

GS Grace  
CossingtonSmithGallery



ABBOTSLEIGH

# Interconnections

13 July to 8 August 2015

An exhibition of works by artists connected to Mary Turner,  
Macquarie Galleries and Abbotsleigh



## Grace Cossington Smith AO OBE (1892-1984)

Grace Cossington Smith attended Abbotsleigh from c1908-c1910.

Due to the specialist art teachers employed by Headmistress Marian Clarke, Grace found an unexpected artistic heritage at Abbotsleigh and a keen supporter in Miss Clarke. 'I can remember an incident with Miss Clarke... she called me into her study one day and said, "Grace, I want you to make a copy of this photograph," and it was a very lovely photograph of a Roman statue...So I made a watercolour copy of it, and took it to Miss Clarke in fear and trembling, and she put her hand on my shoulder and said, "Well done you." Well, that encouraged me.' (*The Lily and the Lion*, p34).

In 1909 Grace started drawing classes at the Royal Art Society of New South Wales with Dattilo-Rubbo. From 1912-14 she travelled in Europe and attended drawing classes in Germany and at the Winchester School of Art in England.

In 1914 Grace returned to the house her parents were renting in Turramurra. She continued her studies with Dattilo-Rubbo and also started to paint. In 1920 the Smiths bought the house in Turramurra and renamed it Cossington after the town Cossington in Leicestershire, home to Grace's mother. At the same time, at her mother's suggestion, Grace became Grace Cossington Smith.

Grace held her first solo exhibition in 1928 at the Grosvenor Galleries and accompanying this was an article in the magazine *Art in Australia*. From 1932 to 1971 she exhibited every three or four years at the Macquarie Galleries. Grace was included in large museum surveys, 150 Years of Australian Art (Sydney, 1938), and Art of Australia 1788-1941 that toured North America.



Grace lived most of her life in her family home at Turramurra and her paintings of interiors and the Sydney Harbour Bridge have become iconic images in Australian art.

*Grace Cossington Smith is regarded as one of Australia's foremost modernist artists, where her art 'revealed a depth of feeling for the world around her, a sense of adventure and a faith in the spirit underlying all things – the golden thread running through time – that made her one of the most brilliant artists of her generation.* (Deborah Edwards ed., *Grace Cossington Smith: a retrospective exhibition*, The National Gallery of Australia, 2005, p95)

*Studio Door*, 1966  
Oil on hardboard, 91.5 x 62.5 cm  
Private Collection

*Drapery, chair and window*, 1942  
Oil on pulpboard, 76.5 x 54.5 cm  
Private Collection  
Exhibited Macquarie Galleries 1968

## Marian Clarke (1853–1933)



Marian Clarke came to Australia from England in 1884 to teach at her sister Ellen's school, Normanhurst, at Ashfield. Perceiving a need for 'academic' schools for girls she founded Abbotsleigh in 1885 and was Headmistress until 1913.

Abbotsleigh's artistic and enterprising founding Headmistress valued an education in all aspects of life, not merely the academic. In her mind, an academic life in isolation without the sporting and artistic spheres did not create a well rounded girl and Miss Clarke sought to create this through an Abbotsleigh education, which was quite unusual for its time.

Marian ensured that Abbotsleigh and her girls would have the best visiting teachers available. Leading specialists now attended the school, not only for lessons in accomplishments, but to give lessons in higher Latin and Mathematics. Included amongst these specialists were three prominent artists; Albert Collins, Alfred Coffey and Eirene Mort, who between them had

won awards and were highly respected artists and designers.

Her favourite relaxation had always been sketching. After the war Marian spent much time travelling throughout Europe and North and South Africa, and she also studied painting under distinguished masters. Her talent flowered and at 71 she had the first of several of her pictures accepted at the Salon in Paris. On her return to Sydney in 1928 she held an exhibition and she also sold many of her pictures for charity.

*The Big Pool*, c1900

Watercolour, 28 x 21.5 cm

Collection of Abbotsleigh

This Pool was in The Glen, near a path to Read House, in the bush behind Abbotsleigh

*St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney*, c1927

Etching, 15.5 x 10.5 cm

Collection of Abbotsleigh

It is possible that it was done under the tutelage of Alfred Coffey when they were both at Abbotsleigh, or on one of her return visits to Australia in 1921 and again 1930.

*In the Sultan's Garden*, c1930

Watercolour, 26.5 x 36 cm

Collection of Abbotsleigh

Exhibited Paris Salon 1931

*The Alhambra Granada, Court of the Chapel*, c1927

Watercolour, 46 x 30.2 cm

Collection of Abbotsleigh

## The Abbotsleigh Album

This large scrapbook recorded Abbotsleigh events and activities for the 1960s and 70s. The open pages show images and the invitation from the 1972 concert, raising money for an Abbotsleigh Art Gallery, with mezzo soprano Lauris Elms. On the right are photographs by Bob Wingfield of Grace Cossington Smith, Patron of the Abbotsleigh Arts Association.

## EVELYN FORSTER

(Abbotsleigh student 1931-1937)

Circular rug, 96 cm diameter

Evelyn made this rug at school in craft classes under the direction of Eirene Mort and she donated it to Abbotsleigh Archives in 1999. The Infants Wing of the Junior School is named in honour of Evelyn Forster and was opened in 2010.

## Janna Bruce (1909-2000)



Janna Bruce was known mainly as a watercolour painter and teacher, working at Abbotsleigh as an art teacher and Head of the Art Department from 1954-1976.

She travelled widely, studied her craft in Paris and lived in both London (1936-1938) and China (1948-1951). In Sydney she studied with

Nancy Goldfinch at the Dattilo-Rubbo School in Sydney from 1925-1935, where she also taught prior to joining Abbotsleigh.

Janna was an exhibiting member of the Australian Watercolour Institute, a finalist several times in the Wynne Prize and her work *Lilies and Figs* (1958) is part of the collection of the Art Gallery of NSW. In 1974 Janna donated *The Reader* by Grace Cossington Smith to the Art Gallery of NSW.

*Yellow House*, McCarrs Creek  
Watercolour, 57 x 42.5 cm  
Collection of Abbotsleigh

Donated by Abbotsleigh's arborist Piers Laverty, whose mother Ursula was a friend of Janna's and whose artist father Peter was Director of the Art Gallery of NSW 1971-1978.

## Thea Proctor (1879-1966)

From 1896 Thea attended Julian Ashton's art school. She worked in London from 1903-21 with just two years spent in Sydney 1912-14. She had a lifelong friendship with George Lambert and his family, and she had an impact on Sydney's cultural life in the 1920s through her involvement in design, theatre, ballet and interior decoration. She taught design at Ashton's Sydney Art School and privately, introducing many young artists to linocut printing, and in the 1940s taught drawing for the Society of Arts and Crafts. When Mary Turner left school she learnt drawing from Thea Proctor.

The actor Barry Humphries note, 'I went to the Macquarie Galleries, in the once charming Bligh Street, to one of their mixed exhibitions

and there came upon a number of fresh and vigorous drawings of the nude signed Thea Proctor and dated '65'... In spite of the continuing support of the Macquarie Galleries, I realised that she had little money and her work was at variance with the prevailing vogue for Abstract Expressionism promoted by Sydney's more modish Eastern Suburbs art dealers.' <http://www.portrait.gov.au/exhibitions/the-world-of-thea-proctor-2005>

*Nude* (undated)

Drawing, 45 x 25.5 cm

Collection of Abbotsleigh, Gift of Dr Nic Jools, 2013

## Alfred Coffey (1869-1950)

Alfred Coffey was employed by Marian Clarke in 1900, teaching at Abbotsleigh until 1921.

Born in Ireland, he migrated to Australia as a boy, studying at the Royal Art Society School in Sydney. As well as teaching at Abbotsleigh, he was a lecturer in History of Art at Sydney University, and he received the President's Prize from the Art Society of NSW in 1892. As reported in his obituary in the Sydney Morning Herald (21 November 1950), in 1921 he gave up art teaching to devote all his time to painting. At the time of his death, he was Vice President of the Royal Arts Society of NSW.

*Watching the Waves*, 1918

Watercolour, 23 x 39 cm

Collection of Abbotsleigh

Donated to the archives in 2010 by Janet Denne (Windeyer 1950). It had belonged to her mother-in-law, Margery Denne (Crane, 1922), who is believed to have acquired it directly from Alfred Coffey not long after he completed the painting.

## Grace Cossington Smith AO OBE (1892-1984)

*Bread, board, knife*, c1915

Pencil drawing on paper, 15x 23 cm

Private Collection

*Cup and Saucer*, undated

Watercolour, 29 x 40 cm

Private Collection

*Calf in the Landscape*, undated

Oil on paperboard, 32.8 x 26 cm

Collection of Abbotsleigh

*Exeter Landscape*, 1957

Oil on canvas on board, 35 x 45 cm

Private Collection

*Chair by the Window*, 1960

Oil on canvas, 42.5 x 28.5 cm

Private Collection

*The Yellow Chest of Drawers*, 1962

Oil on hardboard, 42.1 x 29.2 cm

Collection on Macquarie University

*The Curve of the Bridge* (from Milsons Point),  
c1927-30 (below)

Pastel and pencil on paper, 54.5x 36 cm

Collection of Abbotsleigh, Purchased by the  
Gallery Viewing Group of the Abbotsleigh  
Arts Association.





## Mary Turner Collection from Orange Regional Gallery (selected works)

### Mary Turner OAM (Born Mary Elizabeth Killen in 1926)

Mary attended Abbotsleigh from 1936-1943

For Mary Turner home was Pine Park, north west of Orange, where the family had lived since 1923 (it is now under the Burrendong Dam). Mary was one of seven children. There were five children and then a seven year gap until Mary was born. Her sister Diana was 14 months younger.

Mary attended Abbotsleigh from age 9-17 and her art teacher was Eirene Mort.

When Mary left school she went home to Wellington to help on the farm until the end of the war. She then moved back to the city where she attended art lessons, learning drawing with Thea Proctor and oil painting with Adelaide Perry. She also started working occasionally at the Macquarie Galleries.

Macquarie Galleries was known as Sydney's foremost commercial gallery for contemporary art. It was founded in 1925 in Bligh Street by Basil Burdette and John Young. From the 1920s it was run by Treania Smith and Lucy Swanton, and a new show was held every fortnight. (The Macquarie Galleries closed in 1993.)

Mary travelled abroad, but returned in 1956 on the death of her father. In 1956 Treania Smith offered Mary a partnership at Macquarie Galleries (now in King Street), when Lucy Swanton resigned. Mary highly successfully codirected the galleries until 1978, and after this time continued to run the Murray Crescent Galleries in Canberra. She married Maxwell Godfrey Turner in 1958. Maxwell was extremely supportive and interested in art, although music was his passion.



Mary Turner, photograph by Dot Wilkin

In 1982 Mary offered 34 paintings to the city of Orange to enhance the cultural development of the city. The Mary Turner Collection comprises paintings by some of Australia's most significant modernists such as Grace Cossington Smith, Ian Fairweather, Sidney Nolan, Roland Wakelin and Kevin Connor.

## **Jean Appleton**

*Interior with armchair* 1980

Oil on canvas on composition board,  
125.5 x 93 cm

The interior of the artist's house Moss Vale

## **Grace Cossington Smith**

*The Cotter Dam* 1932

Oil on canvas, 45.5 x 34.3 cm

Exhibited 1974 Macquarie Galleries,  
Sydney,

This work was painted in Canberra during the autumn of 1932. The artist spent several weeks at 'Yarralumla' and gave art lessons to Lady Isaacs, the wife of the Governor-General.

*Cushions on the sofa* 1969

oil on composition board, 91.5 x 61 cm

The main living room of the artist's house Cossington at Turramurra.

Beyond the curtain there is a passageway leading to the arched doorway of dining room. The painting above the chair is Iceland Poppies, 1940 by Roland Wakelin

*Still life with oranges on a plate* 1960

Oil on composition board, 65.9 x 49.4 cm

## **HILDA RIX NICHOLAS**

*The fox whistle*, 1946

Oil on canvas, 102.3 x 82.5 cm

## **ALISON REHFISCH**

*Green and blue still life* (c.1932)

Oil on jute canvas, 50.5 x 41 cm

*The road to the timber mill*

Oil on cardboard, 37.6 x 55.4 cm



## Nancy Goldfinch (1911-2010)

Nancy attended Abbotsleigh from 1924-1928. Her art teacher Eirene Mort suggested that she study with Will Ashton to paint en plein air. After leaving school she had lessons and exhibited at the Royal Art Society of NSW and attended Dattilo-Rubbo's school from 1930-32.

In 1933 Nancy went to England for three years where she studied at the Chelsea Art School, which had a modernist approach. Her work was shown with the Royal Society of British Artists and she exhibited her student work at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1935.

On her return to Sydney Nancy exhibited with the Macquarie Galleries in 1935 and 1940. She attended a drawing group with Thea Proctor and other artists.

In 1951 Nancy moved to Hunters Hill where she raised her family. She worked with John Olsen at the Bakery Art School from 1968-71.

In 1992 Nancy had a one woman show at Macquarie Galleries and in 1994 a retrospective at Newcastle Region Art Gallery. She is represented in the Art Gallery of NSW.

### *Untitled childhood sketch, 1919*

Pencil and watercolor on paper, 16.3 x 24.6 cm  
Private Collection

*When staying with a cousin at Kurraba Point I had a lesson from Miss Marjorie Arnold, a painter. With her I did a small watercolour looking across the harbour toward Cremorne Point. I continued to do small outdoor sketches wherever I was.* Nancy Goldfinch 2002

### *White Gum at Lindfield, 1929*

Watercolour, 48.7 x 56.6 cm  
Private Collection

### *Street in Salisbury, 1933*

Oil on canvas, mounted on board, 47 x 55 cm  
Private Collection  
Exhibited Macquarie Galleries 1935 and 1992



### *Henrietta Street, Double Bay, 1939*

Oil on canvas, mounted on board  
36 cm x 45.5 cm in restored frame  
Private Collection  
Exhibited Macquarie Galleries 1940 and 1992  
Painted en plein air in one sitting.

### *Painting, 1961*

Oil on canvas, mounted on board, 30 x 40.4 cm  
Private Collection

*Painting 1961 ... was the beginning of her search for new modes of expression that were appropriate for the time in which she was now living. From A Particular Form of Meditation*  
Joanna Fischbein Cole 1994

### *Lane in Hunters Hill, 1980*

Oil on canvas mounted on board, 55 x 70 cm  
Private Collection

### *Nude, 1984*

Charcoal, 68 x 54 cm  
Private Collection  
Exhibited Macquarie Galleries 1992  
*Encouraged by John Olsen I became more and more interested in drawing. Drawing which was concerned with space, internal and external forms - negative and positive spaces.* Nancy Goldfinch 2002

*Grey Yellow, 1972*  
Collage, 85.2 x 64 cm  
Private Collection

*Autumn, 1973*  
Acrylic on canvas, mounted on board, 95.5 x 63 cm  
Private Collection

*Untitled, c1992*  
Acrylic on canvas, 122 x 91 cm  
Private Collection

Photograph of Nancy Goldfinch with John Olsen who opened her 1992 exhibition at Macquarie Galleries.

Catalogue for the Nancy Goldfinch retrospective exhibition held at Newcastle Art Gallery in 1994.

## **Mollie Douglas (1920-2011)**

Mollie Douglas attended Abbotsleigh from 1927-1938. Following the Leaving Certificate she won a scholarship to art school at East Sydney Technical College (ESTC) where she studied for a Diploma in Design and Crafts. Mollie completed this course in 1942 and was awarded an Honours Diploma and the College Medal. She started teaching night classes at ESTC in 1944 and for a short time was an art teacher at Abbotsleigh.

In 1946 Mollie set up her studio at her home in Turramurra, holding her first exhibition at David Jones in 1948. In the early 1950s, she moved from earthenware to stoneware with an interest in locally sourced clays and glazes. By 1954 Mollie was a full time staff member at ESTC, teaching there four days and two nights a week and also spending one day a week at the small pottery department she had established at St George Technical College.

With Ivan McMeekin, Peter Rushforth and Ivan Englund, she was one of the original four members of the Potters' Society of Australia when it was formed in 1956. Mollie held her first solo exhibition at the Macquarie Galleries in 1962 and was the Australian delegate to the First World Congress of Craftsmen held at Columbia University, New York, in 1964.

Mollie became the Head Teacher of Art at St George TAFE in 1969 and in 1976 she had full responsibility of all TAFE institutions in NSW as Head of the School of Art and Design. She



retired in 1980 and in 1991, Mollie received a Visual Arts/Craft Board emeritus award.

### **Selected stoneware pots**

Donated to Abbotsleigh from the Mollie Douglas Estate and from Ursula Lavery.

### **Medal in timber frame**

Inscription:

A: Sydney Technical College, Hand and Mind

B: Awarded to Mary Emily Douglas, Highest Honours, Art – Design and Crafts – 1942

Donated to Abbotsleigh from the Mollie Douglas Estate

### **David Moore**

Black and white photograph of Mollie Douglas tea set, exhibited at Macquarie Gallery 1962

Donated to Abbotsleigh from the Mollie Douglas Estate

## Eirene Mort (1879-1977)

Eirene taught at Abbotsleigh from 1914-15 then 1918-1935 and she taught both Nancy Goldfinch and Mary Turner.

She was born into the extended family of the prominent colonial wool broker, pastoralist and engineer Thomas Mort. Amongst her myriad achievements listed in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* she was a founder-member of the Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW and a founder of the Australian Guild of Handicrafts. A respected teacher of art, she had gained her art teacher's certificate from London's Royal College of Art.

Eirene also taught at the Dattilo-Rubbo School, the art school at which Grace Cossington Smith and Nancy Goldfinch studied. There is an anecdotal story that the Mort family may have sponsored Antonio Dattilo Rubbo's voyage to Australia from Naples – thereby ensuring a lasting artistic legacy through this famous art school.

Eirene illustrated Florence Sulman's *A Popular Guide to the Wild Flowers of New South Wales* (1913, 1914). Florence was an early Abbotsleigh student (1890-1895) and daughter of the respected architect Sir John Sulman (whose name is also aligned with artistic endeavours through the Sulman Prize, established in 1936 and awarded for the best subject painting, genre painting or mural project by an Australian artist.



Book: *Eirene Mort's Australian Alphabet*, published 1986 for the Australian National Gallery Canberra

Framed Etching by Eirene Mort, Awarded to Nancy Goldfinch for Drawing Homework 1924



Works and images courtesy the Mary Turner Collection of Orange Regional Gallery,  
Macquarie University Art Gallery, Private collections, Abbotsleigh Archives and  
Abbotsleigh collection

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Abbotsleigh celebrates 130 years