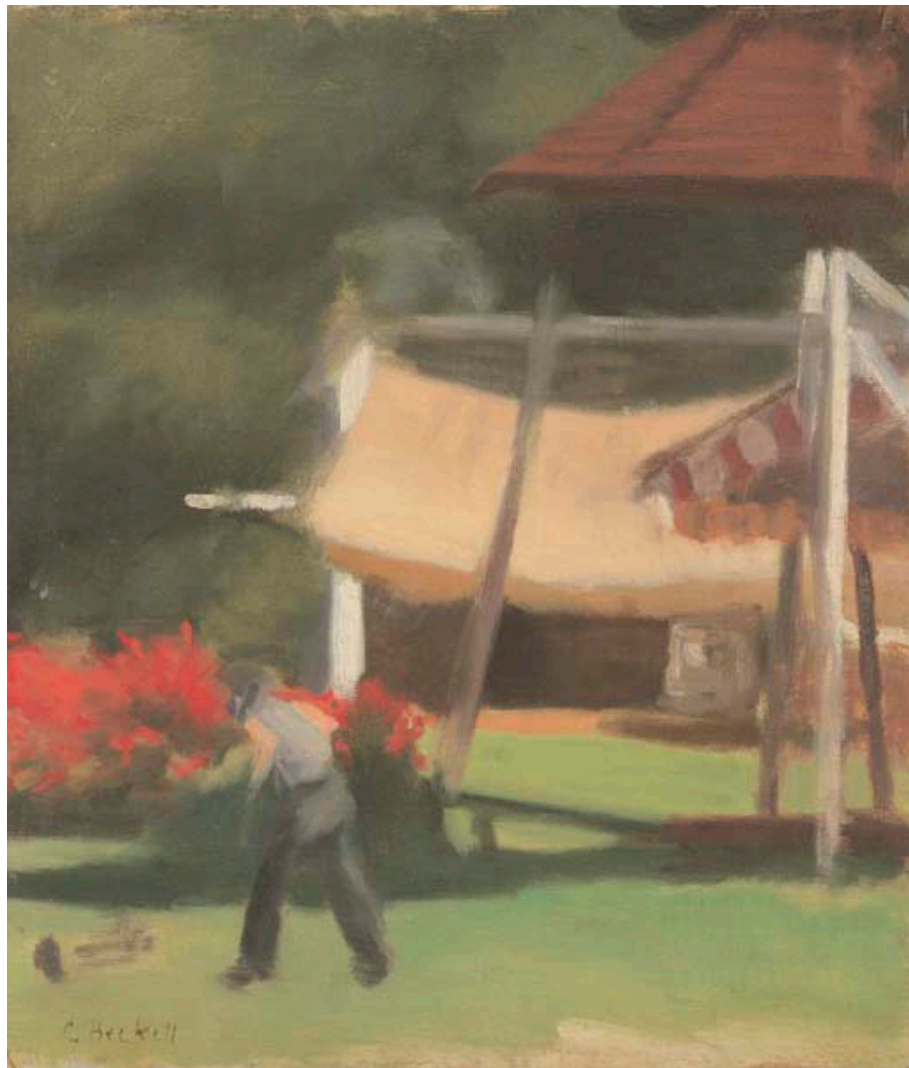


# MISTY MODERNS

AUSTRALIAN TONALISTS 1915–1950



EDUCATION RESOURCE

ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA • ADELAIDE

# EDUCATION RESOURCE

This education resource has been written to assist with an appreciation of the travelling exhibition *Misty Moderns: Australian Tonalists 1915–1950*.

*Misty Moderns* is the first major exhibition to tell the story of Australian Tonalism, a movement championed by the influential and often controversial painter Max Meldrum. The movement reached its peak during the inter-war period.

Around 80 works by Meldrum and his followers have been brought together from collections around Australia. Included in the exhibition are works by Meldrum's best-known pupils Clarice Beckett, Percy Leason and Colin Colahan, as well as formative works by Australian Modernists Roy de Maistre, Roland Wakelin, Lloyd Rees, Arnold Shore and William Frater.

This unprecedented display provides a long-awaited look at Meldrum's influence on the wider development of Australian modernism, and on successive generations of Australian painters.

This resource aims to provide an introduction to the exhibition, information about key works of art, as well as presenting themes and issues for primary and secondary students to consider and discuss. It also suggests ways of looking at Australian Tonalism through works of art on display.

The suggested learning activities within the exhibition space and post-visit are designed to suit a range of learning styles. Teachers are advised to adapt this resource to suit their students' needs, or to integrate information and activities outlined in this resource into existing units of study.

Key terms in bold are defined in the Glossary.

\*This education resource incorporates text from the catalogue *Misty Moderns: Australian Tonalists 1915–1950*, written by Tracey Lock-Weir, Curator Australian Paintings & Sculpture at the Art Gallery of South Australia.



**Government of South Australia**  
Department of Education and  
Children's Services

This program has been made possible through the partnership between the Art Gallery of South Australia (Arts SA) and Outreach Education (Department of Education and Children's Services). Outreach Education is a team of DECS educators seconded to public organisations.

front cover: Clarice Beckett, 1887–1935, *Hawthorn Tea Gardens*, c.1933, oil on canvas laid on pulpboard  
Gift of Sir Edward Hayward 1980, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

# FRANCE AND ELTHAM



Max Meldrum, 1875–1955, *Picherit's Farm*, 1910  
oil on canvas; Felton Bequest 1951, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

In Brittany, France, Meldrum developed his ideas on **tone** and improved his skill in its recording. Views for his paintings were taken from laneways, avenues, embankments and the fields of the village of Pace.

'I wanted to know the meaning of depictive art, and I went into a study of the art of the past, in order to find out its tradition and progress. I discovered that the whole tradition of depictive art was based on an ever-increasing knowledge of what we see. The study of the old masters gave me the courage to go and look at nature and study it at first hand'.<sup>1</sup>

Meldrum 1925

## PRIMARY

### Discussion:

What is the painting about? What time of day is it?  
Where are we?

### Looking:

Imagine walking to the window. Take a look inside. What do you see?

### Activity/research:

Write a story about the people who live in this house.

## SECONDARY

### Discussion:

What is **depictive art**?

### Looking:

Compare and contrast the painting methods in *Picherit's Farm*, 1910, created in France, with *The three trees* 1917, created in Australia.

### Activity/research:

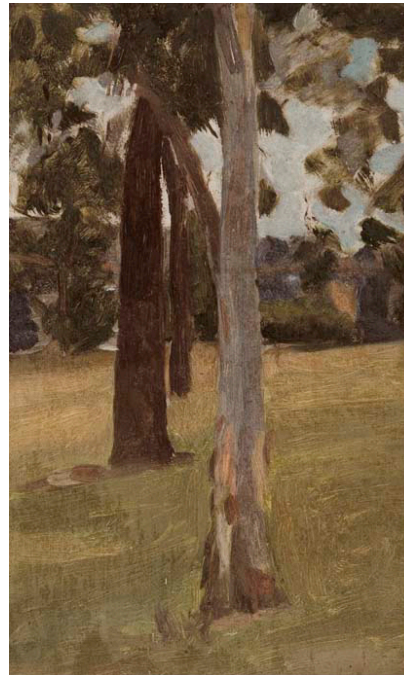
A key influence in the work of Meldrum was his appreciation of old and new masters.

Research the life and work of Spanish artist Diego Velázquez, or French artist Camille Corot, a Barbizon painter.

Compare a landscape painting by your chosen artist with Meldrum's *Picherit's Farm*. Can you see the influence this artist had on Meldrum? Explain.

1 Lock-Weir, p. 22

2 Lock-Weir, p. 76



Max Meldrum, 1875–1955,  
*The three trees*, c.1917  
oil on board;  
Private collection

'Australia has a landscape different from any other... in painting a bush landscape I find I have to use a greater number of tones than would be necessary to render, say a typical scene in Brittany or England... On the trunk of a silver gum, there were seven different tones of grey alone, all subtly different.'<sup>2</sup>

Meldrum 1925

The eucalypts at Eltham inspired Meldrum to produce his first experimental paintings.

## PRIMARY

### Discussion:

*The three trees* is a painting of an Australian landscape. What type of trees has the artist painted? What part of the tree has Meldrum chosen to focus on?

### Looking:

List the number of different shades of green you can see in the painting *The three trees*.

### Activity/research:

Discuss different ways in which artists might record images of gum trees. Find examples of images of gum trees in photographs and paintings by different artists.

Explore your school environment for examples of different kinds of trees or plants. Using paper and coloured pencils or pastels, create a drawing of your favourite plant.

Collect fallen bark, leaves and sticks. Make a sculpture or **collage** using these found objects.

## SECONDARY

### Discussion:

Describe Meldrum's use of tone in *The three trees*.

### Looking:

Find the image of Hans Heysen's *The three gums*, 1915–20 on page 28 of the exhibition catalogue. Compare Meldrum's *The three trees* with Hans Heysen's work. What is similar about both paintings? What is different?

### Activity/research:

Create your own tonalist landscape in the style of Meldrum, where the gums appear misty and atmospheric in quality, by building tone on tone.

# STILL LIFE



Polly Hurry, 1883–1963, *Still life*, c.1940, oil on canvas;  
Gift of John Farmer 1971, McClelland Gallery + Sculpture Park,  
Langwarrin, Victoria

Electric lamps were often used in Meldrum's studio to create ample diffusion of light. Diffused artificial light encourages a close tonal range, whereby the boundary lines of light and shade are barely noticeable, and planes appear to melt into each other.

'The teaching studio in Meldrum's school was set up with easel and canvas positioned directly alongside the **subject matter** or still life. Before the canvas was touched with paint the students would move back some six metres and observe the still life, looking for differences in the tones of the subject. To assist in observing the different tones, their eyes were half closed or dark glasses worn to aid the comparison.'<sup>1</sup>

The students mixed tones onto a palette and then applied the paint to the canvas without observing the still life. 'The method required the painters to use a palette restricted to only five tones. These were applied with round brushes and were mixed with generous amounts of medium that ensured fluid and sometimes flawless transitions of tone.'<sup>2</sup>

'The painting process required much too-ing and fro-ing between subject and observation point... as accuracy of the rendering needed to be frequently checked by observing the work in progress directly alongside the subject.'<sup>3</sup>

## PRIMARY

### Discussion:

Define the term still life. Investigate the beginnings of still-life paintings and explain why the **genre** is so popular.

### Looking:

What subject matter has the artist painted? List the objects you can see in the painting.

### Activity/research:

Set up a still-life arrangement in the classroom. Choose from flowers, fruit and vegetables, and/or household objects. Using coloured pencils draw two pictures of this arrangement from different angles. Display the results in the classroom.

Three of Meldrum's students reflect on their experiences and recall their views on his painting methods and teaching:

'...the deciding discussion for me was the one on the "First Impressions" or how you saw the biggest contrasts or the biggest masses first and those consequently were the ones you had to paint first. The idea of making an analysis of what you saw rather than working in a fixed or mechanical procedure such as drawing in, or shapes first and colours following and tone mostly forgotten as in the Gallery Art School, appealed to me as clear bright sanity...'<sup>4</sup>

A.D. Colquhoun

'...The setting down of optical impressions in their due order of precedence,—the strongest contrast, the darkest dark, the lightest light—whatever "pulls the eye" and claims the attention first. I have never had so much difficulty as in previous times, working in progressive stages, aiming to get a little nearer the truth with each stroke...'<sup>5</sup>

A. M. E. Bale, 1923

'...up as close as possible to the subject went our easels. Back twenty feet or more (six metres) we were led. Half close your eye. Compare the effect of the subject with your canvas. What do you see?... We were forbidden to look at the subject when close to it, all our observations must be made from our viewing point twenty feet away.'<sup>6</sup>

Arnold Shore, 1916

## SECONDARY

### Discussion:

What role does the mirror play within the composition?

### Looking:

What do you notice or discover when you spend more time looking? List what you can see in the foreground and background of this painting.

Can you find other paintings in the exhibition which use mirrors in the composition? Which painting do you think depicts the use of mirrors best? Why?

### Activity/research:

Set up a still-life arrangement in the classroom as Meldrum would have set up for his students. Choose from flowers, household objects, fruit and vegetables, and mirrors. Using paint and a close tonal range, paint two studies from different viewpoints. Display the results and curate your own exhibition.

Scan your painting into Photoshop or a similar computer program, then experiment with the lighting effects to create new images. How does the mood and feeling of the painting change?

Research Diego Velázquez, an artist greatly admired by Meldrum. Look for his masterpiece *Las Meninas*, 1656 which depicts mirrored space. Focus on how he has used mirrors in his work.

1 Lock-Weir, p.114

2 Lock-Weir, p. 42

3 Lock-Weir, p. 46

4 Perry, Peter & Perry, John. *Max Meldrum & associates: their art, lives and influences*. Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum, Castlemaine, Victoria. 1996. p. 85

5 Perry & Perry, p. 75

6 Lock-Weir, p. 42

# CLARICE BECKETT AND COUNTRY HOLIDAYS



Clarice Beckett, 1887–1935, *Passing trams*, c.1931, oil on board; Edna Berniece Harrison Bequest Fund through the Friends of the Art Gallery of South Australia 2001, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

‘...to give a sincere and truthful representation of a portion of the beauty of Nature, and to show the charm of light and shade, which I try to set forth in correct tones so as to give nearly as possible an exact illusion of reality’.<sup>1</sup>

Clarice Beckett on her objective in art, 1924

## PRIMARY

### Discussion:

Make a list of words that you would use to describe the painting.

### Looking:

Does this painting look different according to whether you stand close or at a distance? What are the differences? Describe.

### Activity/research:

Imagine you could step into the painting. What do you see, feel and hear? What is the time of day? What is the weather like?

## SECONDARY

### Discussion:

What do you think is a ‘typical Australian image’? Explain the reasons for your choice.

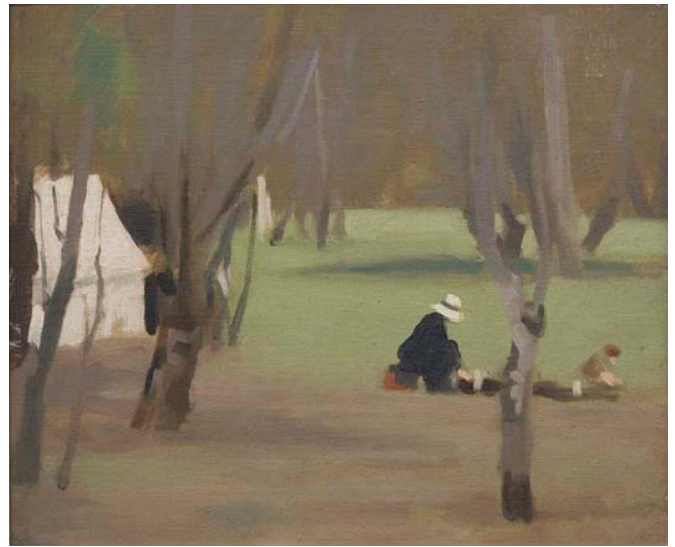
### Looking:

Many of Clarice Beckett’s paintings show an urban landscape: a man-made world of telephone poles, motor cars, trams, and taxis. Compare the ‘urban’ paintings with images of coastal scenes and Australian landscapes. What image do you think best depicts the concept of an Australian identity?

### Activity/research:

Research and write about the life and work of Clarice Beckett. Examine the role of women in Australian art of the early 20th century.

<sup>1</sup> Perry, Peter & Perry, John. *Max Meldrum & associates: their art, lives and influences*, Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum, Castlemaine, Victoria, 1996, p. 78



Percy Leason, 1889–1959, *At the campfire, San Remo*, c.1934, oil on canvas on cardboard; Gift of Max Leason 1980, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

Many of the Meldrum Group painted Australian landscapes on regular summer painting camps to country Victoria, places such as Eltham, situated 20 kilometres from Melbourne, San Remo, a fishing village on Western Port, and Olinda in the Dandenong Ranges near Melbourne. Many of the artists were friends and they often worked alongside each other. This allowed for a rich exchange of ideas.

The painting of adverse weather conditions was favoured by many of the Meldrum Group. Wintry wet surfaces and mists provided increased spatial effects. The use of modified caravan-studios enabled the artists to travel, and so paint a wide range of Australian landscapes.

## PRIMARY

### Discussion:

Why work *en plein air*?

### Looking:

How many people can you see? What are they doing? Have you ever been camping? What do you do when you go camping? What is your favourite activity?

### Activity/research:

Collect images of holiday scenes from old photos, magazines and / or postcards. Using these images create a **collage** of your perfect holiday.

## SECONDARY

### Discussion:

What are the benefits and differences to painting in a studio compared to painting outside?

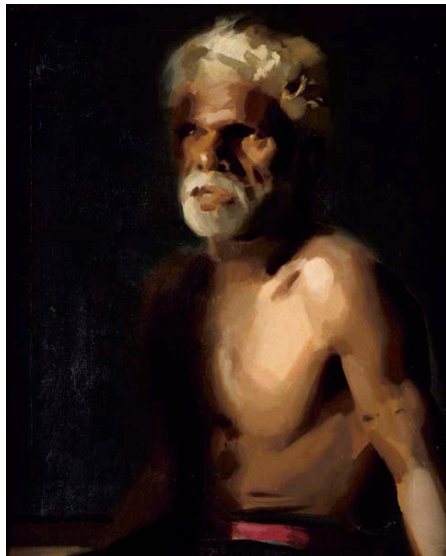
### Looking:

Compare this painting to other images of camping scenes in the exhibition. How did artists overcome the challenge of moving equipment around?

### Activity/research:

When did *en plein air* become popular for artists in Australia? Who were its most famous exponents?

# PORTRAITS



Percy Leason, 1889–1959, *William Johnson*, 1934, oil on canvas; Gift of Mrs Isabella Leason 1969, LaTrobe Pictorial Collection, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne

This is a portrait of William Johnson, known as 'Grandfather' Johnson. He was an expert canoe maker and a noted athlete and boxer. During the 1920s Percy Leason became interested in **anthropological** art. In an exhibition held for Victoria's state centenary celebration Leason painted over thirty portraits in a series titled *The Last of the Victorian Aborigines*, 1934.

Leason created dramatic artificial lighting in his makeshift studio by tacking blankets over the windows of the ballroom at Toorloo Guest House, near Lake Tyers Aboriginal Reserve in eastern Victoria.

## PRIMARY

### Discussion:

Why do artists paint portraits?

### Looking:

What might William Johnson be thinking or feeling?

Imagine if William Johnson could talk to you. What stories would he tell you? What questions would you ask him?

### Activity/research:

Research how to make a canoe.

What is an Aboriginal reserve? How would living there impact on the lives of Aboriginal people?

## SECONDARY

### Discussion:

The series of portraits painted by Leason were not considered as art at the time, but as anthropological records. Now they are considered as a major contribution to twentieth century Australian portraiture.

Discuss the importance of recording indigenous culture and life, past and present.

### Looking:

Find an example of a typical **anthropological** portrait of an indigenous Australian and compare and **contrast** it with Leason's portrait of William Johnson.

### Activity/research:

Investigate Aboriginal rights during the early part of the 20th century. What were the issues which indigenous Australians faced? Has anything changed? Look at the work of other Australian artists and see how they recorded racial injustice.



Roland Wakelin, 1887–1971, *Self-portrait*, 1920, oil on paperboard; Edward Stinson Bequest Fund 2006, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Roland Wakelin and Roy de Maistre were important artists working in the 'Modern Art' mode at the beginning of the 20th century. Their works combine colour and music. 'Believing that colours and tones in a painting can be orchestrated in the same harmonious way that a composer arranges a symphony... The theory assumes there is an analogy between the notes of a musical scale and the colours of the spectrum of the sun.'<sup>1</sup> Meldrum's perceptual theory provoked the artists to abandon their radical colour experiments and explore his tonal values for a short but intense period around 1920.

The *Colour in Art* exhibition (the first time semi-abstract paintings were exhibited in Australia) opened in Sydney in August 1919. Meldrum's group exhibition opened the following month. Both of these exhibitions offered modern painting 'systems' which were much in demand during the interwar period.

## PRIMARY

### Discussion:

What is a self-portrait?

### Looking:

What is the man in the painting doing?

### Activity/research:

Can you find other paintings in the exhibition which show people engaged in some activity? Make a list of all the different kinds of activities you can find.

## SECONDARY

### Discussion:

Do you feel any personal connection to this style of art? Compare this work with the portrait of William Johnson. List similarities and differences. Which portrait engages you more? Why?

### Looking:

How would you describe this self-portrait? What might Wakelin be thinking?

### Activity/research:

Create your own self-portrait using only a monochromatic colour scheme. Explore the effects of light and shade using broken areas of controlled tone, but without the use of line.

Roland Wakelin and Roy de Maistre were important artists of the early 20th century who helped introduce Modernism into Australia. Research how they did this, and find examples of their work.

1 Stephen, Ann; McNamara, Andrew & Goad, Philip. *Modernism & Australia: documents on art, design and architecture 1917–1967*. Miegunyah Press, Carlton, Victoria. 2006, p. 61

# IMAGES OF WAR AND ASIA



Colin Colahan, 1897–1987, *Ballet of wind and rain*, 1945, oil on canvas; Australian War Memorial, Canberra

Colin Colahan was an official war artist from August 1942 until October 1945. He was already living in England when war broke out. This painting was completed in the Netherlands.

## PRIMARY

### Discussion:

What do you think the title of the painting means?

### Looking:

What can you see in the painting? Who are these people? What are they doing?

Imagine you can step into the painting. What can you see and hear? What is the weather like?

### Activity/research:

How has the artist created a sense of movement in the scene? Research the life of this war artist. Find other examples of his work during World War Two.

## SECONDARY

### Discussion:

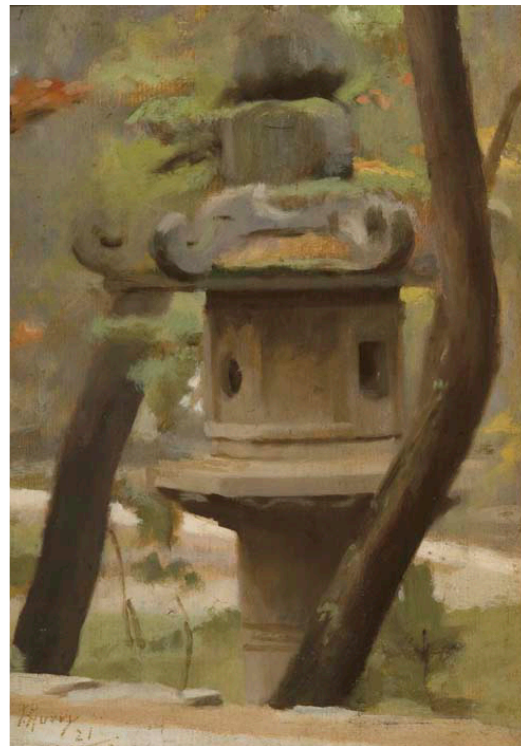
What is the role of an official war artist?

### Looking:

Why has the artist chosen this subject? What aspect of war is the artist depicting in this painting?

### Activity/research:

Find out about other Australian war artists. Choose two different artists who were working during World War Two. Compare and contrast their styles.



Polly Hurry, 1883–1963, *The big stone lantern, Japan*, 1921, oil on panel; Gift of Miss Margaret Pestell 1983, Castlemaine Art Gallery & Historical Museum, Castlemaine, Victoria

Many of the artists of Meldrum's school travelled overseas. John Farmer and Polly Hurry travelled to China, Japan, and South Korea in 1921. Access to Asian art was limited in Australia at this time and both John Farmer's painting *Peking* and Polly Hurry's *The big stone lantern, Japan* offer rare early views of Asia painted by Australians.

## PRIMARY

### Discussion:

What is the lantern in the painting used for?

### Looking:

What country do you think this is? How can you tell?

### Activity/research:

Can you make a list from the wall labels in the exhibition of the different countries that the Meldrum group visited? Back in the classroom use a map of the world to locate these places.

## SECONDARY

### Discussion:

Describe the composition Polly Hurry has used in this work of art.

### Looking:

Make a list of other paintings in the exhibition which have strong vertical or horizontal elements. Choose one which you think has the greatest visual impact and interest. Make a small sketch of the composition.

### Activity/research:

Find the painting by A.D. Colquhoun titled *Alma Figuerola*. The artist who painted this portrait was interested in and collected *ukiyo-e* Japanese woodblock prints.

Research Japonisme which had influenced Australian artists since the 1880s, with particular focus on Japanese woodblock prints.



# MISTY MODERNS

AUSTRALIAN TONALISTS 1915–1950

## EDUCATION RESOURCE

*Misty Moderns: Australian Tonalists 1915–1950* is the first major exhibition of the work of the tonalist painter Max Meldrum (1875–1955) and his school. Meldrum is regarded as one of the most important teachers and theorists of the twentieth-century interwar period, best known as the pioneer of tonal painting and as one of the most influential anti-modernists in Australia. The exhibition includes works by some of his best-known followers and pupils such as Clarice Beckett, Percy Leason and Colin Colahan, as well as works from leading Australian Modernists such as Roy de Maistre, Roland Wakelin, Arnold Shore and William Frater.

### MAX MELDRUM: LIFE

- 1875 Duncan Max Meldrum was born in Edinburgh, Scotland on 3 December.
- 1889 He arrived in Melbourne with his parents and two brothers in 1889. Soon after, Meldrum declared that he was finished with school, and found a job working as a clerk in a Melbourne wool store. However, he soon realised that a career in commerce was not for him, and in 1892 he enrolled in the Melbourne National Gallery Art School, at that time under the leadership of Bernard Hall and Frederick McCubbin. His fellow students included Hugh Ramsay and George Bell. In mid-1895, to earn some money and help pay student fees, Meldrum began work as a freelance illustrator and cartoonist contributing to the Melbourne socialist paper *The Champion*.
- 1899 Meldrum won the National Gallery Travelling Scholarship which gave him a small income tenable for three years, and enabled him to travel to Paris. In 1900 he began study at the Academie Colarossi under M. Raphael Collin, Gustave Courtois, and Louis Girardot. In 1901 Meldrum was at the Academie Julian under Jean-Paul Laurens for the purpose of studying painting from the life model, as well as taking evening classes at the Academie Colarossi. But his time with the schools was short-lived, as he soon became unhappy with their traditional teaching methods. Instead he began working alone, and independently began to study in the Louvre, copying the works of the old and modern masters such as Rembrandt, Velázquez, Camille Corot, Chardin, Van Dyck, Theodore Rousseau, and Turner. Meldrum concentrated his study on the realist traditions of European art. His self-directed studies became his most formative experience in Paris.
- 1907 Meldrum married a French woman, Jeanne Nitsch, a singer at the Opera Comique, Paris. They lived for a number of years in Pace, a small village in Brittany, where Meldrum studied and painted directly from nature. He responded to the influence of the Barbizon school of painters of sixty years before, by painting landscapes in the manner of Camille Corot. He limited his palette and refined the tonal range of his work, and he exhibited frequently in Paris.
- During his time in France, Meldrum was developing his own perceptual theory that ‘impressions came to the eye in a certain order, and should be put down in that order, paying respect to tone, proportion and colour’. This approach was to become his method of painting and teaching for the rest of his life.
- 1911 Meldrum, his wife and two daughters Ida and Elsa, returned to Australia. He brought back nothing of modern art, having rejected much of the Parisian **avant-garde**, including those painters who were laying down the foundations of the modernist movement, such as Matisse, and the cubist painters. Instead Meldrum returned with a modern art theory. He was armed with ideas and concepts about ways of looking and interpreting.
- 1912 Meldrum became a founding member of the Australian Art Association and a member of the Council of the Victorian Artists’ Society (VAS).
- 1913 Meldrum staged his first solo exhibition, comprising one hundred paintings, at the Athenaeum Hall in Melbourne.
- 1915 Meldrum gave the first of many lectures on his optical theory of painting which he called “The Scientific Order of Impressions”. This was the first theory of its kind in Australian art. Meldrum believed that an artist should record tonal impressions (shades of light and dark) on to a canvas in the order the impressions had been received by their eye.



1917 Meldrum established a private art school in which he developed, practised, and taught his theory. Among his students were Clarice Beckett, Colin Colahan, John Farmer, Polly Hurry, Justus Jorgensen, Percy Leason, and Arnold Shore. The studio became a focal point for artists in Australia, and many students left the National Gallery School to seek instruction under Meldrum. Unlike at the National Gallery School there were no progressive stages in Meldrum's teaching process, and no end point. He did not believe that there was a beginning and an end to being an artist, nor did he try to teach painting by a particular method. Instead he encouraged his students to see for themselves.

Meldrum's paintings such as *The three trees* demonstrate his perceptual theory. The paintings he produced from this time show the most important advance in Australian landscape painting since Australian Impressionism.

1919 Meldrum published his ideas on perception in a book titled *Max Meldrum, his art and views*. He argued that painting was a pure science, a science of optical analysis, and that through careful observation of tonal relationships artists could produce exact representations of their subjects. Tone was the most important component of the art of painting, next was proportion, the superficial area covered by one tone, and then colour, the least important component. The book was the first of its kind in Australia and the theory proved highly influential.

The opening of the Meldrum Group exhibition at the Athenaeum Hall in Melbourne caused widespread interest. It was the first public appearance of **tonalism**, and the first of three annual group exhibitions. Two hundred and five paintings were exhibited by thirty one exhibitors; all were listed in the catalogue without titles, and instead assigned numbers. They were uniformly displayed in black frames and presented as a unified whole, like a twentieth-century art installation.



Meldrum Group exhibition, Athenaeum Hall, Melbourne, either 1919, 1920 or 1921



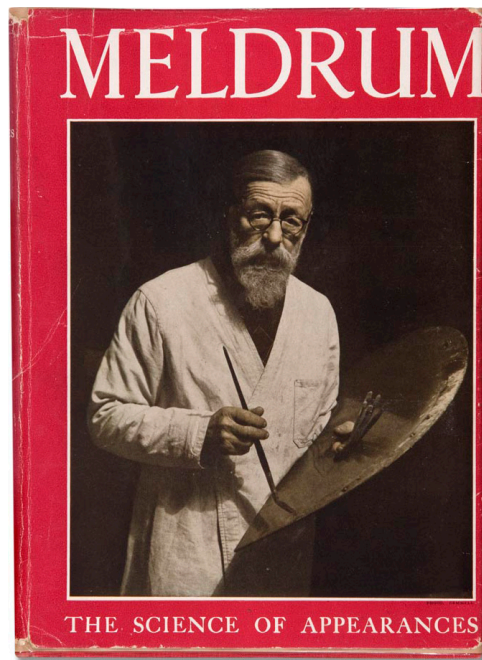
The Meldrum Group was often referred to as 'The Meldrumites'. The group was a complex mixture of Meldrum's current students, former students, and those artists working independently who were in sympathy with his theories, methods and ideas. Many of the Meldrum Group formed close friendships, and often they worked alongside one another, which allowed for a rich exchange of ideas. The Jorgensens, the Leasons, Clarice Beckett, Colin Colahan and others of the group regularly took summer painting camps and holidays together, visiting their favourite rural painting locations in Victoria. These included the wooded areas near Eltham and Olinda, and the coastal areas of San Remo, Lorne and Anglesea.

Clarice Beckett was one of the first of the group to develop a mobile painting trolley or custom-built wheeled easel in order to access a wide range of landscape subjects. Meldrum insisted on working directly from nature and many of the group enjoyed painting outdoors in the open air, whatever the weather conditions.

Leason and Colahan converted a T-model Ford van into a studio-caravan in order to reach more inaccessible areas of the country and provide protection when painting in adverse weather.

In 1930 they embarked upon a painting trip through Victoria and South Australia.

Colin Colahan (left) and Percy Leason (right), probably taken during their painting trip to Adelaide, showing mobile painting trolley and caravan



- 1920 Meldrum travelled to Sydney to promote his book *Max Meldrum: his art and views*.
- 1921 Meldrum moved to Eltham for eighteen months to paint landscapes and prepare for his solo exhibition at the Athenaeum Hall.
- 1922 Meldrum is at the height of his influence in Sydney.
- 1925 As a movement, tonalism reached its peak around 1925 and was waning by 1935. Meldrum continued to paint, teach and exhibit. He inspired the establishment of satellite schools, two in Melbourne in addition to his own, and one each in Sydney, Paris and New York. Some of his satellite schools continued into the early 1950s.
- 1926 Meldrum and his family returned to France where they lived for some years.
- 1927 Meldrum was elected as Associate of the Societe Nationale de Beaux-Arts. He exhibited each year with the Societe from 1927 to 1932.
- 1928 Meldrum made a six month tour of the USA to lecture on this theory, ideas and methods of painting. He gave over one hundred lectures, the first one to an audience of over two thousand people.
- 1931 Meldrum and his family returned to Melbourne and he re-established his painting school.
- 1937 Meldrum was appointed a trustee of the National Gallery School of Victoria, a position he held until 1950.
- 1939 Meldrum won the Archibald prize for portrait painting with a portrait of Sir George Bell.
- 1940 Meldrum again won the Archibald for a portrait of Dr Forbes McKenzie.
- 1950 Meldrum published his second book: *The Science of Appearances*.
- 1954 A Meldrum retrospective exhibition was held at the National Gallery of Victoria.
- 1955 Meldrum died at his home in Kew, Melbourne. He had achieved a great deal by the time of his death: published two ground-breaking books on art; taught to an array of talented artists; and pioneered a new movement in Australian painting.



## GLOSSARY

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Anthropological</b> | The science that deals with the origins, physical and cultural development, biological characteristics, and social customs and beliefs of humankind. Anthropology is the study of human beings.  |
| <b>Avant-garde</b>     | Term applied to the group of artists thought at any given time to be most 'advanced' in their techniques or subject matter.  |
| <b>Collage</b>         | Used to describe both the technique and the resulting work of art in which pieces of photographs, fabric and ephemera are arranged and stuck on to a supporting surface. Can also include painting and drawing and contain three-dimensional elements.   |
| <b>Contrast</b>        | Opposition or juxtaposition of different forms, lines, or colours in a work of art to intensify each element's properties, and produce a more dynamic expressiveness.  |
| <b>Depictive art</b>   | Depicting objects, figures, or scenes as seen.   |
| <b>En plein air</b>    | A French term meaning out of doors, in the open air. The term refers to the practice of painting entire finished pictures out of doors, as opposed to simply making preparatory studies or sketches.   |
| <b>Genre</b>           | A class, category or type of painting. The genres were codified in the seventeenth century by the French Royal Academy. In descending order of importance the types were History, Portrait, Genre, Landscape and Still life. The hierarchy of the genres was based on the notion of man as the measure of all things – landscape and still life were the lowest because they did not involve human subject matter. History was highest because it dealt with the noblest events of human history and with religion.  |
| <b>Subject matter</b>  | Subject or topic that is under consideration in a work of art.   |
| <b>Tone</b>            | Is the lightness or darkness of a colour. One colour can have an almost infinite number of tones. In two-dimensional works of art, such as drawings, artists use tone to create an illusion of form and to add atmosphere to their images.   |
| <b>Tonalism</b>        | Systematically ordered recording of tonal impressions as they appear across pictorial space, in order to create an exact illusion of nature in accordance with Max Meldrum's theory. At the time it was often described in the press as tonal realism or as 'Meldrumism'. It is not to be confused with traditional tonal painting in which artists model form, partly to create a realistic, unified, 'decorative' harmony. That was a dominant form of low-toned painting in Melbourne, promulgated by the National Gallery of Victoria director and head of the popular National Gallery Art School, Bernard Hall, whereby the painted surface is progressively built up, working from dark to light. |
| <b>Ukiyo-e</b>         | Pictures of the floating world. It is a genre of woodblock prints and painting developed in Japan from the 17th to the 19th centuries depicting activities of ordinary people and images from everyday life. Featured were images of landscapes, tales from history, theatre, city life and in particular activities and scenes from the entertainment district.   |

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