Christo and Jeanne-Claude**

born 1935 Gabrovo, Bulgaria, died New York 2020

born 1935 Casablanca, Morocco, died New York 2009

*Wrapped coast, one million square feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia* 1969

gelatin silver photograph

photo: Shunk-Kender

purchased with funds from the JW Power bequest, 1969

JW Power Collection, The University of Sydney, managed by the Museum of Contemporary Art, PW1969.5

In 1969, Sydney textile entrepreneur and art patron John Kaldor invited Christo and his wife Jeanne-Claude to Australia to exhibit and lecture; the artists proposed to wrap a piece of coastline for seven weeks. Materials were tested at the University of Sydney before a loose-weave polypropylene was chosen.

*Wrapped coast*, in front of Prince Henry Hospital at Little Bay, became the first Kaldor Art Project.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Published in conjunction with the exhibition

*COASTLINE*

Chau Chak Wing Museum

November 2020 – December 2022

Senior Curator	Ann Stephen
Assistant Curator	Katrina Liberiou
Author	Ann Stephen with contributions by Katrina Liberiou, Vivienne Webb and Barbara Campbell
Exhibition designer	Trina Day Architects and Cat's Eye Bay (Sarah Jamieson)
Object photography	David James, Jean-Francois Lanzarone, Kylie Holmes, and Stuart Humphreys
Conservation	Alayne Alvis, Madeleine Snedden and Virginia Ho
Exhibition Manager	Luke Parker
Cover image	William Lister Lister <i>Seaside</i> 1910-30 watercolour on paper Robert Pickburn bequest, 1985 UA1985.14

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