

ART NOTES

Stature Still Increasing in Centenary Year

WHEN posterity has cast its vote the artistic stature of the late Frederick McCubbin is likely to increase, and in inverse ratio the later work of Sir Arthur Streeton may lose some of its present day popularity.

During his youth Streeton was undoubtedly the greater artist. Consciously or unconsciously, he fell victim to the charms of success and the poet made way for the businessman.

McCubbin's art, on the other hand evolved steadily and towards the end of his life attained a lyricism unique in Australian art.

It is true that some of his subject pictures are marred by an element of Victorian sentimentality, but if the theme is ignored, such compositions as *The Pioneers* and *Down On His Luck* live as beautiful studies of the bush.

In their presence one can almost smell the blue gums and blue bitter smoke of a bushman's camp fire.

McCubbin was born in 1855. The centenary of his birth is to be acknowledged later in the year with an exhibition at the National Gallery.

Now at Joshua McClelland's rooms, 82 Collins Street, is a display of 12 paintings by this artist.

The period covered by the collection is from 1908

to 1910. Within this period the artist painted some of his finest work.

By
a Special
Correspondent
in London

His former broad statement of tone had been replaced by the broken colour technique which produced canvasses shimmering with light and atmosphere.

Few, if any of the paintings in the show represent the artist at his best, but as he did not seem to have ever painted a really bad picture, collectors may approach the display with confidence.

Some of McCubbin's artistic talent was inherited by his son.

It is appropriate that some of Louis's work should be shown side by side with that of his father. If his work does not arouse the same admiration, it is the work of a sensitive artist with a fine appreciation for the colour and atmosphere of the Australian landscape.

★
from *The Age* 26 July 1955

ART NOTES

McCUBBIN SHOW INSPIRING

A RETROSPECTIVE exhibition of paintings by the late Frederick McCubbin at the Latrobe Gallery, National Gallery, fulfills expectations. It is the major artistic event of the year.

COMPRISED of 56 works drawn from private collections, and State and provincial galleries, it has been brought together to mark the centenary of the artist's birth and to do honour to a great landscape painter.

Subject of comment in this column (25/10/55), the display offers a unique opportunity to study the works of one of the finest artists this country has produced.

By
"The Age"
Art Critic

Armed with art illustrated catalogue containing an introduction by Mr Arnold Shore, visitors may trace McCubbin's progress through three stages of artistic development.

Although his reputation rests mainly on his abilities as a painter of landscape and genre, he executed some good portraits and interiors.

In the latter category *The Little Girl at the Piano* and *Petit Dejeunex* rank with his finest landscapes.

★
from *The Age* 8 November 1955

ART SHOW

EARLY AUSTRALIAN IMPRESSIONIST

Twenty-four canvasses by Frederick McCubbin, one of the originators of the school of landscape painting, which with modifications, still dominates Australian art, are showing at the Sedon Gallery, Elizabeth Street.

They cover a good part of his artistic career, and show considerable variety in style. Nearly all the work is impressionist, but it is far removed from the high key of colour introduced by Steeton. McCubbin painted with a broken touch, closer to that of Monet, and his method of building up a landscape or an interior out of misty half-lights is entirely personal.

As one of the creators of the Australian landscape, McCubbin has earned the respect with which he is treated. His work, however, was not uniformly successful or purposeful. Some of his smaller canvasses today may create more interest than the large show pieces.

The exhibition will be opened this afternoon by Sir Keith Murdoch, and will be on view until September 19. —G.W.H.

The *Argus* 9 September 1941

MELBOURNE CELEBRATES FEDERATION



Princes Bridge Arch, Melbourne 1901, albumen photograph, 10.6 x 15.3 cm, National Library of Australia, Canberra

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tate.org.uk/servlet/BrowseGroup?cgroupid=999999998

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nga.vic.gov.au/collection/pub/itemDetail?artworkID=34883

nga.gov/podcasts/fullscreen/turner_vid.shtm

Publications

Kathleen Mangan, *Daisy chains, war, then jazz*, Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1984

Kathleen Mangan, *Autumn memories: a McCubbin family album*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1988

Andrew Mackenzie, *Frederick McCubbin 1855–1917: 'The Proff' and his art*, Mannagum Press, Lilydale, 1990

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Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth 12 December 2009 – 28 March 2010

Bendigo Art Gallery 24 April – 25 July 2010

Proudly sponsored by



national gallery of australia

The McCubbin Times

15 AUGUST 2009

National Gallery of Australia showcases Frederick McCubbin

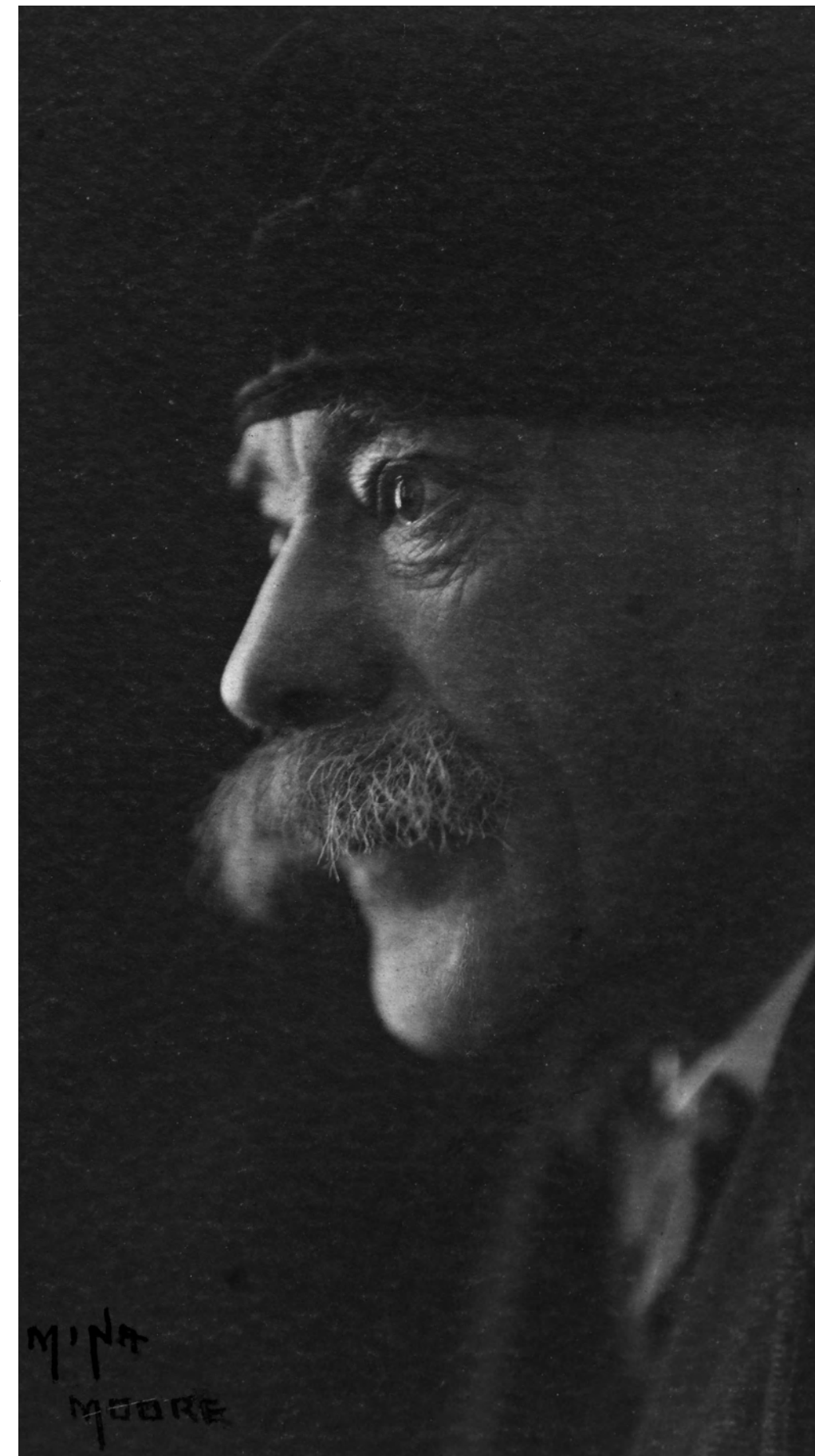
An exhibition of 76 works of art created by Frederick McCubbin during the last eleven years of his life, opened at the National Gallery of Australia last night. The exhibition titled *McCubbin: Last Impressions 1907–17* includes images of city life, portraits, interiors, landscape scenes around South Yarra and Mount Macedon, views of industry and maritime activities.

The exhibition traces the radical changes in McCubbin's techniques after his trip abroad in 1907 when he saw the works of JMW Turner, John Constable and Claude Monet in London and Paris. He returned to Australia inspired by this experience and began painting in a more expressive and experimental manner.

McCubbin: Last Impressions highlights the artist's fascination with the effects of light—the glow of a setting sun, the atmosphere of early morning or the interplay of light and shadow in a city street.

Canberra audiences have until 1 November 2009 to see the work of this significant Australian artist. The exhibition will then travel to Perth and Bendigo.

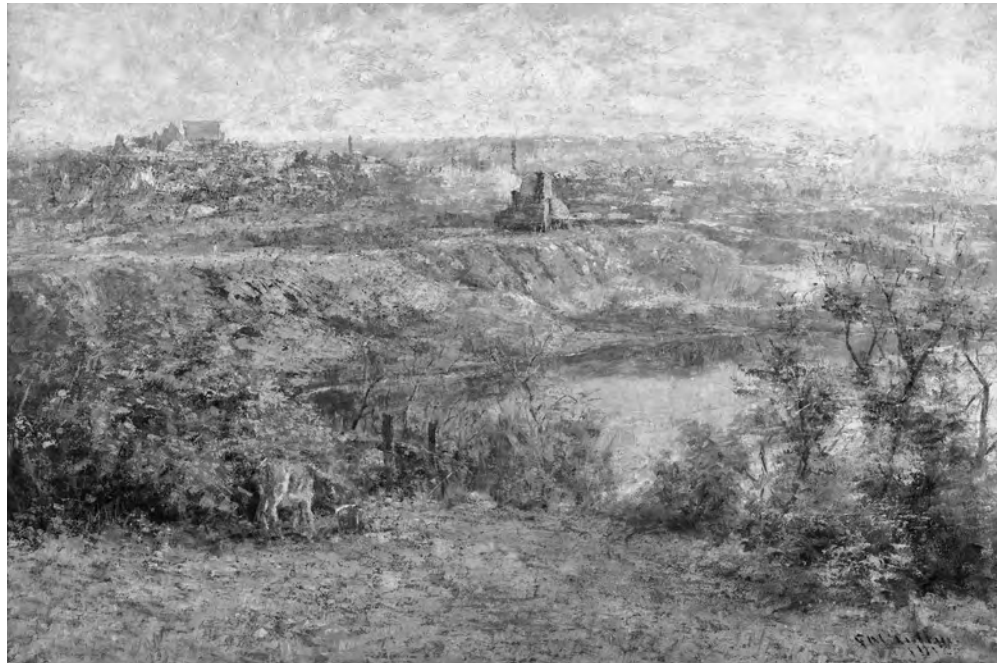
Photograph of Fred McCubbin by Mina Moore c 1913 sepia-toned gelatin silver photograph 13.8 x 9 cm Castlemaine Art Gallery & Historical Museum, Victoria, Percy Leason Bequest Fund, 1995



PRIZE REAL ESTATE WITH VIEWS

We have moved as you see. This is the loveliest place I have ever lived in. A charming old colonial house of stone cool—on the hottest days—perched right over the Yarra with three acres of garden and trees ... The winding stream, gums, osiers and wattle—interspersed. The night effects; sunrise, moonrise, we can see every way. The old Dandenongs in the distance—and ... the back of Burnley is the most picturesque.

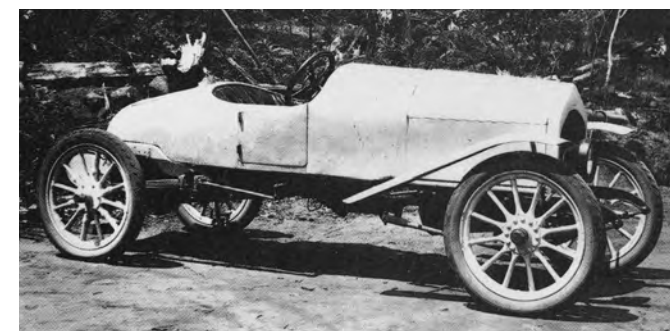
Letter to Tom Roberts in the new year of 1908



Frederick McCubbin *Coming of spring* 1912, painted in South Yarra, Melbourne, oil on canvas, 68.8 x 102 cm National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1976 (76.1570)



(above) Collins Street in the centre of Melbourne, photographed by Nicholas Caire c 1900. Silver gelatin photograph, 20.8 x 27.9 cm, National Library of Australia, Canberra



(left) The family Renault from which McCubbin painted many of his city scenes courtesy Andrew Mackenzie

McCUBBIN ATTRACTED TO CITY LIFE

We parked near the top end of Collins St, facing the city. The latish afternoon sun was shining brilliantly on the tops of the buildings and this was the ideal subject for one of father's swift sketches. Hastily taking out his palette from the box he always carried in the car, he squeezed out blobs of paint and swiftly blended the colours together with his palette knife. Within moments the sky and the illuminated facades of the buildings began to take shape on the sketching board.

From Kathleen Mangan, *Daisy chains, war, then jazz*, Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1984, p 50

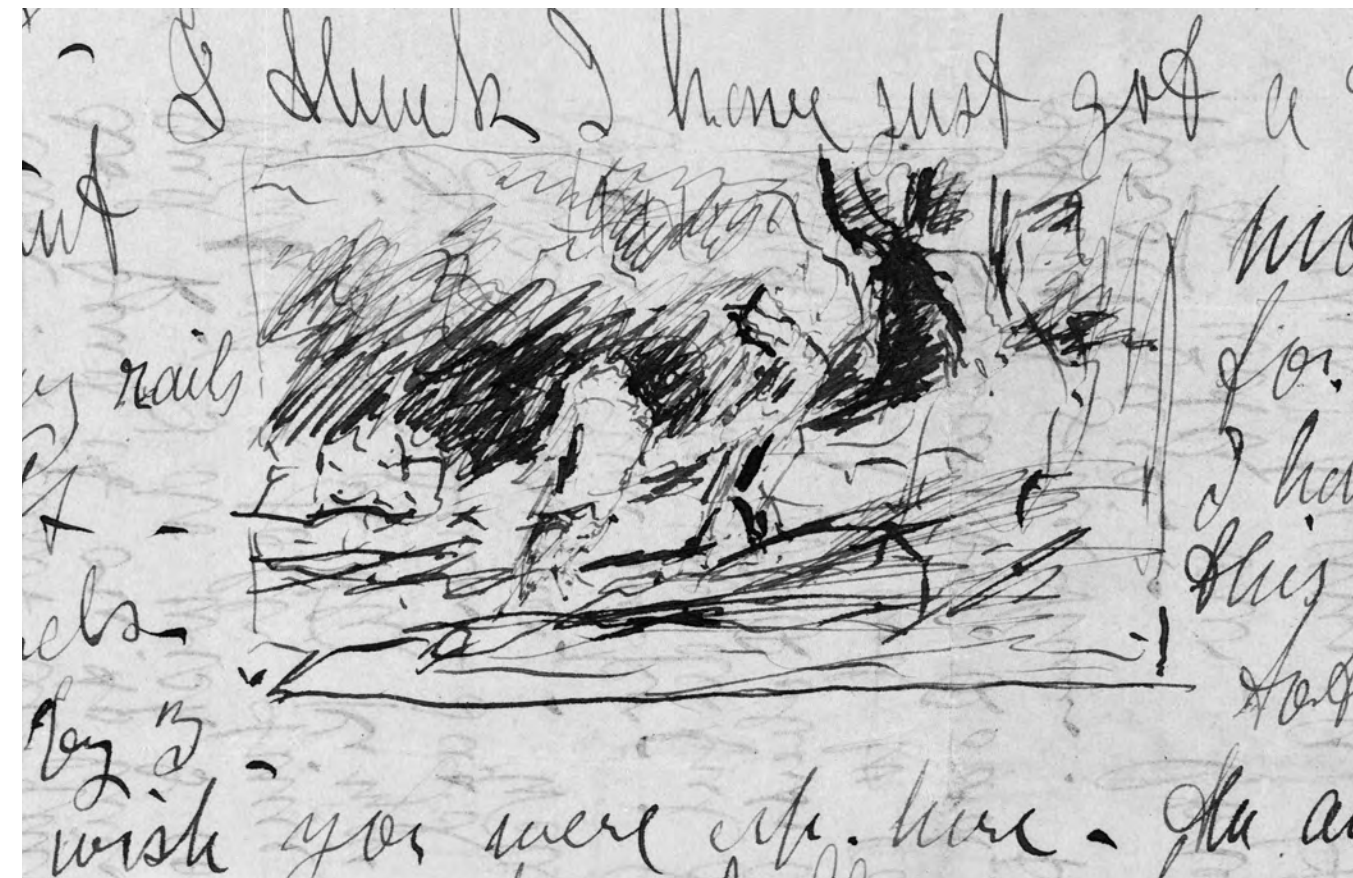
McCUBBIN GOES BUSH

I can see my father going into the bush with his battered old felt hat and his painting coat which was smeared with paint and he carried his easel and paint box. He used to go and find a secluded spot and put down his camping stool and he would paint his subjects right there in the bush on the spot. His easel was collapsible and folded into three and was usually strapped to his paint box. When he opened up his paint box, he had his palette on one side and all his paints and oils and mixers on the other side, along with his brushes and of course his palette knife. He didn't need to wander far because there were so many paintable subjects right there close to the cottage.

Kathleen Mangan (McCubbin's daughter) quoted in Andrew Mackenzie, *Frederick McCubbin 1855–1917: 'The Proff' and his art*, Mannagum Press, Lilydale, 1990, p114



McCubbin's house, 'Fontainebleau', Mount Macedon, Victoria. Kathleen Mangan collection, courtesy Andrew Mackenzie



Pen and ink sketch for *Hauling the rails* in a letter from McCubbin to Tom Roberts 19 January 1910. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

Ripper of a subject at Mount Macedon

I think I have just got a ripping subject to paint morning sunlight—Hauling rails for a fence—a regular Millet—I have made a number of poshards—this I fancy for a 5ft by 3—and others smaller etc.—I wish you were up here—the air of the Mountains is lovely.

Letter to Tom Roberts on 19 January 1910

TURNER MADNESS

No theatrical effect but mist and cloud and sea and land drenched in light- [There is} no other master like him ... these gems with their opal colour—you feel how he gloried in these tender visions of light and air. He worked from darkness into light—His contemporaries could not follow him ... [these works] belong mostly to the same time of the Approach to Venice—Fancy the world taking the greatest period of Art for madness.

From letter to his wife Annie, 19 July 1907 (McKenzie 1990, p 259)

SON TELLS ALL ABOUT McCUBBIN'S TECHNIQUE

He has departed from the direct method of painting of his earlier works and glazes or, to use his own words, 'scumbles' his colour on by means of many applications. The picture was first 'sketched in' in one warm tone, probably with some sienna and white. After this, painting in colour commenced. The pigment was mixed on the palette and applied with a knife. It was kept purer in this way than by mixing it with a brush and, applied thinly, was kept transparent. After each painting the canvas was put in the window or out in the sun until the pigment became bone-dry; it was then rubbed down with a pumice stone until the surface was as smooth as glass. By this method the underneath colours would show through the over-paintings, and the effect of transparency and broken colour was accentuated; advantage could also be taken of 'accident'. This process was continued until the picture was completed. In some instances it might take several years.

Louis McCubbin in the *Bulletin of the National Gallery of South Australia*, vol v, no 1, July 1943

TURNER'S LIGHT

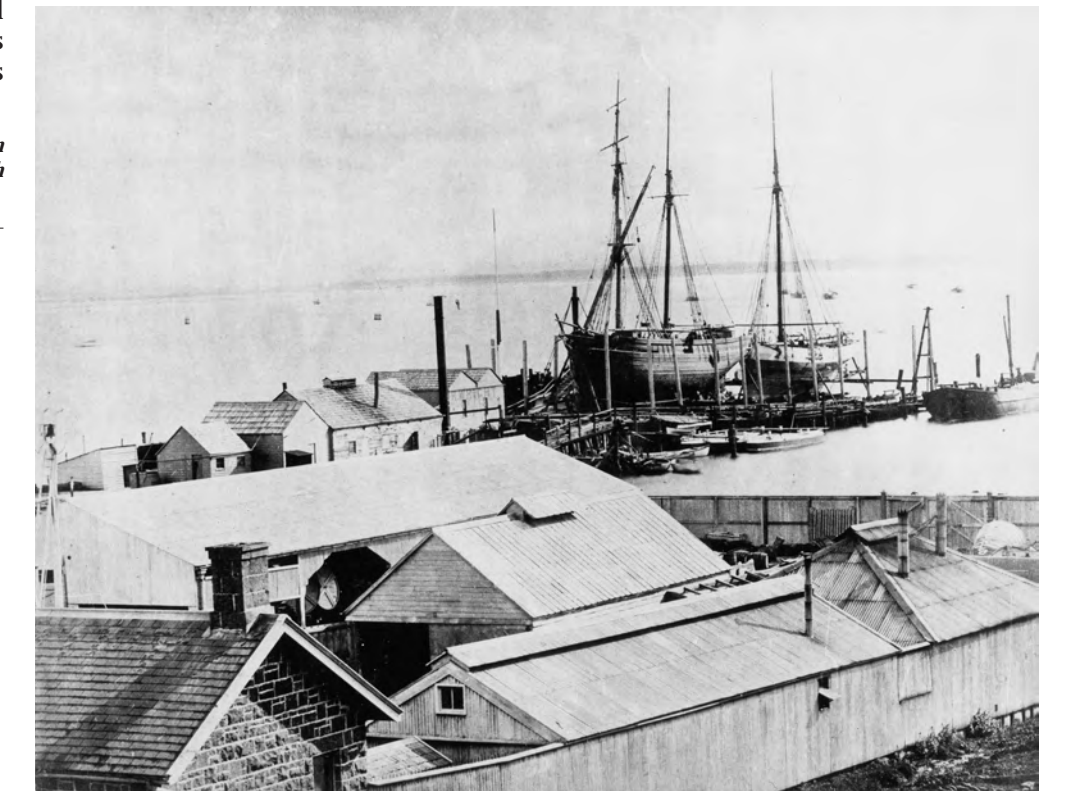
I went yesterday with Fullwood and G Coates and Tom Roberts for a ramble ... to the Tate Gallery—a beautiful freestone building facing the river- through a portico into the Gallery where the lately found Turners are exhibited—these are not like the greater number of pictures in the National Gallery—they represent his different periods, but are mostly in his latest style, when he had realised the quality of light. From letter to his wife, 19 July 1907 (Mackenzie 1990, p 259)

MARITIME ATMOSPHERE

The association may be congratulated on a worthy commencement, and although its aims have not as yet been quite achieved there is a good deal of the raising of the traditional blinds to let the sunlight stream in. The colour key of the exhibition, while diversified, ranging as it does from the highest to the lowest notes of the register, is generally characteristically high, and that is modern. In touring the room the clever work demands many halts, the first stop being in front of the realist, Mr. George Lambert's, two naïve and impetuous studies, Chesham street (an anatomical tour de force) and "The Housekeeper". Then there is Miss Cumbræ-Stewart's broadened and simplified, sweet and tender pastel, "Blue Bonnet": Mr. Meldrum's appealing and spirituelle head of a lady and a child; Mr. Edward Officer's keen dealing with sensations, not with actualities, the appeal of nature to the senses as in "Tasmanian Hills", "The Lachlan Valley", and the musical nocturne in paint, "A Waterhole at Night".

Thereafter follows Mr. McCubbin's luxuriant landscape, "Flood Waters", retaining a good deal of the liquid warmth of the old masters, and "The Old Slip, Williamstown", virile in thought and expressed in romantic language. Mr. Walter Witheys also demands pause for his cleverly-noted and appealing triptych, "A Pastoral" with a fine central note: "Evening, Grey and Gold, A Grey Pastoral". Miss Ohlfsen's admirable medallions attract, and so do Mr Mather's soothing "Golden West" and Mr. Clewin Harcourt's Royal Academy and Paris Salon picture "One Summer Afternoon" a gracious Madonna-like mother in a cream dress and wonderful old Paisley shawl reading to her children, and a group of portraits. Other exhibitors whose works have special interest of their own are by Mrs. Muntz-Adams, Mr. Howard Ashton, Mr. Ambrose Patterson, Mr. Norman Carter, Mr. Webb Gilbert, Mr. Norman McGeorge and Mr. John Shirlow.

Excerpt from Australian Art Association review in the *Argus* 7 May 1913



Wright's Slip about 1900. State Library of Victoria, courtesy of Geoff Dougall

McCUBBIN

LAST IMPRESSIONS 1907–17

14 August – 1 November 2009



Frederick McCubbin *Collins Street* c 1915 (detail)
Geelong Gallery, Victoria, HP Douglass Bequest Fund, 1945

SECONDARY SCHOOL RESOURCE

This education resource, produced to accompany the exhibition *McCubbin: Last Impressions 1907–17*, introduces teachers and students to the work of this significant Australian artist. The exhibition looks at the work of Frederick McCubbin (1855–1917) in the last decade of his life and includes 76 works.

Well-known for his evocative and sentimental bush scenes, in this later period McCubbin focussed on the landscape around his homes in South Yarra and at Mount Macedon, views of the shipping docks and industry, city life, portraits and interiors. The exhibition traces the radical changes in McCubbin's painting methods after his trip abroad in 1907.

This education resource comprises a newspaper broadsheet—*The McCubbin Times*—and eight cards of images of works of art.

- The cards focus on five works of art, each reproduced with background information, discussion topics and activities printed on the back. Three additional works of art have also been produced to assist discussion and research.
- The broadsheet is designed to replicate a fictitious newspaper from the period. The newspaper contains excerpts from McCubbin's letters; reminiscences from his daughter Kathleen; journal articles; reviews and photographs.

Students can locate a primary source in *The McCubbin Times* from the list of articles and photographs on the top left of each card. The diverse subject matter explored within the exhibition links to learning in the areas of Art, History, Geography and English.

This kit has been designed to be used in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia. Additional information is available on the Gallery's website nga.gov.au/McCubbin. This resource can also be downloaded from the website for those schools unable to attend the exhibition.

GALLERY INFORMATION

National Gallery of Australia
Parkes Place, Canberra ACT
nga.gov.au

OPENING HOURS

Open daily from 10.00 am – 5.00 pm
(except Christmas Day)

The shop is open 10.00 am – 5.00 pm

The cafe is open 10.00 am – 4.00 pm

ADMISSION

Entry to the permanent collection is free

Entry to paying exhibitions is free for booked school groups (*McCubbin* is a paying exhibition)

Entry to all exhibitions is free for 16s and under

EDUCATION GROUPS

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Education bookings

groupbookings@nga.gov.au

Program details

nga.gov.au/education

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McCubbin: Last Impressions 1907–17

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
14 August – 1 November 2009

Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth
12 December 2009 – 28 March 2010

Bendigo Art Gallery
24 April – 25 July 2010

Proudly sponsored by



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CARD 1: INVENTIVENESS

PRIMARY SOURCES

- 'Prize real estate with views'
- 'Son tells all about McCubbin's technique'
- 'McCubbin show inspiring'
- Card 6 *Autumn (Stone crusher, Richmond Quarry)* 1908
- Card 7 *The stone crusher* c 1912

In this painting, McCubbin observed the everyday activities of the Burnley quarry and its stone crusher in close proximity. The smoking chimney stack and the dust and dirt indicate the working nature of the scene. McCubbin contrasts the physical exertion of the horses and men with the soft lavender haze shrouding the distant view of the growing city of Melbourne.

Frederick McCubbin painted many images of the Burnley quarry. As McCubbin's daughter Kathleen observed, 'he loved that old stone crusher, and it was so accessible to paint—looking across from our hill'. In 1907, the artist moved to 'Carlesberg' 42 Kensington Road, South Yarra shortly after his return from abroad. The property included three acres of garden extending down to the banks of the Yarra River. It also included a peppercorn tree, fruit trees and areas of natural bush in which acacias and gum trees grew, and with daffodils and jonquils in spring. The garden was a great source of pleasure and adventure for McCubbin's six children. The property looked across the Yarra River to the industrial suburb of Richmond and the Burnley quarry.

The Burnley quarry was established in the 1860s and was a symbol for McCubbin of the developing cityscape of Melbourne. Its cathedral-like structure dominated the skyline and represented the encroachment of industry into the natural landscape. Basalt (bluestone) was quarried and crushed at Burnley until the 1920s and used for building and road construction throughout Melbourne.

McCubbin was one of a few notable artists of the period to spend his lifetime in Melbourne. A characteristic of his work was the depiction of the nuances of what was around him and the variety of the colours and textures of his world 'at home'.

Discussion

- Look at the various images of the stone crusher in this exhibition. In particular compare the three images of the stone crusher included in this resource. Describe the ways McCubbin created variety in his compositions.
- Read Louis McCubbin's explanation of his father's working methods. Examine the surface of this painting and discuss the experimental nature of McCubbin's techniques.

Activity

- Write an exhibition review comparing two of McCubbin's paintings of the stone crusher explaining his innovative techniques and exploration of colour.
- Think of a location familiar to you, observe the scene for a number of days and then paint two versions of your chosen subject. Consider viewpoint, time of day, composition, colour, technique and the way seasonal variation can affect atmosphere.

Frederick McCubbin

The old stone crusher (The quarry) 1911
painted at South Yarra, Melbourne
oil on canvas
76.2 x 91.4 cm
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide,
purchased through the Elder Bequest Fund, 1943 (0.1237)



CARD 2: HISTORY

PRIMARY SOURCES

- 'Turner's light'
- Photograph of Princes Bridge Arch
- Card 8 *Triumphal arch at Princes Bridge*, Melbourne 1901
- prov.vic.gov.au/exhibs/ournation/melbtour2.htm
- JMW Turner *Ancient Rome: Agrippina landing with the ashes of Germanicus* exhibited 1839 tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999996&workid=14780
- JMW Turner *The burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons, 16 October, 1834* 1835 see nga.gov.podcasts/fullscreen/turner_vid.shtm

The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York visited Melbourne on 9 May 1901 for the inauguration of the first Australian Federal Parliament. Frederick McCubbin witnessed this historic event and painted a small oil sketch of the occasion. The royal party's procession began at St Kilda pier and then proceeded through nine elaborate temporary arches along streets covered with flags and festive decorations.

In *Arrival of the Duke and Duchess of York*, McCubbin captures the royal procession proceeding across Princes Bridge where the first arch, The Municipal Arch, served as an imposing gateway to the city. This arch was similar to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and Marble Arch in London, which had been modelled on Roman arches. It included the Latin motto from the British coat of arms and lines by the poets Virgil and Tennyson. Extending from the arch was the bow of an ancient barge with six oars inscribed with the names of the states. A lion's head symbolised the Empire.

Returning from his only trip abroad in 1907, Frederick McCubbin revisited the subject of Federation by making a much larger painting of the royal couple's procession across Princes Bridge. During McCubbin's six month trip to Britain and Europe, he saw original paintings by well-known artists that he had previously only seen in books. While in London McCubbin was impressed with the work of JMW Turner and returned to Australia with an understanding of the differences in light and colour between the Australian and the English landscape. As a result, the artist began to paint with greater freedom and expressiveness and an increased awareness of an atmosphere of place.

Discussion

- How does McCubbin's painting differ from the photograph of the festivities on Princes Bridge?
- In what ways did Turner's paintings, *Ancient Rome: Agrippina landing with the ashes of Germanicus* (exhibited 1839) and *The burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons, 16th October, 1834* 1835, influence McCubbin's 1908 painting of *Arrival of the Duke and Duchess of York*?
- Discuss the various ways McCubbin changed the composition of his large painting when compared to his 1901 oil sketch.
- Compare Turner and McCubbin's references to Ancient Rome as expressed by the titles of their paintings. Does Ancient Roman civilisation have any relevance for the Federation of the Australian states?

Activity

- Research the Duke and Duchess's procession through the streets of central Melbourne. Consider the rationale for the naming of the nine Triumphal Arches. Examine the social and cultural history of Victoria and the relevance of the British Royal Family at the time.
- Write a newspaper article to accompany the photograph on the broadsheet about the festivities on Princes Bridge in 1901.

Frederick McCubbin

Arrival of the Duke and Duchess of York, Melbourne, 1901
c 1908
painted at South Yarra, Melbourne
oil on paper on canvas
59.4 x 89.8 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, purchased with the assistance of a special grant from the Government of Victoria, 1979 (A25-1980)



CARD 3: INFLUENCES

PRIMARY SOURCES

- 'McCubbin goes bush'
- 'Stature still increasing in centenary year'
- 'Ripper of a subject at Mount Macedon' and pen and ink sketch in letter
- Photograph of 'Fontainebleau', Mount Macedon

Frederick McCubbin purchased a cottage which he called 'Fontainebleau', at Mount Macedon in 1901, where he and his family lived for four years. The Mount Macedon area reminded McCubbin of the countryside painted by the French landscape artist, Camille Corot. McCubbin's students often visited Mount Macedon and set up camp near the house.

It was summertime in the mountains when McCubbin painted this landscape of two men hauling rails to make a fence. The village of Heskett, in the valley below Mount Macedon was about one kilometre from McCubbin's home, and was the centre of the local timber industry. The geological formation made famous by the film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) is out of view to the left. The timber in the area included mountain ash, messmate, peppermint, whitegum and manna gum trees. Even though much of the timber had been cut down by 1911, the industry remained important to the district.

Before painting *Hauling rails for a fence*, McCubbin made a quick sketch of a scene he had witnessed on an early morning walk. The artist's small sketch focused on the implied movement of the figures as they pulled the loaded cart up the steep hill. The final composition remained very similar to the sketch in the placement of figures within the landscape. Art historians have suggested that McCubbin may have also been influenced by another French artist, Jean Francois Millet. In his painting McCubbin painted the dense bush in an intimate manner in contrast to the panoramic view favoured by many other artists of the period.

McCubbin was fascinated by the Australian eucalypt and suggested that many Australian artists did not appreciate its qualities. He referred to the way that the eucalypt responded to the varying effects of light and shadow. In *Hauling rails to make a fence* paint was applied to the canvas with a palette knife and a brush. Colours have been dragged over others and scraped back so that we see through the upper layers.

Discussion

- Can you see how McCubbin has absorbed the influences of other artists into his working methods and still maintained a very individual approach?
- How does McCubbin convey the time of day in this painting?
- Discuss the comparisons made between Arthur Streeton and Frederick McCubbin in *The Age* on 26 July 1955.

Activity

- Research the art of Camille Corot and Jean-Francois Millet. What features of Millet's paintings do you think McCubbin was referring to in his letter to Tom Roberts printed in *The McCubbin Times*?
- Observe a scene that involves figures in movement. Make a quick pencil sketch using a variety of marks. Use your sketch to develop a painting.

Frederick McCubbin

Hauling rails for a fence, Mount Macedon 1910
painted at Mount Macedon, Victoria
oil on canvas
71.5 x 101.5 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1964 (1964.46)



CARD 4: MODERNITY

PRIMARY SOURCES

- 'McCubbin attracted to city life'
- 'Art Show: Early Australian Impressionist'
- Photograph of Collins Street
- Photograph of Renault car
- *Boulevard Montmartre, morning, cloudy weather* 1897 by Camille Pissarro see National Gallery of Victoria website ngv.vic.gov.au/collection/pub/itemDetail?artworkID=34883
- *Princes Bridge* 1911 see nga.gov.au/exhibition/mccubbin/Default.cfm?IRN=190355&MnuID=3&ViewID=2

In 1915, at the age of 60, McCubbin bought a second-hand Renault and began making regular painting excursions into the city of Melbourne. He was one of the first artists in Australia to own a motor car and used it as a mobile kerbside studio to capture modern life. McCubbin's daughter, Kathleen (Mangan), often accompanied him on these painting excursions and recalls her father working in the back seat of the car rapidly applying paint to a canvas with his palette knife.

Collins Street was one of the original east-west thoroughfares in the Melbourne city plan of 1837 and maintains its reputation as one of Melbourne's most fashionable and cosmopolitan streets. Today, Collins Street is the address for exclusive retailers and clubs, medical, financial and cultural institutions.

McCubbin captures the vibrancy of this abstracted urban scene; the movement of people, motor vehicles, bicycles, trams and sulkies, in the flickering light of a Melbourne afternoon. The atmosphere of the scene is suggested through the interplay of reflected light and encroaching shadow.

The surface of the painting is covered with small jewel-like dabs of paint. Other areas are painted thinly or rubbed back. The artist also scraped into the paint with the handle of the brush and a palette knife to create highlights in the composition.

Discussion

- Look at the photograph of Collins Street and observe the architecture of the streetscape and how it was considered 'modern' when McCubbin painted this image. Notice the varied modes of transport and the infrastructure of the street, including the tram lines, guttering and electricity poles.
- Compare the photograph of Collins Street with McCubbin's painting. Discuss how the artist creates a sense of dynamism and movement and how the effects of colour and light convey atmosphere.
- Using the Art Show review in *The McCubbin Times*, discuss the word 'impressionism' in relation to McCubbin's art.

Activity

- Identify McCubbin's painting *Princes Bridge* 1911 which shows Flinders Street Station and St Paul's Anglican Cathedral before its spires were erected. Research the developments which have occurred to this major Melbourne city intersection.
- Compare Pissarro's *Boulevard Montmartre, morning, cloudy weather* with McCubbin's *Collins Street*.
- Paint an atmospheric image of an urban scene that you are familiar with. Use a palette knife and the end of your brush to create highlights in your composition.

Frederick McCubbin

Collins Street c 1915
painted in Melbourne
oil on canvas on cardboard
25 x 35.3 cm

Geelong Gallery, Victoria, HP Douglass Bequest Fund, 1945



CARD 5: LIGHT

PRIMARY SOURCES

- 'Turner madness'
- 'Maritime atmosphere'
- Photograph of Wright's Slip
- *The Pool of London (Barges, Pool of London)* 1907 see nga.gov.au/exhibition/mccubbin/defaultcfm?IRN=189706&MnuID=3&ViewID=2
- *The Pool of London* c1907 see nga.gov.au/exhibition/mccubbin/defaultcfm?IRN=189433&MnuID=3&ViewID=2
- JMW Turner collection at Tate tate.org.uk/servlet/BrowseGroup?cgroupid=999999998

Frederick McCubbin's childhood was spent in the area around the Yarra River and its wharfs. As a result of this experience shipping activities were a lifelong interest for the artist. The busy port of Williamstown became a favourite location for McCubbin's paintings of maritime scenes.

Williamstown provided the artist with the opportunity to explore the atmospheric changes of the sea and sky. When McCubbin travelled abroad in 1907 he was inspired by the paintings of JMW Turner especially those of the great city of Venice. Like Turner, McCubbin sought to capture the brilliant colour of a coastal scene, especially the sparkling reflections of light on water. However, for McCubbin the stronger Australian light allowed the artist to explore more vibrant colour combinations.

The old slip, Williamstown depicts a vessel on the slips at Williamstown Patent Slip in front of a building with a double-hipped roof and a tall chimney. The painting is based on a 1910 watercolour which is also included in this exhibition. Violet highlights in the water in the foreground may have been added after the painting was completed. A cloudy sky shrouds the scene in a soft and hazy atmosphere. It is through his use of colour and light that McCubbin evokes the twilight hour.

There were two slips at Williamstown and both were constructed of wood and railway lines to allow the completed vessels to be launched into the sea. These slips no longer exist in the area, however the construction of naval frigates continues in a location further along the waterfront.

Discussion

- Refer to the letter McCubbin wrote to his wife about the Turner paintings he saw in the Tate. Why was the artist so inspired by Turner's paintings?
- Compare McCubbin's two paintings of the Pool of London with this image of Williamstown. How are they similar and different?
- Read the 1913 Australian Art Association review in *The McCubbin Times*. Expand on what you think the critic means by his interpretation of *The old slip*.

Activity

- Look closely at the paint surface of *The old slip, Williamstown* and write a short piece describing the different effects of light on the water, buildings and in the sky.
- Using watercolour, paint a scene of a seascape concentrating on conveying the light effects that McCubbin so admired in Turner's paintings.

Frederick McCubbin
The old slip, Williamstown
1915
painted at South Yarra, Melbourne
oil on canvas
92.5 x 117.5 cm
private collection



J.M.C.H.
1917

CARD 6

Frederick McCubbin

Autumn (Stone crusher, Richmond Quarry) 1908

Painted at South Yarra, Melbourne
oil on canvas mounted on plywood

50.5 x 75.8 cm

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, purchased with funds
from the Robb Bequest, 1975 (AG2800)



F.M. Collins
1908

CARD 7

Frederick McCubbin

The stone crusher c 1912
painted at South Yarra, Melbourne
oil on canvas on board
25.5 x 35.5 cm
Castlemaine Art Gallery & Historical Museum, Victoria,
bequeathed by Hilda Munckton, 1996 (977)



CARD 8

Frederick McCubbin

Triumphal arch at Princes Bridge, Melbourne 1901

Painted in Melbourne

oil on pine panel

26 x 34.4 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, given by Hugh McCubbin to the Commonwealth as a first-hand record of a great historical event and to mark the centenary of the birth of Frederick McCubbin, in 1955 (1959.28)

