

For Industry, Taste and Hand-eye  
Coordination: Art Education in Sydney from  
1850 to 1915

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the history of art education in Sydney from 1850 to 1915. This was a foundational period for the establishment of both art and education in Sydney. It was a time during which structures of schooling first emerged, technical instruction became a priority and a government supported art gallery was established. I draw on a wide range of English and Australian sources to consider what comprised art education in Sydney during this foundational period. It is a topic that has received little scholarly attention, but is important for allowing those currently involved in art education an understanding of the foundations on which our current system was built.

This thesis focuses on four key research questions. The first, ‘why teach art?’ is examined through analysis of discourse surrounding art education in this period. Three major motivations that informed the provision of art education in Sydney are identified: the importance of art for industry, a desire to teach taste and the broader educational benefit of art instruction for improving hand-eye coordination. ‘Where was art taught?’ is a second major focus. The art instruction offered through schools, technical colleges, exhibitions and galleries is examined in order to map the landscape of art education in Sydney. This thesis offers a novel contribution through the creation of a chronology, tracing the development of art instruction across a range of educational institutions. Thirdly, ‘who taught art?’ is considered through a series of professional biographies, featuring a range of individuals involved in the provision of art education. These case studies show the way one person could influence instruction across a range of institutions. Analysis of periodicals, personal papers, educational magazines, government records and school archives is undertaken to gain a deeper understanding of the contribution of these individuals. Finally, the question of ‘how art was taught’ is considered through close analysis of the tools used in teaching. Plaster casts and copybooks are examined, both for their pedagogic value and as artistic objects in themselves and how they were used to disseminate visual culture in Sydney.

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## Contents

Abstract.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	1
Contents.....	2
List of Illustrations .....	4
<b>Introduction</b> .....	8
Literature Review .....	14
Methodology .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Part I: Places and Spaces</b> .....	<b>45</b>
Chapter One: Schools.....	47
Chapter Two: Technical Education .....	83
Chapter Three: Exhibitions and the art gallery.....	112
<b>Part II: People</b> .....	142
Chapter Four: The Superintendents Woodhouse and Branch .....	146
Chapter Five: Ethel A. Stephens .....	174
Chapter Six: Edward Combes .....	196
<b>Part Three: Tools</b> .....	219
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	256
<b>Timeline</b> .....	264
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	269

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: 'Ambidextrous Drawing' in *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, October 1901 pp.101

Figure 2: F. Woodhouse, 'Drawing Examination', *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, September 1900, p.80.

Figure 3: John Skinner Prout, *City of Sydney N.S.W. From the Government Paddock Parramatta Street*, 1844, tinted lithograph, 23.5 x 44.2 cm, State Library of New South Wales

Figure 4: A. M. Brandis, 'Life class student's work', 1908, in *A Quarter Century of Technical Education in New South Wales: A monograph published on the occasion of the exhibition of student's work held at the Sydney Technical College, Easter Week 1909*: p. 143.

Figure 5: Photographs of Crowds lining up and viewing Holman Hunt's *Light of the World* at the National Art Gallery of New South Wales. Photograph from the Art Gallery of New South Wales Archive, Press clippings.

Figure 6: 'Greek Fret' in F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 7: Column base at the front façade of the New South Wales State Library Photograph by the author.

Figure 8: *Detail of an Attic red-figured kylix*, ca. 490, Vulci, The British Museum

Figure 9: The cast of the Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise*, The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Photograph source: <http://from.ph/59050>

Figure 10: Photograph of J. Branch attached to his letter of application. C.1903, photographer unknown. File of the Superintendent for Drawing, New South Wales State Records.

Figure 11: Ethel Stephens, portrait from an article dated August 1902 in Stephens Album, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archive.

Figure 12: Ethel Stephens, *Stannard's Warf*, 1894 Painting reproduced in the *Sydney Mail*, 'Pictures at the Exhibition of the Art Society of New South Wales, 1894 – Second series' Saturday October 13, 1894. (Stephens Album)

Figure 13: Three illustrations from a newspaper article dated September 15 1894. Stephens Album, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archive.

Figure 14: Costumes for 'Trachiniae', performed in 1912. Photograph reproduced in Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School. *Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School 1895-1955*. Darlinghurst: Council of S.C.E.G.G.S, 1958. p.58.

Figure 15: Edward Combes, black and white photograph, c.1872-1885; 28 x 23.6 cm, National Library of Australia.

Figure 16: Ford Madox Brown, *Chaucer at the court of Edward III*, 372.0 x 296.0 cm stretcher; 391.0 x 315.0 x 8.0 cm frame, Oil on canvas, 1847-1851, Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Figure 17: Edward Combes, *The Settlers Hut*, 1880, Watercolour, 43 x 65 cm.

Figure 18: 10<sup>th</sup> century German church enamel work, F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 19: Japanese design and boarder patterns, F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 20: painted Maori boarder designs', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 21: 16<sup>th</sup> century French wood carvings, F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 22: 'Chinese gourd vase', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 23: 'Antefix', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 24: 'Actinotus Hellanthi', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 25: 'Sarpedon' and 'Danais', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 26: 'Leaves of Eucalptus' F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 27: 'Native rose', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 28: Figure 28: 'Fruit of Hakea Platysperna', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

Figure 29: Back cover, Cole, E. W. *Cole's Funny Picture Book*. Melbourne: E. W. Cole, 1879. National Library of Australia.

Figure 30: Cole, E. W. . *Cole's Funny Picture Book*. Melbourne: E. W. Cole, 1879., p.95. National Library of Australia.

Figure 31: Cole, E. W. . *Cole's Funny Picture Book*. Melbourne: E. W. Cole, 1879., p.99. National Library of Australia.

Figure 32: F. W. Woodhouse, Illustrations of the Borgia Apartments, V&A Prints and Drawings collection, 1886

Figure 33: Pinturiccio, The Myth of the Bull Apis, Fresco, Borgia Apartments, Hall of the Saints, 1492-94

Figure 34: F. W. Woodhouse, watercolour sketch of ceiling decoration in the Borgia Apartments, V&A Prints and Drawings Collection, 1886

Figure 35: South Kensington Syllabus included in NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.



## INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the history of art education in Sydney from 1850 to 1915. In examining this history I seek to answer four key questions about why and where art was taught, who was involved in art education and how art was taught. These four questions allow me to examine the motivations that informed the provision of art education; to explore the types of opportunities for art education that existed for ordinary people across a range of institutions; to uncover the professional biographies of those involved in art education; and to examine the tools and methods employed in art instruction.

Previous scholarship on this topic has focused on the place of art in government-supported schooling. This research has characterised the art instruction in Australian schools between 1850 and 1915 as prescriptive and skills-based. The art curriculum of this foundational period of Sydney's schooling has been compared with later eras, when creativity and self-expression were more heavily emphasized. These comparative studies found early forms of art instruction lacking. I suggest that such claims paint a view that is simplistic and incomplete. This thesis seeks to broaden this view with a fuller and more nuanced understanding of art education in this foundational period.

### **Defining 'Art Education'**

This thesis examines art education for amateurs, children and the general public. It is concerned with the educational opportunities available for ordinary people. Art historians have examined the educational experiences of professional artists: William Moore devoted a chapter to artists' training in *The Story of Australian Art*;<sup>1</sup> Bernard Smith includes details of specific artists' educational experiences in *Place, Taste, and Tradition*,<sup>2</sup> but there has been no comprehensive study that has

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<sup>1</sup> William Moore, *The story of Australian art: from the earliest known art of the continent to the art of to-day* (London ; Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Smith, *Place, taste and tradition: a study of Australian art since 1788*, 2nd ed. rev. ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1979).

considered the art instruction available to the greater population of Sydney. Examining art education for the broader population gives us greater insight into our aesthetic heritage, as it was through education that most people encountered art. This thesis examines the way in which visual culture spread through art instruction as children were introduced to the western canon through their art classes; through technical schools teaching English design and art exhibitions that promoted British notions of taste.

Defining what might be included as 'art education' has not been simple. Exploring the motivations that informed the provision of art education has shown how broad art education was in this period. Arguments were used to justify the establishment of art instruction across a range of institutions including schools, technical colleges and galleries. The idea of 'art instruction for improving industry' was used to argue for the inclusion of art as part of general schooling. It was believed that this early training would equip all children with basic design skills that could be later developed through technical education to improve manufactures. The same argument was made to support the establishment of public galleries, as it was believed that workingmen visiting the gallery could study good design to inform their work in manufacturing industries. This thesis examines the motivations that informed the provision of art education in schools, technical education, exhibitions and galleries to find the way art education across these different institutions was connected. It is for this reason I have taken a wide definition of 'art education' including the informal learning offered through exhibitions as well as more formal instruction in schools and technical colleges.

I have used the discourse surrounding the motivations for the provision of art education to inform my definition of art education for this thesis. Contemporary accounts often use the term 'drawing' in relation to art instruction in schools and technical colleges before the twentieth century. I examine both 'art' and 'drawing' in these contexts. In selecting this definition I acknowledge that there may be some artistic activities that have been overlooked. Soucy and Stankewicz make an argument for the inclusion of nature and object study in an examination

of art education, as they found lessons including artistic principles such as colour theory and observational drawing as part of lessons.<sup>3</sup> There is also an argument to be made that other nineteenth century subjects such as needlework and woodwork should all be included in a study of the history of art education, because each of these subjects include elements we now consider part of a visual arts curriculum. This points to the difficulty in defining what should be included as 'art education'. I have chosen to limit my study to 'art' and 'drawing' in order to explore the ways these subjects were taught across a number of different institutions.

### **Art Education for Whom?**

This thesis examines the ways in which the discourse surrounding art education was gendered. For working class children attending New South Wales Public Schools, the same drawing curriculum was taught to both boys and girls. However, for middle class students attending some church, grammar and private venture schools, art instruction was differentiated for boys and girls. Boys studied a drawing curriculum similar to the public schools. By contrast, girls studied fine art and painting in the tradition of the accomplishments curriculum, as well as a more design-focused curriculum. Art education for middle class girls is explored in chapter five. At the technical college, instruction was often divided by gender. The majority of students studying painting and water colour were women, and men dominated design and practical drawing classes. Though there was no explicit rule preventing women from attending the more practical classes, they were often held in the evening making them inappropriate for women to travel to at night. The gendered nature of technical education is explored further in chapter two.

Race and ethnicity are not central categories of analysis in this thesis. Nevertheless, an important theme in this thesis is the tension between 'British' and '(white) Australian' approaches to art instruction across the various sites

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<sup>3</sup> Donald Soucy and Mary Anne Stankiewicz, eds., *Framing the past: essays on art education* (Virginia: National Art Education Association, 1990), p. 50.

examined. For example, Chapter three considers the overwhelming popularity of the exhibition of a religious painting by William Holman Hunt in Sydney in 1906, suggesting a link between high art, Britishness and Christian ideals. The analysis of art in this thesis, as seen from the perspective of those who sought to foster, 'industry, taste and hand-eye coordination', aims to provide a rich and detailed picture of a range of sites for art instruction in late colonial and early post Federation Sydney. The Aboriginal people of Sydney were mostly excluded from these sites whether by rule or practice and Indigenous art (known as 'Primitive Art') was viewed as categorically distinct from either 'fine art' or applied art. The sources used in this study uniformly characterized by their silences about the artistic practice of aboriginal people. While a deeper exploration of these silences and omissions, as well as a concerted search for new sources for the study of Aboriginal art education is important, such a project is outside the scope of this thesis.

This thesis examines the art education available to ordinary people. In the discourse surrounding its provision there is considerable discussion of the advantages of art education for the working classes. These discussions are examined throughout in order to explore the way art education was shaped to accommodate working class participants across schools, technical colleges and exhibitions. I also explore art education for middle class children through consideration of private schools and for adults through the technical college. Questions of class were a subject of ongoing debate for the technical college throughout this period. The tensions about whether lessons should aim to equip working class men with skills in design, or introduce middle class ladies to the polite accomplishment of painting are explored in Chapter two.

### **A Foundational Period: 1850-1915**

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a foundational period for New South Wales' educational and cultural institutions. It was an era of establishment and dramatic growth for mass public schooling; the first formally constituted artists' societies first came together and the National Gallery was

built. It was a time when an individual could make a significant impact on the landscape of art education and helped shape the character of art instruction for the decades that followed.

Between 1850 and 1915 schooling became an increasingly important part of children's lives. By the middle of the nineteenth-century, there was a growing concern among politicians and policy-makers that all children should be at school.<sup>4</sup> Drawing was introduced to Sydney public schools in 1854 by the pioneer of public schooling William Wilkins.<sup>5</sup> Joseph Fowles – whose professional experience included work as an artist, farmer, surgeon and racehorse trainer - was appointed the first Superintendent for Drawing, to oversee its teaching and examination in National Board schools in 1854. It is difficult to know just how art was instructed in the classrooms of public schools, let alone the myriad private and church schools. Examination reports suggest that from this time on, Drawing occupied a (sometimes precarious) part of the public school curriculum.

For Australian artists, this was also an important foundational era. For example, the Society for Artists was established in 1871 and began holding small annual exhibitions. In 1879, Sydney hosted an International Exhibition, which galvanised local interest and enthusiasm in the arts and manufactures. It also brought a wealth of paintings and sculpture to the country for the first time. From this the first public collection was established, but was not open as a permanent gallery until 1897. As a foundational era this period is particularly interesting, as the structures and institutions that were established at this time have gone on to influence the character of art education in Sydney to the present day.

## **Sydney**

In some ways, the history of art education in Sydney is similar to the histories of

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<sup>4</sup> Craig Campbell and Helen Proctor, *A history of Australian schooling* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2014), p.41.

<sup>5</sup> For more on Wilkins see Clifford Turney, *William Wilkins: his life and work* (Marrickville: Hale & Iremonger Pty Limited, 1992).

art education in other Australian colonies. Advocates for the provision of art education made similar arguments for the importance of art from the middle of the nineteenth-century, gathering support towards the end of the century. However, unlike Melbourne and Adelaide, where government-supported galleries were established in 1861 and 1881 respectively, plans to build a government-supported art gallery came together much more slowly in Sydney. In Victoria and South Australia, state-sponsored art schools had been established in connection with their art galleries in 1867 and 1856. No similar school was ever established in New South Wales. Despite the efforts of the New South Wales Society of Artists, the National Art Gallery of New South Wales did not find a permanent home until 1897. This altered the course of art education in New South Wales, as the place of art education was never firmly established during this foundational era by a state sponsored art school. The lack of an official art school meant that Sydneysiders sought art education through schools, the technical college and at exhibitions. Unlike elsewhere in Australia, these became the key sites for art education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the key research questions is: **Why was art taught?** Or, what were the motivations that informed the provision of art education? Three key themes can be identified in the literature on art education: the interest in art for teaching hand-eye coordination; the importance of art education for improving industry; and the desire to teach taste. These three themes appear time and again in the discourse on art education in Sydney. This introductory chapter begins by tracing these themes through the scholarly literature that has examined the motivations that informed the provision of art education. This grounds our understanding of why art was taught, allowing us to explore how these ideas influenced the places and spaces in which art was taught, the people involved in art education and the way in which they taught in later chapters.

### **The importance of art for improving hand-eye coordination**

Histories of art education in Australia that examine this foundational period have focused on pedagogy. They have characterised this early era of art instruction as rigid and skill-based, placing it in contrast to the more creative, child-centred approaches that became popular in the twentieth century. Many scholars who have written on the topic have done so with the intention of using their discoveries about past art instruction to inform present practice. This fixation on the present means that many have not situated their understanding of nineteenth and early twentieth-century art education within the historical context.

Australian Art educators showed a particular interest in the history of their discipline in the late 1970s and 1980s, when “back to basics” curriculum reform placed the future of visual arts education in a precarious position. The establishment of *The Official Journal of the Institute of Art Education* in 1976 saw the publication of articles by teachers grappling with the place of art in the curriculum. This might be read as an attempt by art teachers to organise and

advocate the importance of visual arts education against the perception of art at the time as a “Mickey Mouse subject.”<sup>6</sup> Some of the first articles to examine the history of art education in Australia were published in this journal. They were written by art teachers who wanted to understand the history of the curriculum in the hope it might shed light on their present situation.

In 1981, Geoff Hammond examined the past in order to find how it could inform the “present direction” for art educators.<sup>7</sup> His account of nineteenth-century art education was painted in broad brushstrokes and without any references to primary sources. In his unpublished doctoral thesis on the same topic, Hammond does pay attention to primary sources and examines the early history of art in schools in a far more nuanced manner. He assesses drawing exercises to consider the different ways they may have been used in the classroom, acknowledging the opportunities these exercises offered teachers to encourage creativity in design.<sup>8</sup> However, in his article - which was much more widely cited than his thesis - the close analysis of primary sources was not present. He did not explore the many different factors affecting art curriculum in Victorian schools in the nineteenth-century.

Hammond characterized nineteenth-century art education as being focused on ‘hand-eye coordination’.<sup>9</sup> He wrote that it was “highly prescriptive, product oriented and emphasized skill and discipline to absurd lengths.”<sup>10</sup> According to Hammond, visual arts education in Australian schools developed and *improved* over the one hundred years he considered, reaching its pinnacle in ‘present’ practice. Hammond placed the early period of “hand-eye coordination” in opposition to the “creativity and self expression” phase and claims that words such as “interest, freedom, enjoyment, self-expression” were not part of the normal vocabulary of art teachers until the 1950s and 60s. And yet, he connects

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<sup>6</sup> *The Bulletin*, 24 January 1976, quoted in Campbell and Proctor, *A history of Australian schooling*, p.234.

<sup>7</sup> G. A. Hammond, "Art education ideologies: current emphasis in Australia," *The Official Journal of the Institute of Art Education: a journal of issues in art education*. 5, no. 3 (1981).

<sup>8</sup> ———, "Changes in art education ideologies: Victoria, 1860s to mid-1970s" (Monash University, 1978).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Hammond, "Art education ideologies: current emphasis in Australia," p.84.



this movement with the influence of “the romantic socialist ideals of Ruskin, William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood” without acknowledging them as nineteenth-century thinkers and without explaining why it took so long for their influence to penetrate the Australian curriculum.

Hammond’s interest in New Education and creativity in the art curriculum is reflective of a broader trend in histories of art education; to value past forms of art education that fit better with contemporary ideals. This tendency has also been identified in the American Literature. In his historiography of the American literature on art education, Donald Soucy suggests that, “as ideas from the Child Study Movement and Progressivism took hold, historians began to criticize the rigidity of the industrial drawing systems.”<sup>1112</sup> They saw progressive education as an *improvement* on earlier skills based instruction.

Hammond’s article appears to have had an enduring influence in the literature. It was followed several years later by articles by Les Mandelson,<sup>13</sup> Muriel Hilson,<sup>14</sup> and in 1991 a full issue of the journal was dedicated to historical topics. In 1985, Mandelson described nineteenth-century art education “as an educator of the eye... a drill subject.”<sup>15</sup> He continues Hammond’s characterization of hand-eye skills in the art curriculum. In 1989, Doug Boughton cited Hammond in his survey of art curriculum, using him as a source to justify his classification of Australian art education in three major ‘phases’: the nineteenth-century “hand-eye training period”, followed by “the creativity period” and then the “studio-discipline period”.<sup>16</sup> Neither Mandelson nor Boughton interrogated primary sources, or sought to challenge Hammond’s claims. They did not engage critically with sources or situate our understanding of the curriculum history in the broader historical context of schooling and art.

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<sup>11</sup> Hammond, "Art education ideologies: current emphasis in Australia," pp.83-85.

<sup>12</sup> Soucy and Stankiewicz, *Framing the past: essays on art education*, p.8.

<sup>13</sup> L Mandelson, "From Drawing to Art in Australian state schools," *Journal of the Institute of Art Education* 9, no. 1 (1985), pp.35-45.

<sup>14</sup> Muriel Hilson, "Walter Smith: an indirect connection with Australia," *Journal of the Institute of Art Education* 11, no. 3 (1987), pp.46-54.

<sup>15</sup> Mandelson, "From Drawing to Art in Australian state schools," p.36.

<sup>16</sup> Doug Boughton, "The changing face of Australian art education: New horizons or sub-colonial polities?," *Studies in Art Education* 30, no. 4 (1989), pp.197-211.

Scholarship on the history of art education in Australia has been undertaken by those who identify themselves principally as art educators.<sup>17</sup> Their interest in the topic came from their interest in teaching and their analysis of the past was often used to serve an agenda in the present. In 1991, the *Journal of Art Education* published a guide for art teachers wishing to pursue historical research entitled; *So you want to write history*.<sup>18</sup> They address “enthusiastic art educators who find [they will] learn more about their field by examining the past.”<sup>19</sup> While this may be true, there is also a tendency for passionate art teachers to examine the past in order to justify art instruction in the present.

Donald Soucy also identified this trend in the histories of American art education. He suggested that many art teachers writing history have searched “the past for evidence supporting contemporary art education theory – to find those things that served as stepping stones to today’s enlightened pedagogy, and to discredit anything that did not.”<sup>20</sup> These histories serve the interests of current ideas about art education, rather than attempting to understand past methods of teaching in their own terms.

This tendency can be seen again in Gillian Weiss’ work published in *The Official Journal of the Institute of Art Education* in 1992. She traced the history of art in public schools from 1880-1970 to understand the place of art in schools today. She wrote that “one of the roles of the historian is to reclaim the past for here in the present.”<sup>21</sup> In a 6-page article, Weiss attempted a great breadth in her analysis, considering almost one hundred years of art education across the whole

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<sup>17</sup> All the scholars discussed above identify, at the time of writing, first and foremost, art teachers: Muriel Hilson, "Art Education in New South Wales. 1850s to 1930s with particular reference to the contribution of Joseph Fowles, Fredrich W. Woodhouse, and John E. Branch" (Canberra College of Advanced Education, 1982); ———, "The Journal of John Fowles," *Australian Art Education* 15, no. 1 (1991); Geoff Hammond, "Changes in art education ideologies: Victoria, 1860s to mid-1970s" (Monash University, 1978); Boughton, "The changing face of Australian art education: New horizons or sub-colonial polities?."

<sup>18</sup> Tony Rogers and Gillain Weiss, "So you want to write history," *Australian Art Education* 15, no. 1 (1991), p.68.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Soucy and Stankiewicz, *Framing the past: essays on art education*, p.10.

<sup>21</sup> Gillian Wieiss, "From skills to expression: the arts in the early years of school, 1880- 1970," *Australian Art Education* 16, no. 2 (1992), p.32.

of the country. She suggested that visual arts education developed from emphasising on mechanical drill, to a more creative approach that encouraged the child's individual artistic expression. This broad sweep across history offered insight into the general character of art in public schools, but without further consideration of how art instruction fit within nineteenth-century schooling, or how it was perceived by wider society. She did not consider the place of art education in Australian society.

The preoccupation with hand-eye coordination presented in much of the literature on Australian art education also reveals the researchers' own interests in pedagogy. They focused on the instructional methods, rather than the broader discourse surrounding art in schools. Though developing hand-eye coordination was one significant element of art instruction of this era, the reasons why this style of instruction was favoured have not been the focus of scholarly attention. Few have examined the rationale that informed the curriculum.

This thesis considers art education within the broader historical context. One of the key research questions has been to consider the motivations that informed the provision of art education: *why* was art taught? The literature discussed above fixates on the importance of hand-eye coordination and the focus on skills based instruction in the school curriculum. This thesis considers the school curriculum, but also goes beyond it, to the discourse surrounding art education in order to find why these methods of art instruction were used.

### **Art education for improving industry in England**

English histories of art education have considered the motivations that informed the provision of art instruction. Examining the trends in the English literature allows us to identify the ways in which Australian scholars have been influenced by these ideas. English systems of art education were a major influence on the way art education was instituted in Australian in this period. Examining key

themes in the English literature allows us to consider whether they might also have been present in the establishment of art education in Australia.

English histories have focused on the arguments put forward in the first part of the nineteenth-century that claimed that better provision of design education would improve industry. Scholars have identified the recommendations of the 1835-6 Select Committee in England as a key turning point in the widespread provision of art education. The committee was formed “to enquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the arts and the principles of design among the people (especially the manufacturing population) of the country; also to enquire into the constitution, management and effects of the Institutions with the Arts”.<sup>22</sup> Many scholars have traced this through the establishment of the school curriculum, technical education and art galleries.<sup>23</sup> The establishment of the South Kensington Department of Science and Art and the influence its activities had on art and design education in Britain became the subject of serious scholarly attention in England in the 1950s and 60s. Frank Brown had written an account of the Department and the Royal College of Art in 1912. This was revised and expanded by Quentin Bell in 1953 in his well respected volume titled; *School of Design*.<sup>24</sup> Bell suggested that poor quality design was believed to be holding English manufactures back from competing with their French and German counterparts.<sup>25</sup> In 1968, Richard Carline also highlighted the importance of the Select Committee. He wrote that the report emphasized the superior quality of French Design, stating; “in France, the workman is himself the artist”.<sup>26</sup> He suggested that the Germans too were praised for their designs, their superior quality attributed to the fact that art was a part of their national system of education.

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<sup>22</sup> Gordon Sutton, *Artisan or artist?: a history of the teaching of art and crafts in English schools* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1967), p.46.

<sup>23</sup> Quentin Bell, *The English School of Design* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1963). Richard Carline, *Draw they must: a history of the teaching and examining of art* (Great Britain: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1968). S. Macdonald, *The history and philosophy of art education* (London : University of London Press, 1970).

<sup>24</sup> Bell, *The English School of Design*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> The report of the English 1835/36 Select Committee quoted by Carline, *Draw they must: a history of the teaching and examining of art*, p.76.

Both Bell and Carline suggested that the findings of the Select Committee and the emphasis on improving art for manufactures affected the character of art education that developed in England. In response to the report, a School of Design was established in London in 1838 and installed at Somerset House under the directorship of the young Scottish painter, William Dyce. The school was intended to train young designers who would go on to improve the quality of design in industry. In his analysis of the syllabus Dyce prepared for the School of Design, Carline noted the new, empirical approach to art education Dyce had taken by dividing study in 'form' and 'colour'. Lessons focused on emerging colour theories, and principles of drawing.<sup>27</sup> Carline also examined Dyce's beliefs around art and class. He explored Dyce's opinion that class distinctions should be respected and preserved. Carline suggested, it was this belief that informed the School of Design curriculum that focused squarely on the useful arts only, with no attention to high art and figural compositions.

In his account of the history of English technical education, Michael Argles suggested that the 1851 Great Exhibition was another pivotal moment in the establishment of art education. It put art and manufactured goods on the world stage on a scale not seen before.<sup>28</sup> This spurred an interest in design and reignited the fear that English design may not be competitive in the international market place. Soon after the exhibition, Henry Cole, one of the exhibition organisers, was appointed the superintendent of the Department of Practical Art. The Department included a Museum of Manufactures (later renamed the Museum of Ornamental Art) and The School of Design, which was moved to Marlborough House. In 1853 the Department of Practical Art became the South Kensington Department of Science and Art and was given the responsibility of overseeing art instruction in elementary schools throughout England. The syllabus focused on freehand, geometric and model drawing. Like Dyce's curriculum for the School of Design, it was focused on the useful arts. In 1967, Gordon Sutton's *Artisan and Artist* focused more closely on art in English schools. He traced the events leading up to the establishment of South Kensington and

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Argles, *South Kensington to Robbins: an account of English technical and scientific education since 1851* (London: Longmans, 1965).

the way the new system of art education was implemented in schools. South Kensington was enormously influential on the way art was taught in Sydney Schools and will be examined further as it has been addressed in the Australian scholarship.

Rebecca Wade has considered the way art education developed in the English regional centre of Leeds.<sup>29</sup> She has criticised the absence of scholarship in this area, as it was the regional parts of England that became key industrial centres and an important area where 'art for industry' was concerned. She points to the numerous generalised characterisations of art education in English regional centres, by those who have focused their studies on London. Wade repositions the educational activities of Leeds at the centre and reconsiders the ways that the South Kensington Department of Science and Art affected the development of art education in Leeds. Wade suggests that the use of local supplementary material for art education in Leeds represented a resistance to the standardised teaching promoted from London. Those working and teaching in these industrial centres resisted the South Kensington system. Wade suggests that they were better informed about how to teach design than those in London writing the syllabus.

British histories of art education have focused on art education in England with little attention to Ireland, Scotland, Wales or the British colonies. Richard Carline was an exception, having dedicated a chapter to the influence of British systems of art education in the colonies, concentrating on India. For his discussion of art education in Australian schools, Carline depends on survey accounts of Australian schooling by Austin,<sup>30</sup> and Smith and Spaul.<sup>31</sup> Carline brings together small fragments of information about art and reports that in the few instances art was taught in Australian schools in the nineteenth-century, the South

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<sup>29</sup> Rebecca Wade, "Pedagogic objects: The formation, circulation and exhibition of teaching collections for art and design education in Leeds, 1837-1857" (University of Leeds, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> A. G. Austin, *Australian education, 1788-1900: church, state and public education in colonial Australia* (Carlton, Vic.: Pitman, 1972).

<sup>31</sup> S. H. Smith and G. T. Spaul, *History of education in New South Wales (1788-1925)* (Sydney: G.B. Philip & Son, 1925).

Kensington syllabus was followed.<sup>32</sup> He did not include primary research from Australian archives for a deeper interrogation of Australian art education. However, he does allow us to see the influence of South Kensington and art for industry throughout the British Empire.

Though he did not address Australian art education, it was Stuart Macdonald's *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* published in 1970 that had the most significant influence on scholars of Australian art education.<sup>33</sup> Macdonald was the key reference for all the early articles on Art education in Australia by Aland,<sup>34</sup> Boughton,<sup>35</sup> Hilson,<sup>36</sup> Mandelson<sup>37</sup> and Young.<sup>38</sup> He offered a comprehensive account of the way in which art education developed in England throughout the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth-centuries. Macdonald also identified the '1835 Select Committee on the Arts and their connection with Manufactures', as a key moment in establishing the widespread provision of art education. He focused on the industrial imperatives for art education in England, suggesting that this was the driving force behind the establishment of art institutions and curriculum. Histories of art education in Australia have followed this English example to consider the place of design education and drawing in schools, tracing the influence of South Kensington in Australian schools.

### **Art for industry and Australian Schools**

The Australian literature that has examined the influence of South Kensington and the importance of art education for industry has largely focused on its impact on the school curriculum. A Masters thesis written by Muriel Hilson maps the influence of South Kensington's Department of Science and Art on the school

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<sup>32</sup> Carline, *Draw they must: a history of the teaching and examining of art*, pp. 124-25.

<sup>33</sup> Macdonald, *The history and philosophy of art education*

<sup>34</sup> Jenny Aland, "The Influence of the South Kensington School on the teaching of Drawing in South Australian schools from the 1880s in to the 20th century," in *Australian Art Education* (1991).

<sup>35</sup> Boughton, "The changing face of Australian art education: New horizons or sub-colonial politics?."

<sup>36</sup> Hilson, "Art Education in New South Wales. 1850s to 1930s with particular reference to the contribution of Joseph Fowles, Fredrich W. Woodhouse, and John E. Branch."

<sup>37</sup> L. A. Mandelson, "State Primary School in New South Wales, 1856-1930, a study of curriculum development and the 'New Education'" (University of Sydney, 1969).

<sup>38</sup> Marisa Young, "Art and design education in South Australia 1836/ 1887," *Australian Art Education* 15, no. 1 (1991).

curriculum in New South Wales. Hilson's thesis is the most substantial account of the nineteenth-century art curriculum in New South Wales. Her work provides important foundation for this thesis, mapping the major policy and personnel changes in the state school system as they affected Drawing instruction.<sup>39</sup> However, Hilson paid little attention to whether the English system was altered or adapted for Australian school children. She focused on the ways English methods of instruction were implemented without considering the surrounding discourse to consider the motivations for establishing this kind of art instruction.

Some Australian scholars have examined the way English models of art instruction were adapted and altered for Australian schools. Jenny Aland examined the links between the South Australian art curriculum and South Kensington by exploring the professional biographies of the superintendent for drawing, Harry Penning Gill. She traced the connection between Gill and the South Kensington Department of Art and Science, where he trained and worked, following the elements of the English system he used for South Australia.<sup>40</sup> However, unlike Hilson, Aland also considers the way Gill altered elements of the South Kensington system to better suit South Australian classrooms. However, no equivalent study of South Kensington-trained educators has been undertaken for art education in other states.

Similarly, Lindsay Broughton detailed the introduction of South Kensington style instruction in Tasmania in the latter part of the nineteenth-century. He also examined the ways in which the English motivations for art instruction were relevant in the Tasmanian context. He suggested South Kensington's curriculum of 'useful arts' was well suited to the interests of the working classes, who made up the larger part of Tasmania's population. He claimed that the desire to develop colonial industry and cultivate cultural life was entwined with the aims of South Kensington's syllabus.<sup>41</sup> However, Broughton does not look beyond the

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<sup>39</sup> Hilson, "Art Education in New South Wales. 1850s to 1930s with particular reference to the contribution of Joseph Fowles, Fredrich W. Woodhouse, and John E. Branch."

<sup>40</sup> Aland, "The Influence of the South Kensington School on the teaching of Drawing in South Australlian schools from the 1880s in to the 20th century."

<sup>41</sup> L Broughton, "Art education as a panacea for Tasmania in the late 19th century," *Australian Art Education* 15, no. 1 (1991), pp.6-16.



industrial aims of the South Kensington system to consider the possibility of other motivations informing art instruction.

Chris Peers has been one of the only Australian scholars to consider the influence of South Kensington in the colony of New South Wales. He also questions the classification of nineteenth-century art education as being rigidly focused on 'imitation'. Peers challenges the notion presented in much of the scholarship that creativity and an interest in Child Art did not come into the curriculum until the twentieth century. Instead he traces some early interest in the nineteenth-century.<sup>42</sup> He also suggests that before this, art instruction was similar for both children and adults. His work moves us to reconsider nineteenth-century art education across a range of educational contexts to find whether different pedagogical strategies were utilised for different demographics. However, like much of the earlier scholarship on histories of art education in Australia, Peers' 37-page article examines a period of over a hundred years. The brevity of his paper prevents his study from exploring this history in any great depth.

Margaret Robinson examined the establishment and development of drawing in Government-supported schools in Victoria. The first part of her thesis is devoted entirely to discovering the influence of English education during this era. She draws comparisons between the development of education in Victoria and how this compared to what was happening in England.<sup>43</sup> She also analyses the curriculum, paying close attention to a number of key art educators who were among the first to teach Drawing. In these 'portraits' she highlights their background and interest in implementing the South Kensington system.

Hilson, in an article of 1987, also explored the connections between the Australian art curriculum and the influence of South Kensington trained, American based art reformer Walter Smith.<sup>44</sup> She cites the 1887 Combes report

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<sup>42</sup> C Peers, "Mapping histories of art education in New South Wales," *Historical Studies in Education* 15, no. 2 (2003), pp.299-346.

<sup>43</sup> Margaret Jean Robinson, "Skillful hands and seeing eyes: drawing and drawing masters in the government subsidised school system of colonial Victoria" (PhD thesis, Monash University, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> Hilson, "Walter Smith: an indirect connection with Australia", pp.46-54.

on Technical Education as a key influence on the decision to import a South Kensington graduate to act as Superintendent for Drawing in New South Wales.<sup>45</sup> Hilson fixes on Smith because he had “been widely recognised in the literature.... as perhaps the most influential figure in the development of art education in America and Canada in the latter part of the nineteenth-century.”<sup>46</sup> However, there is little evidence to suggest his work had any immediate impact on art education in New South Wales. The “wide recognition” of Walter Smith may also have been due to the popularity and enduring legacy of the South Kensington system in America.

In his historiography of American literature on art education, Soucy outlines the great legacy of one American historian, Isaac Edward Clarke. Clarke’s 1874 report on the history of art education, focused on art instruction in Massachusetts.<sup>47</sup> He concentrated on the impact of Walter Smith, an art teacher who had trained at South Kensington, and implemented the system in American schools. Smith’s work had an enduring legacy on art instruction in Massachusetts. His contribution was immortalised in Clarke’s 1874 report. The report has since been a key source for historians of art education. However, it put forward a single narrative in which South Kensington was the leading and dominant force in art education.<sup>48</sup>

Tony Rogers also examined the impact of South Kensington on the school curriculum. He is one of the only Australian scholars to challenge the emphasis placed on art for industry, highlighting the innovations present in South Kensington’s Alternative Syllabus introduced to English schools in 1895, in response criticisms of the original South Kensington syllabus.<sup>49</sup> The Alternative Syllabus emphasised the drawing from nature and presented children with

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<sup>45</sup> Edward Combes, *Education in Australia: a paper read before the Society of Arts* (London 1887).

<sup>46</sup> Hilson, "Walter Smith: an indirect connection with Australia," p.46.

<sup>47</sup> Isaac Edwards Clarke, "Drawing in public schools: the present relation of art to education in the United States," in *Circulars of Information 1874, no.2* (Washington D.C.: Bureau of Education, 1874).

<sup>48</sup> Donald Soucy, "A history of art education histories," in *Framing the past: Essays on art education*, ed. Donald Soucy and Mary Anne Stankiewicz (Virginia: National Art Education Association, 1990), pp.19-31.

<sup>49</sup> Tony Rogers, "A valuable aesthetic influence upon the working classes: the alternative syllabus and its aftermath," *Australian Art Education* 16, no. 2 (1993), pp.39-44.

familiar images such as animals and household objects. It also encouraged teachers to allocate free drawing time, during which children could draw what they wanted. He suggests that the new methods present in the Alternative Syllabus made a more creative child-centred art education dominant at a time well before Macdonald and other scholars have intimated. In his abstract, Rogers examines the impact of the Alternative Syllabus on Australian art education, but he does not elaborate or explain this further in the article. He remains focused on English history. However, his work suggests that closer study of South Kensington's 1895 Alternative Syllabus in Australia may reveal further motivations for the provision of art education beyond an interest in art for industry.

### **Art for industry beyond schooling in Australia**

The importance of 'art for industry' was an argument used to justify the need for art education across a range of institutions. In his collection of *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia*, Bernard Smith shows that this argument about the importance of art for industry also existed outside of art in schools.<sup>50</sup> Smith comments on an article written by Joseph Sheridan Moore in 1857 for Sydney's short-lived *Month* magazine.<sup>51</sup> Moore recounts contemporary developments in the provision of art in England, concluding that: "It almost seems, indeed, that Beauty can vindicate herself in the market-place."<sup>52</sup> In choosing this article to inform discussion on art education in Australia, Smith connects it with South Kensington's Department of Science and Art. This sentiment is seen again in a speech Smith includes, given by John West at the Launceston Mechanic's institute. West said that 'the plough not the pencil must be the crest of infant empires.'<sup>53</sup> Smith's commentary places not just the art curriculum, but the art exhibition and art within technical education in line with industrial aims.

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<sup>50</sup> Bernard Smith, ed. *Documents on art and taste in Australia: the colonial period 1770-1914* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1975), p.ix.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.151.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.141.

Caroline Jordan considers the interrelationships between four regional art galleries founded in regional Victoria in the latter part of the nineteenth-century.<sup>54</sup> She discusses the way in which they modelled themselves on the National Gallery of Victoria, and the South Kensington Museum in London. These were imagined as spaces that would encourage interest in the arts, the education of artisans and through this, improve standards of design. Yet, Jordan also indicates the confusion about how these ideas should be translated into practice in regional Victoria.

### **Art for Industry in Sydney's technical education**

Bernard Smith and Jean Riley have considered the contribution of the technical education movement to the development of art in Australia. Smith suggests that the School of Arts was established in order to raise the colony's productive and manufacturing skills through the provision of art and design, much like the School of Design in England. However, as Riley points out the School was founded before the 1835-6 Select Committee in England and before the establishment of the English School of Design.<sup>55</sup> The notion of practical manual training did not join the agenda of the School until after 1850. Riley examines some of the ways in which the Mechanics' Institute movement offered art education to a broader public throughout New South Wales. She argues that the Institutes were a key feature of the educational landscape. However, the breadth and brevity of her study leaves it short on detail, as she does not consider the character or scope of the art education offered. Neither have considered the curriculum of the technical college in detail, or examined the context of the broader landscape of art education of Sydney.

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<sup>54</sup> Caroline Jordan, "The South Kensington Empire and the idea of the regional art gallery in nineteenth-century Victoria," *Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* 20, no. 2 (2011), pp. 34-59.

<sup>55</sup> Jean Riley, "The movement's contribution to the visual arts: three New South Wales case studies" in *Pioneering culture: mechanics' institutes and schools of art in Australia*, ed. P. C. Candy and John Laurent (Adelaide: Auslib Press, 1994).

Several scholars examining the history of the School of Arts movement in Australia have questioned its success in providing education to the working classes. George Nadel considered the movement a failure, suggesting that the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts was of little benefit to the working classes.<sup>56</sup> Joan Cobb has also suggested that the school tended to attract students who were educated, socially active and intellectually curious.<sup>57</sup> However, Jean Riley has challenged this characterisation. She takes a broader understanding of the School's initial aims, suggesting the institution was not conceived as catering exclusively to the working classes. While she concedes that many of the earliest Schools of Arts classes were not taken by the working people for whom they were intended, she considers the movement as a whole was an enormous success. With as many as 434 buildings built to foster adult education in New South Wales, she claims these made a significant positive impact for all members of the community.<sup>58</sup> These buildings became important social spaces as they housed dances, meetings and other community events.

### **Teaching Taste across a range of institutions**

The importance of art for industry has been a familiar trope in histories of art education. However, more recently, scholars have challenged this, suggesting there were other motivations that informed the establishment of art education in the nineteenth-century. Mervyn Romans has reconsidered some of the major contributions to the history of English art education.<sup>59</sup> In doing so, he returned to a key moment identified by each of those canonical accounts; the proceedings of the 1835/6 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures. He reassessed the primary sources and questioned the emphasis that has been placed on the importance of economic concerns in the debates surrounding art education.

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<sup>56</sup> George Nadel, *Australia's colonial culture: ideas, men and institutions in mid-nineteenth century eastern Australia* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1957), p.143.

<sup>57</sup> Joan. E. Cobb, *Sweet road to progress: the history of state technical education in New South Wales to 1949* (Sydney: NSW Dept. of Education and Training, 2000), p.9.

<sup>58</sup> Riley, "The movement's contribution to the visual arts: three New South Wales case studies," pp.210-12.

<sup>59</sup> Mervyn Romans, ed. *Histories of art and design education: collected essays* (Bristol; Oregon: Intellect, 2005), p.9.

Romans claims that the far more dominant theme throughout the discourse is the question of 'taste'. This is a theme we see throughout the discourse on art education in Australia, through the introduction of art in schools, technical colleges, in exhibitions, and the public art gallery (In *Part I*). Romans suggests that although the notion of 'taste' was linked to the economy (as it was believed that high consumer expectations would create demand for high quality design from manufacturers) it was the improvement of public taste that formed a key motivation of the establishment of a national system of art and design education.

In her work on art and the Victorian middle class, Dianne Sachko Macleod examines the power of art to improve public taste. She claims, that "both factory owners and socially conscious city dwellers, [who,] recognizing the potential of visual imagery to educate and to inspire, supported art exhibitions for the lower classes."<sup>60</sup> The importance of teaching taste was an idea frequently used to promote the provision of widespread art education across a range of areas and by a range of people. Art was seen as a moralizing force where education in the arts could civilize a man. For this reason art education was not just for artists but for everyone.<sup>61</sup> Sachko Macleod explores the way that the idea of 'taste' was redefined in the Victorian era. Common aesthetic experiences became a key component of middle class culture. The notion of taste was no longer bound up with the elitist collections and connoisseurs of the eighteenth century. Nineteenth-century writers and critics believed that anyone was capable of understanding art, and that an aesthetic education could be an education in good citizenship and good morals.<sup>62</sup>

Diana Maltz has examined this connection between taste and morals as it was championed by John Ruskin. She highlights Ruskin's sympathy for workingmen and the plight of the factory worker. She suggests that division of labour alienated them from the product they made. Ruskin's sympathy to their plight made him popular among his working class audiences. He believed art could

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<sup>60</sup> Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian middle class* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.15.

<sup>61</sup> Soucy and Stankiewicz, *Framing the past: essays on art education*, p.49.

<sup>62</sup> Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian middle class*, pp.14-16.

serve a social purpose; that “educating the people to know what was beautiful and good... an aesthetic education would teach them discipline as well... The diligent study of art would ultimately bring about a better society.”<sup>63</sup> Maltz traces the social and cultural history of aesthetics in missionary work. As she points out, this affected public art education as philanthropists believed in the power of aesthetics to have an uplifting effect upon the poor. The enlightenment notion that beauty could be a civilizing force was taken up and galleries were opened to ‘the people’.<sup>64</sup>

In his survey of Scottish enlightenment philosophical prose, Philip Flynn discusses the ways this connection between taste and morals was taken up by Scottish advocates for mass schooling, and later by those encouraging the provision of art education in Britain.<sup>65</sup> The idea that art could improve humanity was useful for justifying art education in many different forms. Unlike the economic argument for art education, it did not restrict the resulting lessons to basic drawing or design. Exhibitions, museums, galleries and art appreciation were all important venues for teaching taste. Few scholars have examined whether the notion of ‘teaching taste’ was present in the Australian discourse on art education. Many studies of art education have restricted their scope to the art curriculum in schools,<sup>66</sup> losing sight of the ways in which artists, museums and technical education influenced one another. This thesis looks across institutions to consider the way arguments about the importance of teaching taste influenced the provision and character of art education in Sydney.

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<sup>63</sup> Diana Maltz, *British aestheticism and the urban working classes, 1870-1900: beauty for the people* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.4.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Philip Flynn, *Enlightened Scotland: a study and selection of Scottish philosophical prose from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1992).

<sup>66</sup> Australian studies have focused on art in the school curriculum, such as Hammond, "Changes in art education ideologies: Victoria, 1860s to mid-1970s."; Hilson, "Art Education in New South Wales. 1850s to 1930s with particular reference to the contribution of Joseph Fowles, Fredrich W. Woodhouse, and John E. Branch."; Mandelson, "From Drawing to Art in Australian state schools." Catherine Thompson, "The Accomplished Artist: a study of art and girls' schools in Sydney c.1890-1940" (University of Sydney, 1986); Wieiss, "From skills to expression: the arts in the early years of school, 1880- 1970."; M Young, "A history of art and design education in South Australia" (Flinders University of South Australia, 1986).

In the last decade, several studies focusing on aspects of art education in Victoria have emerged, providing insight into the role public institutions have held in providing public education. Kathleen Fennessey examines the way 'The Institution' (the public library, national museum, gallery, technical museum, and zoological and botanical gardens) developed as sites for public learning in the 1860s and 70s in Victoria. She considers the museum and art gallery as sites for social control; institutions that were expected to "civilise the masses".<sup>67</sup> Like much of the scholarship on art education in Australian schools, Fennessey's work notes the influence of English public museums. She considers the way these museums were adapted for Victoria and imbued with the colony's liberal values. Fennessey expands our concept of art education in Australia from the school curriculum to more broadly accessible forms of art education. Her work also highlights the way in which education often came together with entertainment in public institutions. Fennessey introduces the idea that Australian galleries were educational institutions, an idea that is taken up in this thesis.

### **Gendered taste**

Scholarship on girls' education has shown the way that teaching taste, through art instruction was an important part of the accomplishments curriculum. Australian histories of art in schools have focused almost exclusively on the influence of South Kensington and the implementation of industrial drawing instruction. There have been few efforts to look beyond and explore other forms of art education. An exception is found in Catherine Thompson's 1986 honours thesis.<sup>68</sup> Thompson examines art education within a select number of Sydney's private schools for girls from 1890 to 1940. She considers the role of the artist-teacher in bringing together innovations in the art scene with their classroom practice. In doing so, Thompson explores the ways these artist-teachers brought

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<sup>67</sup> Kathleen Fennessey, *A people learning: colonial Victorians and their public museums 1860 - 1880* (Melbourne: Australia Scholarly, 2007), p.4.

<sup>68</sup> Thompson, "The Accomplished Artist: a study of art and girls' schools in Sydney c.1890-1940."



a range of aesthetic influences into the classroom and introducing students to high art.<sup>69</sup>

Marjorie Theobald addresses the place of art education in the accomplishments curriculum. She challenges understandings of the accomplishments curriculum as a frivolous education. She argues that the accomplishments curriculum of was sometimes a comprehensive and rigorous course of study. Sometimes, the 'accomplishments' referred specifically to "the cultural studies of music, art and modern languages, and sometimes to the totality of women's studies."<sup>70</sup> In her account of Vieusseux Ladies' College, Melbourne, Theobald examines the place of art in girl's schooling. Julie Vieusseux worked first as a painter when she arrived in Melbourne. Her connections to the Melbourne art world meant that many well-respected artists came to teach at her school. Theobald's work reinforces our understanding of the ways that girl's art education as linked to the individual teacher and their personal connections.

Angela Philp's work on The Society of Women Paintings active in Sydney between 1910 and 1934 explores the success of this organization in helping over 300 women to exhibit their work.<sup>71</sup> The society offered many more the opportunity to access art education through their regular activities including a sketch club, monthly criticism mornings, competitions and guest lectures. However, Philp notes that these women and their work have fallen into a historical "*limbo*" as their work, largely valued as incidental decoration has not been collected and documented in the same way as their male counterparts. She notes the way social activities and artistic camaraderie, which made the society so strong, also contributed to its lack of credibility. They were not perceived as professionals and were often dismissed as amateurs. Philp identifies the fact these women artists were bringing the art of the drawing room, and ladies

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Marjorie R. Theobald, *Knowing women: origins of women's education in nineteenth-century Australia* (Cambridge; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 15.

<sup>71</sup> Angela. Philp, "From wallflowers to tall poppies? The Sydney Society of Women Painters, 1910-1934," in *Wallflowers and witches: women and culture in Australia 1910-1945*, ed. Maryanne Dever (St. Lucia, Qld: niversity of Queensland Press, 1994).

accomplishments into the public exhibition space of the gallery. However, she does not consider these as spaces for education and learning.

Philp highlights the tensions experienced by women painters who were largely considered to be amateurs and not taken seriously as artists like their male counterparts. She also shows how attempting to seek the status of 'professional' within the paradigm of male artists was difficult. The figurative subjects painted by male artists were highly respected. Many women artists showed a preference for the less prestigious subjects such as landscape and flower painting, subjects deemed more appropriate for women. Their preference for these subjects meant they were often dismissed as amateurs.<sup>72</sup>

The role of Australian women artists in teaching and developing art in the colonies has also been illuminated by Joan Kerr. In assembling the stories and works of five hundred Australian Women Artists, Kerr's work reinforces this need to examine women's art education. In refocusing attention on the work of female artists, Kerr reminds us of the important role women played in the Australian art scene; a role that has been forgotten or ignored by other histories of Australian art. Many of the women whose stories appear in *Heritage* show the way in which art and teaching came together as key opportunities for employment.<sup>73</sup>

Though recent scholarship has re-examined the work of female artists in Sydney during the latter part of the nineteenth century, few have considered the role of art education for girls and women. This thesis explores this history and considers the ways that the work of female artists intersected with the experience of female students and teachers.

### **Teaching taste in a colonial context**

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Joan Kerr, ed. *Heritage: the national women's art book* (Roseville East, NSW: G&B Arts International ltd., 1995).

Few have examined the implications of teaching (British) taste in a colonial context. However, we can draw valuable insights from studies in other countries. Ian Cooke considers how the South Kensington museum influenced displays in the Auckland museum. The museum acquired a series of plaster casts, like those on display in South Kensington's 'cast courts' in 1878.<sup>74</sup> In examining the way plaster casts of classical sculptures were displayed within the Auckland museum, Cook highlights some of the problems of claiming these canonical works for a colonial audience. When they first arrived, the casts sat alongside taxidermy, a giraffe skeleton and between glass cases of specimens and Maori artefacts. Cooke analyses the symbolic relationship between these whitewashed casts, as emblems of empire as they sat together with objects from traditional Maori culture. Cooke examines the way the juxtaposition and ordering of these things exemplifies some of the problems in finding a national display in a colonial context. He does not consider the educational implications of this arrangement. However, his ideas about the museum display are relevant and applicable to examining the role of South Kensington and the British Empire in colonial art education.

Tim Barringer explores the relationship between colonial objects and South Kensington Museum in England.<sup>75</sup> He considers the historical role of the museum in promoting and presenting the colonial project. Imagined as a space for self-education and self-improvement, the South Kensington Museum presented didactic exhibits to the general public. Like the school syllabus administered by the Department of Science and Art, the aim was to improve the quality of English design by furnishing working-class audiences with excellent examples of craftsmanship from across the globe. Barringer points to the way this collection became an "imperial archive", as objects were displayed at the Imperial centre became a symbol of British authority.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Christopher Whitehead questions the ways museums have generated an understanding of 'knowledge'.

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<sup>74</sup> Ian Cooke, "Colonial contexts," in *Plaster casts: making, collecting, and displaying from classical antiquity to the present* ed. Rune Frederiksen and Eckart Marchand (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2010), pp.577-595.

<sup>75</sup> Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, eds., *Colonialism and the object : empire, material culture, and the museum* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), pp.11-28.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

He challenges the narratives that have been generated through display to become 'maps' of knowledge.

Arindam Dutta has examined the global influence of South Kensington in India. He argues that the liberal agenda of South Kensington in England, with its aims of reuniting the alienated worker with the objects of production and undoing the degradation of the public standards of taste, did not play out in the same way in the colony as it did in the Metropole. The great dominance of the South Kensington system in India "cast itself as a saviour of the decaying native industries."<sup>77</sup> However, the Indian situation was different from the Australian experience of art education as Indian schools implemented the South Kensington system in a far more systematic way. Dutta's work opens us to understanding the enormous impact of the South Kensington Department of Science and Art across the globe.

The influence of Britishness has also been considered by Australian art historians. Kate Darian-Smith and her co-authors have examined allegorical depictions of "Australia" in Australian nation building. She suggests that in the latter part of the nineteenth-century, neo-classical imagery was used to represent an inherent moral and political virtue.<sup>78</sup> John Rickard has suggested that "Australian mythology both competed with and depended on the mythology of Britishness."<sup>79</sup> However, histories of Australian art education have not considered the curriculum as part of the Imperial project.

## Conclusion

In the 1980s, the first wave of Australian scholarship on this period of art education emerged. This focused on the school curriculum and emphasised the

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<sup>77</sup> Arindam Dutta, *The bureaucracy of beauty: design in the age of its global reproducibility* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>78</sup> Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Gimshaw, and Stuart Macintyre, eds., *Britishness abroad: transnational movements and imperial cultures* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), p.155.

<sup>79</sup> Rickard in Carl Bridge, Robert Crawford, and David Dunstan, eds., *Australians in Britain* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Press, 2009), p.05.1.

importance of hand-eye coordination and skills-based instruction. They characterised this period of art instruction as rigid and disciplines. These scholars appear to have been most interested in studying the past to inform present practice, leading them to focus on pedagogy without considering the broader context surrounding past art education.

English histories of art education have also examined the pedagogies of the past, but have paid attention to the motivations that informed these practices. English histories identified the importance of art for improving industry as a major force in the establishment and development of systems of art education in England. More recent Australian scholarship has also identified the interest in 'art for industry'. Scholars have highlighted the influence of English systems of instruction in Australian schools. Several accounts consider the ways English interest in art for industry influenced Australian art education in museums. However, no work has yet been undertaken to build an understanding of how art education developed across a range of institutions.

Recent English scholarship has also identified the importance of teaching taste as forming a key motivation in the establishment of accessible art education. For the most part, Australian scholarship has not yet considered whether this interest in teaching taste informed the provision of art education in the colonial context. This thesis considers how this notion of 'teaching taste and its connection with moral education was used to justify the need for public art education.

This thesis examines these three themes identified in the literature: the importance of art education for improving industry; better public access to art for teaching taste; and the broader educational benefit of art instruction for improving hand-eye coordination, and considers whether they were used to inform the provision of art in Sydney.

## APPROACHES AND SOURCES

The methodological approach to this project has been lead by the four key research questions: Why was art taught? Where was art taught? Who taught art? And how art was taught? These questions have informed the structure of the thesis. *Part I: Places and Spaces* examines art instruction across a number of institutions to build an understanding of the landscape of art education. In *Part II: People* a series of case studies examining the professional biographies of individuals involved in teaching art are undertaken to consider 'who taught art?' Finally, *Part III: Tools* explores some of the methods used for teaching art, by analysing the pedagogic tools employed for art instruction. Throughout the thesis, the question of why art should be taught is re-examined to find the motivations that informed the character of art instruction. Each of these three sections employs a slightly different methodology in attempt to answer the research questions.

### **Part I: Places and Spaces**

In trying to find 'where art was taught and why?' This thesis looks across different places and spaces. This section examines the art education offered by a number of institutions to consider the broad range of instruction available in Sydney. Art education was not confined to the school curriculum, or to a museum display. Art education for 'ordinary people' was available across many different sites and in many different guises. *Part I: Places and Spaces* maps the landscape establishing a chronology of art education in schools, technical colleges, exhibitions and the Art Gallery. This section marks an important first step in discovering the character of Sydney's art education during this foundational era.

This section re-examines and draws together disparate and fragmented studies to build an understanding of where art was taught; to whom; and why. It brings together the historical literature that has examined different areas of art education in New South Wales. No study has looked across various different

institutions that taught art to build a broader picture of art education in nineteenth and early twentieth-century. Histories of schooling and curriculum; individual school histories; biographies of artists and educators; histories of Australian art; institutional histories and broader social and cultural histories offer insight into the broader development of education in Australia, have been considered in order to develop an understanding of the broader educational context of art education in this period.

This section also unearths and examines new sources. A wide range of state and institutional archives were consulted. Records relating to drawing in the public schools; the art gallery; and the technical college were analysed at New South Wales State Records were consulted. Individual school archives from independent schools: Sydney Grammar School, The Scots College, Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School and Newington College were examined to explore the ways art was taught across a range of different schools. The archives of the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Museum of Applied Arts and Science were consulted to discover more about the educational motivations behind their displays. Published sources that were examined include government teaching periodicals, institutional reports related to schooling and technical education, contemporary newspaper articles, magazines, speeches, pamphlets and personal papers written by those involved in art education. Various different sources have been examined in attempt to consider art education from a range of perspectives.

## **Part II: People**

One element drawing together different forms of art education were the individuals teaching art. It was not uncommon for a teacher to teach at a number of different schools; teach private classes and occupy positions at the artists' societies, art gallery, or government department for education. Many were also

practising artists. However, little work has been done to explore their contributions to art education. *Part II: People* is devoted to four individuals who taught art in Sydney in this period, and whose legacy continued for many years after their working lives. The four people who have been selected: Edward Combes, Frederic William Woodhouse, John Edward Branch and Ethel Ann Stephens, all brought different approaches to their teaching, allowing us to gain further insight into the breadth of art education in Sydney. The historical record is often fragmented, leaving little evidence from which to build an understanding of their work. Private papers, albums, press accounts, the government record, the gallery archives and individual school archives have been brought together to build an understanding of the way they taught and influenced art education in Sydney.

*Part II: People* features a series of case studies to explore the professional biographies of individuals who played a significant role in art education in Sydney. The individuals chosen for this section were not necessarily the most important, but were significant and influential. Their contributions have been neglected in the literature. Close examination of their actions and beliefs about art education, allows us to consider art education in greater depth, paying close attention to their individual approaches to instruction.

In choosing whose contributions should be explored in these case studies, there has been an attempt to select individuals who represent the range of different teaching experiences. They were not necessarily the more important teachers, but held considerable influence over the way art education developed in Sydney. They collectively and individually give insight into the scope as well as detail of art education practice. They also show the way individuals worked across a range of sites, influencing the character of art education across institutional boundaries.

The professional biographies of **F. W. Woodhouse** and **John Branch**, Superintendents for Drawing in New South Wales between 1891 -1903 and 1903 -1930 respectively, allow us consider art in government schools. Examining their



time as superintendents reveals key trends in art education for children, as well as the changing status of art education in schooling. Much of their work is documented in the New South Wales State Record. This has been supported with close analysis of their contributions to teaching periodicals, as well as correspondence with other institutions such as the Sydney Grammar School, the National Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Technical College. The archives of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Archives of the United Kingdom were also examined to more about Woodhouse's early training and experience at the South Kensington Department and Science.

Piecing together the professional biography of **Ethel Stephens**, a successful artist and teacher at the turn of the twentieth century, has illuminated the history of girls' art education in Sydney. As an artist/teacher who was also involved in the several Sydney art societies, Stephens' experiences allow us to consider the way students in schools came into contact with the Sydney art scene. Her album of press clippings held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales archives, together with her contribution to school publications at Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School, the school archive and press accounts of her exhibitions offer a rare glimpse into the pedagogical practices of an artist-teacher.

Donald Soucy has suggested that close examination of the life and work of female artist-teachers may offer further insight into the way gender affects both their experiences of teaching and making/exhibiting art.<sup>80</sup> Much of the literature on girls' education and women artists separates it from other male-dominated spheres. Often, this is a useful way of focusing in on the experience of women, because their often fragmentary record and absence from the official record makes it all too easy to shift women to the periphery. Placing Stephen's work as both an artist and teacher at the centre of this chapter allows us to explore the way women experienced art education in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Sydney.

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<sup>80</sup> Soucy and Stankiewicz, *Framing the past: essays on art education*, pp.12-19.

Stephens' was a well-known artist in her day. Her traditional landscapes and flower paintings were incredibly popular, winning her acclaim. However, her flower work has fallen out of favour over the past century and is little known today. Examining Stephens' work and teaching allows us to discover more about the way traditional art and art education was valued in Sydney at the turn of the twentieth century.

The final biographical case study features Edward Combes. **Edward Combes'** resurfaced time and time again: in the records relating to the Sydney Mechanic's School of Arts; as a commissioner representing New South Wales at the International Exhibition held in Paris in 1878; as an advisor for the Sydney exhibition of 1879 and the Melbourne exhibition of 1880; as the commissioner of a significant report on overseas technical education in 1887; in the minutes of the meetings for the Artist's society, and later National Art Gallery of New South Wales; and in relation to the Technical College. He was an artist, an engineer, and a member of parliament. Tracing the professional biography of Edward Combes has lead through the archives of the Bathurst Historical Society; personal papers and numerous paintings held in the Mitchell and National Libraries; the records relating to the Technical College held by New South Wales State Records; the archives of the Art Gallery of New South Wales; his report on Technical education and countless newspaper articles. In his biography of Norman Self, Les Mandleson writes:

Combes' multifarious career as a surveyor, mining engineer, pastoralist, politician, artist, educationist and Australian representative abroad has as yet not been adequately described not his influences fully assessed.<sup>81</sup>

This is still true. Combes' numerous contributions have yet to be fully explored. However, this chapter marks an attempt to consider his ideas about art education and his influence across a diverse range of institutions.

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<sup>81</sup> L. A. Mandleson, "Norman Selfe," in *Pioneers of Australian Education Vol 2*, ed. C. Turney (London: Angus & Robertson 1972), p.144.

### Part III: Tools

Few histories of art education have devoted attention to the images used for the teaching and making of art. Histories of art education in England and America have included the development of curriculum;<sup>82</sup> the contribution of exceptional educations;<sup>83</sup> and the histories of specific art schools.<sup>84</sup> Several studies have examined the instruction manuals used for art education in America and England,<sup>85</sup> but none have considered the material practice of art education or the tools utilised for art instruction. None have considered the role of instructional manuals in Australia. *Part III: Tools* focuses on two of the key tools used to teach art: plaster casts and copybooks. The images chosen for students to copy are examined and considered in the context of an Australian colony. They are not the great iconic images painted by Tom Roberts that have been claimed as images of nation-building, but *are* the images that appeared before generations of children and artisans. They are the ornamental figures that populate the facades of our state buildings; they feature in the tile work of arcades; and in the decorative motifs of our homes; they pervade the Australian consciousness in a quiet, unassuming way that does not invite questions or close examination. This section offers a re-examination of these images used in

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<sup>82</sup> For curriculum history in America see Soucy and Stankiewicz, *Framing the past: essays on art education*. For curriculum history in England see Sutton, *Artisan or artist?: a history of the teaching of art and crafts in English schools*; Carline, *Draw they must: a history of the teaching and examining of art*; Macdonald, *The history and philosophy of art education*; Romans, *Histories of art and design education: collected essays*.

<sup>83</sup> Robert J Saunders, "Elizabeth P. Peabody's quest for art in moral education," in *Framing the past: essays on art education*, ed. Donald Soucy and Mary Anne Stankiewicz (Reston, Virginia: The National Art Education Association, 1990); Ray Haslam, "Looking, drawing, and learning with John Ruskin at the Working Men's College," in *Histories of Art and Design Education: Collected Essays*, ed. Mervyn Romans (Bristol; Portland: Intellect, 2005); David Thistlewood, "Herbert Reed: a critical appreciation at the centenary of his birth," in *Histories of Art and Design Education: Collected Essays*, ed. Mervyn Romans (Bristol; Portland: Intellect, 2005); Richard Yeomans, "Basic design and the pedagogy of Richard Hamilton," in *Histories of Art and Design Education: Collected Essays*, ed. Mervyn Romans (Bristol; Portland: Intellect, 2005); Lynton, "Harry Thubron: teacher and artist," in *Histories of Art and Design Education: Cole to Coldstream*, ed. David Thistlewood (Essex: Longman Group UK limited, 1992).

<sup>84</sup> Bell, *The English School of Design*; Frank. P. Brown, *South Kensington and its art training* (London: Longmans, Green., 1912).

<sup>85</sup> Kevin H. Orr, "The Sydney international exhibition of 1879" (Macquarie University, 1972); Cardoso and Korzenik in Romans, *Histories of art and design education: collected essays*, pp.19 - 33.

teaching art, in order to understand how they were used as pedagogical tools and how they were intended to shape a national aesthetic.

The final section of this thesis examines the tools used for art education, concentrating on plaster casts and copybooks. Examining activities in the classroom through analysis of pedagogic tools allows us to focus on the act of art instruction. Art education places the visual at the centre of its practice. However, few histories of art education have employed visual analysis to focus on the images and objects used for instruction.<sup>86</sup> Examining the images used in art instruction offers insight into the motivations that informed the provision of this instruction. The methodology used for this section places the images used in the classroom as a central focus.

These 'tools' were the ties that linked art education in the colony, to the long-standing traditions of European art education. Seeing how they were used in this new context, together with close readings of the discourse surrounding their use, reveals the way these classical icons were reinterpreted by students, teachers and colonial audiences. The images used, and the sculptures cast for art instruction brought with them British values and became a link between Sydney and England. This chapter explores the way that tools for art instruction extended British taste and values to the colony, by first examining English copybooks in order to identify the connections between the Australian and English styles of instruction.

Looking at plaster casts and copybooks allows us to interrogate the similarities in art instruction across institutional boundaries. These tools were used in schools, technical colleges, exhibitions and galleries. Examining casts and copybook exercises allows us to explore the educational philosophies that informed their use. This section examines a range of casts and copybooks that were employed within a range of institutional contexts.

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<sup>86</sup> Martin Lawn, Ian Grosvenor, and Kate Rousmaniere, eds., *Silences & images: the social history of the classroom* (New York : P. Lang, 1999).



## PART I: PLACES AND SPACES

In 1848 Joseph Fowles, artist and later Superintendent for Drawing, published a series of engravings picturing Sydney's streets and buildings: *Sydney in 1848*. In his introduction, he offers the reader a tour of Sydney; steering us from one street to the next through "spacious Gas-lit Streets, crowded by an active and thriving Population--its Public Edifices, and its sumptuous Shops..."<sup>1</sup> He stops along the way, explaining the historical significance of the buildings. Fowles' aim was to undo any "erroneous and discreditable notions current in England concerning this City"<sup>2</sup> and to show Sydney as it really was. He made much of "numerous and flourishing" public institutions,<sup>3</sup> showing his readers how quickly the new colony had established the structures of civilized society.

Among the institutions Fowles includes are many of the first spaces that offered art education: The Mechanics' School of Arts, where some of the first art classes took place in the colony; the Australian Museum, which displayed some of the first objects of art; and the National School, a key training school for Sydney's teachers and the school in which Fowles himself became superintendent for Drawing in 1854. Fowles highlights the importance of both art and education stating that "the sordid views of penny wise and pound foolish economy, will soon give way before a generous and liberal admiration of art..."<sup>4</sup> He emphasized the importance of education, suggesting that learning was the key to improvement and success in a new colony.

Fowles presented the facades of these buildings in his engravings. The Mechanic's School forms part of a streetscape, reminiscent of a bustling English town; the buildings sat cheek by jowl. The Museum and National School each take up a full page. They stand alone: people, backgrounds and landscape absent, placing a special spotlight on their importance. The neoclassical facades are

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Fowles, *Sydney in 1848: illustrated by copper-plate engravings of its principal streets, public buildings, churches, chapels, etc.* (Sydney: J. Fowles, 1848), p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

symmetrical and balanced, evoking a sense of rational civility. In presenting them in this way, Fowles shows the colony as a civilized space, complete with culture and education. Art education brought together culture and learning, reproducing the visual tropes that connected the centre and periphery, helping to establish British notions of civilization in Australia.

Fowles, an artist himself, had a keen interest in establishing art education in the colony. *Sydney in 1848* shows the range of different places one might encounter art education: casts in the museum; drawing lessons in the National School; or the various different art classes and lectures that took place at the Mechanic's School of Arts. Like Fowles' popular book, the first section of this thesis maps the landscape of art education across the various places and spaces it was offered.

*Part One: Places and Spaces* has been divided into three sections. Chapter one examines the way art was taught in **schools**. The systems of art instruction are considered across a range of schools, plotting the ways these changed between 1850 and 1915. Chapter two focuses on **technical education**, looking at the place that the School of Arts and Technical College held in making art available to adults. Finally, chapter three **exhibitions and galleries** are examined as spaces for less formal art instruction: places that blended education with entertainment and appealed to a mass audience. These represent the large majority of places and spaces in which art education was offered, allowing us to gather the broader trends in the way art was taught in the colony.

## CHAPTER ONE: SCHOOLS

This chapter examines art instruction in Sydney schools between 1850 and 1915. It was during this foundational era that the systems of schooling familiar today began to emerge. In 1848 a Board of National Education was established to administer state-funded education. In the same year, a Denominational Schools Board was formed to oversee church schools, which also received state funding. Churches had provided many of the colony's first schools and continued to be a strong influence in schooling. The two boards competed against one another, offering similar schooling experiences. In 1861 denominational schools enrolled more than half of the students attending school in New South Wales. Many children also attended private venture schools. In 1844, according to Robert Lowe's inquiry, over a third of children schooled in New South Wales were attending private schools. This number decreased over the following decades as national and denominational schools gathered strength.<sup>1</sup> Previous scholarship has characterised this period as a single unified era, dominated by skills-based instruction.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, I challenge this characterisation by exploring the range of approaches to art education in this period.

Children's experiences were markedly different from what we know today and varied according to gender and social class. Often, children were expected to work from a young age, which interfered with their schooling.<sup>3</sup> There was no clearly marked path for progressing through levels of schooling as we do now: from primary to secondary then possibly tertiary studies. Superior public schools established in 1881, offered more advanced primary education, but there were few options for secondary schooling that prepared students for university. In 1854, one of the founding members of the University of Sydney commented, "the anxious father finds, indeed, a university; but in vain he looks for a high school."<sup>4</sup> Schooling, as we know it now, was in development.

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell and Proctor, *A history of Australian schooling*, p.42..

<sup>2</sup> Boughon, "The changing face of Australian art education: New horizons or sub-colonial politics?."

<sup>3</sup> Campbell and Proctor, *A history of Australian schooling*, p.29.

<sup>4</sup> John Woolley, *Two lectures delivered at the School of Arts, Sydney* (Sydney: Joseph Cook, 1855).



This chapter examines the place of art education within this changing school system. In attempting to address *where* art was taught, this chapter considers art in both Church and National schools. Some attention is also paid to the place of art within private venture schools. Beginning with the introduction of Drawing to the school curriculum in the 1850s, I consider the attitudes that informed the provision of art education as part of general schooling. I create a chronology, mapping the changes that occurred to 1915. Establishing a chronology has been important for understanding art in context. It allows us to identify the way people's beliefs about the importance of art education shifted throughout this foundational period.

### **1850s: Art in the curriculum**

As public institutions were being established and the structures of schooling emerged, art education began to appear in colonial discourse. In England, the 1835-6 Select Committee had established the need for art education as part of schooling.<sup>5</sup> No mention of the report of this Select Committee can be found in the Australian popular press at the time. However, the arguments put forward in the committee's report about the importance of art education for industry did make their way into the Australian discourse. For example, in 1856 *The Empire* printed an article entitled "Art Education", restating these sentiments and highlighting of the impact of the industrial revolution on manufacturing: "It is evident that the training requisite to form an efficient workman in any branch of industry is essentially different to, and higher than, the education that sufficed for the artisan of old."<sup>6</sup> Therefore - the author suggested - it was necessary to furnish students with a sound education in art. The development of trade schools in England and trade museums in France were suggested as examples that should be instituted to improve art education in Australia.

The importance of teaching taste, (discussed in the introductory chapter), can also be traced through the discourse surrounding art education in Sydney. In

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<sup>5</sup> Carline, *Draw they must: a history of the teaching and examining of art*, p.73.

<sup>6</sup> *Empire*, 4 August 1856, p.4.

1852, an article in *The Empire* reprinted from *The Times* (London) made clear the importance of teaching taste to consumers in order to increase the demand for quality design. The reporter refers to the English habit of copying French design in absence of any strong local designers:

It is our boast, rather than our glory, that we are a pre-eminently practical people; and in this noble reliance we are content to borrow the patterns of every other people under the sun. We are only disappointed when we discover that some of our customers have, as we think, the perverseness to leave our manufactures for the more tasteful and original though possibly less durable, fabrics of our mercurial neighbours.<sup>7</sup>

The article goes on, emphasising the need for art education to start at the very beginning of a child's schooling, for "if that foundation is not laid, the scholar, or artist, or professional man, is ever after clogged by the necessity of making up arrears...".<sup>8</sup> The importance of art education for children was linked to teaching taste. Identifying arguments about the importance of art for industry and teaching in the Australian discourse is significant. This suggests a growing interest in establishing art education in the colony, following from the English example. However, in Sydney, systems of schooling were still in their infancy.

In 1848 the National School Board and Denominational School Board were formed in an attempt to reorganise the school system in the New South Wales. This was intended to ensure efficiency and a place for non-denominational secular schooling. The National School Board installed Englishman William Wilkins as the headmaster at the newly established Fort St Model School. Wilkins arrived in Sydney in 1851 and became inspector and superintendent of schools in 1854. He brought with him the influence of Pestalozzian ideas (the Swiss education theorist who advocated child-centred learning), which he had encountered at Battersea Training School in London. This can be seen in his

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<sup>7</sup>*Empire*, 3 August 1852, p.3.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

organisation of the model school in Sydney that extended the curriculum to include drawing, music, geography, scripture, drill and gymnastics.<sup>9</sup>

Wilkins believed that the study of *form* should occupy a key role in the curriculum, alongside the study *language* and *numbers*. In his fourth lecture on the 'Art of Teaching', he describes *form* as drawing, calligraphy and the construction of geometrical figures. He promotes this area of study for improving hand-eye coordination and accurate observation. Wilkins also suggested that the study of form might assist the refinement of taste: "this subject itself is not art, any more than the formation of letters is literature."<sup>10</sup> By distancing this study from 'art', he argued for its practical benefit and showed it was not seen as frivolous and extravagant. Wilkins also attempted to show the broader educational benefit of art instruction: his strategy of aligning art with writing, a subject at the core of the school curriculum lent the subject 'Drawing' greater legitimacy.

Wilkins introduced a method of drawing instruction he has studied as part of his own training at Battersea. He implemented both the use of copybooks and a form of linear drawing instruction developed by a Parisian inspector for Drawing, M. Dupuis. Dupuis used a vertical stand with a rotating clamp to suspend objects before his students for them to draw from multiple angles.<sup>11</sup> This allowed pupils to undertake observational drawing of specimens from multiple angles. Yet it took some time before the French method could be implemented as Wilkins much "regretted that none of the teachers engaged at the Model School are qualified to give instruction in Drawing, a subject of the greatest utility to both master and pupils."<sup>12</sup> In 1854 Joseph Fowles was appointed as a drawing teacher and Superintendent for Drawing (discussed below). He began teaching two drawing classes: one for pupils and one for teachers. Wilkins hoped that this

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<sup>9</sup> For more on William Wilkins see Turney, *William Wilkins: his life and work*.

<sup>10</sup> William Wilkins, *The principles that underline the art of teaching: lectures, delivered at the technical college, Sydney, under the auspices of the Board of Technical Education*. (Sydney: Thomas Richards Government Printer, 1886), p.41.

<sup>11</sup> Turney, *William Wilkins: his life and work*, p.68.

<sup>12</sup> Report of the Board of National Education, 1848 – 1865, p.5.

would be the first step in spreading art instruction throughout schools in the colony.<sup>13</sup>

Though Wilkins expressed interest in the French method of observational drawing,<sup>14</sup> he was soon decided on a more practical approach to art instruction based on the English approach. In his report of 1856 Wilkins wrote:

The importance of an acquaintance with drawing, even in the utilitarian point of view alone, is very great. To a skilled artisan, the ability to draw is a valuable help; and if a taste for the art be early implanted in the youthful mind, it may exclude others of less elevating cast. As an efficient means of carrying on the general education also, it is not without importance. On these grounds, it seemed expedient to allow all the pupils the option of learning to draw, and in order that the instruction may be carried on with the most effectual aids, the publications of the Department of Science and Art, in connection with the Board of Trade, were ordered from England. These publications include Manuals for Teachers, embodying the experience in teaching of eminent Masters in Art; and copies and models for the use of the pupils. I anticipate much good from these arrangements.<sup>15</sup>

Wilkins refers to the Department of Science and Art at South Kensington, London, the department established in response to the findings of the 1835/6 Select Committee. The South Kensington system could be instituted with relative ease. Copybooks laid out clear instructions and figures that could be copied by students with little additional guidance from teachers. This made them ideal for teachers and pupils who had little or no previous knowledge of Drawing. Wilkins' decision to institute the South Kensington system may have responded to local interest in art education that would improve industry.

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<sup>13</sup> Report on national education for 1858, New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1859-60, vol 4, p.8.

<sup>14</sup> Turney, *William Wilkins: his life and work*, p.68.

<sup>15</sup> Report on national education for 1856, New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1857, vol.3, p.503.

This emphasis on the 'useful arts' reinforced the inclusion of art in mass schooling for its role in improving industry, but it also anticipated fears about children 'getting ideas' about becoming artists. When it came to the art curriculum in England, Brown explained, it was believed that teaching techniques associated with high art (such as figure drawing) might give working class children ambitions to move beyond their station.<sup>16</sup> Lionel Playfair had suggested "there is still... a lurking, though inexpressed (sic) fear, that the lower orders may be too highly educated and there is a sentiment, the offspring of that fear, that the state has done its duty when it imparts the rudiments of knowledge."<sup>17</sup> The South Kensington course focused on ornamental figures, ensuring students' knowledge did not extend beyond the limits of design.

The fear of 'over-education' was rarely echoed in the discourse on Australian art education. Could this have been because class divisions in the colony were less rigid than in England? In Sydney, the introduction of utilitarian art instruction responded to the common perception that art was a frivolous endeavour, rather than a necessary part of the core curriculum. The South Kensington course taught skills that could be used in a variety of vocational pursuits. There was, however, some suggestion that Wilkins wished to introduce Sydney students to high art. In his lectures *The Art of Teaching*, Wilkins described the ideal curriculum and included a list of object lessons. Object lessons were classes focused on an object, such as a flower, shell or handcrafted item. Students were encouraged to observe, explore and research the object. Among the list of objects, Wilkins includes 'Art Work'. No elaboration is made, and nor have any further descriptions of this class been found. However, it is possible that via object lessons focusing on art work, Wilkins hoped to institute lessons on art appreciation that would introduce children to works of art through object lessons.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Brown, *South Kensington and its art training*.

<sup>17</sup> Playfair, 'On primary and technical education' quoted in Richard J. W. Selleck, *New Education: 1870 - 1914* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1968), p.25.

<sup>18</sup> Wilkins, *The principles that underline the art of teaching: lectures, delivered at the technical college, Sydney, under the auspices of the Board of Technical Education*.

## **Superintendent: Joseph Fowles**

William Wilkins appointed Joseph Fowles the first superintendent for Drawing in 1854. He was a keen painter, making sketches on his journey from England to the colony in 1838.<sup>19</sup> His work was included in the first exhibition staged by the Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Australia in 1847. His work received a mixed review in the *Sydney Morning Herald*: "Mr Fowles, we believe, is a professional marine painter, and succeeds very well in seizing the likeness of the ships. He has improved considerably since we first knew his works; but he still wants correctness in his drawing in some prints..."<sup>20</sup> Before taking up the position of superintendent, Fowles had been a drawing teacher at Mr. Robert Horniman's boarding and day school, in 1851. He had also taught at St Philip's Grammar School in 1853. From 1854 he was appointed drawing teacher at the Sydney Mechanics School of Art, teaching classes on Wednesdays and Fridays.<sup>21</sup>

The Board of National Education employed Fowles in August 1854. As Superintendent of Drawing in the National Schools Fowles had an enormous impact on the way drawing was taught. He was responsible for training teachers, writing a course of instruction and examining students. Fowles wrote to Wilkins, expressing his passion for art education; "I do have a deep interest in the intellectual advancement of the rising generation, and fully appreciating the worthy motives of the Gentlemen forming the 'Board of National Education' in giving to the children the best instructions, I shall feel much pleasure in assisting by my humble abilities in carrying out their design."<sup>22</sup> It is unclear where Fowles undertook his artistic training. However, he appears to have had an understanding of the South Kensington system that was instituted at Fort St Model School. The South Kensington system had been established in England in the years after Fowles left for Sydney. In his syllabus, Fowles outlined the goals

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph Fowles, "Fowles Diary," (Sydney Mitchell Library, 1838).

<sup>20</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 July 1847, p.2.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from J Fowles to the headmaster, dated 1863, Sydney Grammar School archives.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from J Fowles to William Wilkins, 26 August 1854, Superintendent of Drawing files, New South Wales State Records.

of his drawing classes stating that; "The only certain method of training the eye to a true perception of form, and the hand to an abstract power of reproducing objects as perceived, is by means of a course of instruction in exact geometrical form."<sup>23</sup> Like the South Kensington syllabus, his instruction was focused on precision and accuracy.

During his time as Drawing Master for the Board of National Education after 1854, Fowles also taught at a number of private and denominational schools. He worked and lived at St Mary's College in Glebe throughout the 1860s and taught at the Surry Hills Academy (1860–61), the Classical and Commercial School at Cleveland House (1862–63), Sydney Grammar School (1863–74), The King's School (1871–73), and sponsored a drawing prize at Camden College (1864).<sup>24</sup> By 1867 Fowles was also teaching at: Mr Stephens (1 hour), Dr. Stanley's (1 hour), Lyndhurst College (2 hours), Camden College (2 hours), Mr. Penrill's Glebe Point (2 hours), and Miss Cooley's, Cathosia (2 hours) each week.<sup>25</sup> The fact that Fowles was teaching across a range of private, National and Denominational schools suggests that drawing instruction might have been similar across this range of different schools.

We can gather some insight into Fowles methods of drawing from the series of copybooks he produced to assist teachers. His opening instructions placed special emphasis on the benefit of hand-eye coordination and observation. Fowles also highlighted the importance of accuracy, stating that "it is at once susceptible of proof."<sup>26</sup> Just like in reading, writing and arithmetic, Fowles believed there was a correct and an incorrect answer in drawing. In their initial classes, children were instructed to draw a straight vertical line. Any variation or imprecision would be immediately discernible. This emphasis on accuracy might have been a relief to apprehensive teachers who lacked confidence in their own

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<sup>23</sup> Joseph Fowles, *The elementary freehand drawing book*, vol. 1, 5, 6 (George St, Sydney: J J Moore Bookseller & c., 186-?).

<sup>24</sup> Fowles lists his employment history in a letter of application to the Headmaster, dated 1863, Sydney Grammar School archives.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from J Fowles to William Wilkins, 23 July 1867, Superintendent of Drawing files, New South Wales State Records.

<sup>26</sup> Fowles, *The elementary freehand drawing book*, 1, 5, 6.

artistic abilities. It may also have anticipated scepticism about Drawing being a purely subjective discipline. By emphasising the objective nature of the course, Fowles might have hoped to undo the notion of intrinsic artistic talent and to instead emphasise any child's ability to learn the skill of drawing.<sup>27</sup>

Fowles' copybooks offer clear instructions to both pupils and teachers. Every element of the lesson is described, giving a step-by-step guide to studying drawing. He offers practical advice about directing students and grouping larger classes according to skill. He reassured his reader that progress and improvement is likely to be slow, but that acquiring drawing skills is important: "This power is valuable alike to the artisan and his employer in their respective positions in life... drawing is the first and last indispensable qualification."<sup>28</sup> In this he reinforced the fact that drawing, as he taught, was aligned with useful art and design rather than high art: This was art for industry.

Fowles believed in the capacity of every child to learn to draw. He made this clear in his article 'Drawing and its Advantages', published in *The Australian Journal of Education*. He compared drawing with a child's capacity to learn to write: "the simple Art of Drawing is as purely mechanical as that of writing, and can be as easily attained".<sup>29</sup> He appealed to a general audience, making efforts to show the relevance of drawing instruction for all. The importance of learning to write was widely accepted. By linking instruction in writing to instruction in drawing, Fowles tried to show his readers the importance of drawing and prove it was a legitimate subject. He suggested that the ability to draw gave one the power to express any number of visual forms that would be far less accurately described in words. He suggested that drawing should be seen as a language, one which can transcend cultural barriers and understood by: "the savage as well as the most highly educated".<sup>30</sup> Fowles was careful to make his readers aware that drawing was useful for *every* child: a sentiment that was likely intended to distance it from the idea of art as an "extra" as it often appeared in the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Fowles, *The elementary freehand drawing book*, 1, 5, 6.

<sup>29</sup> J. Fowles, "Drawing: its advantages," *Australian Journal of Education* 1, no. 1 (1868).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



accomplishments curriculum. In his article for the *Australian Journal of Education*, he suggested that the introduction of Drawing instruction to schools had little to do with the Drawing of the ladies accomplishment curriculum. That curriculum focused on studying languages, music and fine art which “has been deemed a useless waste of time”.<sup>31</sup> This was an attempt to distance his drawing classes from the perceived indulgence of high art, making clear his art classes focused on the useful arts: useful to both the future careers of working class students and the Australian economy.

In the same article, he made clear that this new drawing instruction was an important element of education. It “...aims at training the eye (which in its natural state is imperfect,) to a true perception of form and a just estimate of proportion, by a course of which geometrical form is the basis.”<sup>32</sup> Fowles’ emphasis on the physical benefits of drawing foreshadowed twentieth century approaches to art instruction that began to focus on improving coordination and dexterity. This motivation for studying art placed an emphasis on skills and the process of art making, rather than the finished product. This relates to the beliefs voiced by Henry Cole who thought that there had been a misguided emphasis on the products of children’s art education, rather than the thinking process.<sup>33</sup> The aim of drawing instruction was not to produce pretty pictures, but to learn skills in visual communication.

Fowles also highlighted the use of art in science. He reminded his audience of the earliest art made in Australia: scientific surveys and drawings made to describe the flora and fauna. He made clear the importance of drawing for a number of different vocations: architects, surveyors, mechanics and artisans all need drawing to complete their work. Fowles may also have been trying to establish a better reputation for art instruction by showing its connection with the better-respected discipline of Science.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Fowles, "Drawing: its advantages."

<sup>33</sup> Cole stated his frustration with teachers who focused on the finished pictures made in art class, rather than the process and learning. Henry Cole and Alan Summerly Cole, *Fifty years of public work of Sir Henry Cole, K. C. B., accounted for in his deeds, speeches and ...* (G. Bell 1884).

## The Council of Education

In 1866 the *Public Schools Act* established the Council of Education to oversee both the public and denominational schools. By rationalizing the system, it was hoped that more schools could be opened, particularly in rural areas.<sup>34</sup> Schooling became a more important part of families' lives as efforts were made by the state to educate, "regulate, supervise, moralise and even *create* more satisfactory populations...".<sup>35</sup> Under the Council of Education, drawing became a part of the normal curriculum.

In a report to the Legislative Council in 1867, it was noted that due to the fact Drawing was a new subject for many schools, most teachers had no experience in teaching the subject. Special teachers were appointed to teach candidates in the training schools and to assist regular teachers as much as possible.<sup>36</sup> Joseph Fowles was promoted to 'Inspector of Drawing'. On Fowles' recommendation, the council also offered additional weekend and evening classes in Drawing and provided additional training to pupil teachers from schools where Drawing had not been taught before.<sup>37</sup>

Prospective teachers of both the National and Denominational schools were trained through the pupil-teacher system. This method saw pupils receive instruction from their teachers before and after school. During the day they assisted with regular classes. After a minimum apprenticeship of four years and the successful completion of the annual examinations, a pupil teacher could be admitted to the training school at Fort St where they would receive 6 to 12 months further instruction.<sup>38</sup> For drawing instruction, this meant that new teachers spent their formative years training with teachers who had little or no

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<sup>34</sup> A Barcan, *Two centuries of education in New South Wales* (Kensington, N.S.W: New South Wales University Press, 1988).

<sup>35</sup> Campbell and Proctor, *A history of Australian schooling*, p.65.

<sup>36</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1867-68, vol 4, p.222.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Barcan, *Two centuries of education in New South Wales*, p.132.

knowledge of drawing instruction themselves. In the few months pupil-teachers spent at Fort St Model school they would receive a few hours of drawing instruction each week they attended. This is unlikely to have been sufficient to equip new teachers with skills in drawing. Of the fifty-eight teachers who were examined in 1861, just twelve took Drawing as an 'ordinary subject'.<sup>39</sup>

In September 1867 the council of Education ordered 300 copies of Fowles drawing book for use in the training school. The books were intended to supply teachers with example lessons and practice exercises. For many, teaching Drawing was new and most likely challenging. One inspector reported that several teachers "who do not teach [Drawing], are deterred from attempting it from a real or fancied inability to teach it."<sup>40</sup> However, with the guidance of the copybooks, the inspector suggested: "there is little (if any) excuse to be made for the neglect of [Drawing]."<sup>41</sup> Teachers who were not confident in their own ability to draw could implement copybook exercises, as instructions and illustrated examples were provided.<sup>42</sup>

By 1868, the Council of Education recorded the progress being made in teaching Drawing:

A great impulse has been given to the teaching of drawing during the year there is but one school in which it is not systematically taught. The proficiency already attained in the subject is considerable. This result is the more gratifying when the difficulties that have met the introduction of drawing as an essential branch of school instruction are duly estimated. Not the least of these have been the ignorance and prejudice of the parents, and, in some instances, of teachers. The great value of drawing as part of ordinary education is now very widely admitted. It is eminently a practical

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<sup>39</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1862, vol 4, p.184.

<sup>40</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1867-68, vol 4, p.56.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*

<sup>42</sup> Fowles, *The elementary freehand drawing book*, 1, 5, 6.

subject, one which even if regarded from a parent's point of view, will equip a child all the better for the battle of life.<sup>43</sup>

This report again shows the emphasis on drawing as a useful, practical subject allied with an interest in art for industry. The inspector also made it clear that fighting against the prejudices of parents and teachers was an ongoing challenge. Fowles was instrumental in the introduction of drawing to those schools where it had not previously been taught. In the Council's report of 1869, they acknowledge his efforts, writing: "Mr Fowles, has been indefatigable in the discharge of his duties, and it is to that gentleman's ability and zeal that much of the success in drawing is to be attributed."<sup>44</sup>

After these initial years of success, the reports on drawing began to suggest teachers' apathy towards the subject. While drawing continued to be taught across the majority of National and Denominational schools, teachers were criticised for their inattention to the subject. Stricter observance to the course of drawing was called for and complaints were made about improper posture, incorrect materials and a lack of supervision.<sup>45</sup> Hilson suggests the decline in the quality of drawing instruction may have been due to the absence of William Wilkins, who took leave for ill health in 1869-70.<sup>46</sup> Without his encouragement and advocacy for the importance of drawing, those old prejudices may have resurfaced amongst teachers, resulting in the neglect of drawing instruction.

The inspector's report of 1878 confirms this apathy from teachers; "on average [results] scarcely reach fair. In many cases this appears to arise from a lack of interest in the subject on the part of the teacher, to slack supervision of the work, and to the injudicious selection of copies for the use of the pupils, which are often unsuitable in character as well as too difficult for the child to reproduce."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1869, vol 2, p.13.

<sup>44</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1870, vol 2, p.745.

<sup>45</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1872, vol.2, p.625.

<sup>46</sup> Hilson, "Art Education in New South Wales. 1850s to 1930s with particular reference to the contribution of Joseph Fowles, Fredrich W. Woodhouse, and John E. Branch."

<sup>47</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1878-9, p.90.

Fowles also criticised teachers' preoccupation with 'product over process'. He wrote:

In some of the larger schools pupils of the higher classes are occupied in producing showy landscapes and figures of animals before they have the slightest knowledge of shading or perspective. The examples set by the large schools is followed by the smaller, in order to keep the elder scholars from leaving for both pupils and parents prefer these attempts at sketching to the less striking, but more useful, outline drawing, to the attainment of excellence in which the lessons in this subject should be chiefly, if not entirely, directed in primary schools.<sup>48</sup>

Fowles interest in having children undertake the "less striking, but more useful" form of drawing again hints at the division between what was set forth in the curriculum and what was delivered by teachers. Without comprehensive training, teachers were unlikely to deliver the drawing course in the spirit Fowles intended.

Fowles remained Inspector of Drawing for the Council of Education until his death in 1878. He also continued teaching at a number of independent schools. However, a decline in health appears to have affected his ability to perform his duties. Colin Laverty suggests that Fowles suffered from epilepsy, said to have been aggravated by the regular spiritualist séances he attended.<sup>49</sup> For the final decade of his life he was unwell. A series of exchanges between Fowles and the Board of Sydney Grammar School reveal the school's dissatisfaction with Fowles' teaching in the final years of his life and their desire to relieve him of his duties. Fowles increasingly illegible handwriting in his pleas to maintain his position supported their claims. Fowles died on June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1878 after a séance at the Fairfield house of Mr Mathews, a teacher at the William St School.<sup>50</sup> The state of

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Colin Laverty, "Joseph Fowles biography," <http://www.daa.org.au/bio/joseph-fowles/biography/>.

<sup>50</sup> *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 29 June 1878, p.16 S.

Fowles' health in the years before 1878 suggests he may not have been carrying out his duties as Inspector of Drawing.<sup>51</sup>

### **After the 1880 Act**

In 1880 The Public Instruction Act was passed. It was intended to extend and improve schooling. State funding was withdrawn from denominational schools. Superior Schools were established, offering several years of post-primary education. The Act also saw several state high schools established, also offering post-primary education and further instruction, preparing students for matriculation for entry to university. It was also an attempt to make primary school 'free, secular and compulsory', following the example set by the state of Victoria in 1873. However, New South Wales schools continued to have non-denominational scripture classes and reduced fees. Attendance, while compulsory, was not strictly enforced.<sup>52</sup>

The Education Act of 1880 emphasised the importance of reading, writing and arithmetic. Wilkins' and Fowles' efforts to raise the status Drawing in the school curriculum began to unravel. After Fowles death in 1878, no replacement was hired for the position of Inspector or Superintendent of Drawing. From 1882 lessons at the training college were given by John Plummer (who also taught Drawing at Sydney Grammar School) and from 1883 Miss Jessie Douglass was appointed as his assistant. After Wilkins retired in 1884, the number of students taking Drawing decreased: 48,947 were examined in 1884. This dropped to 26,518 in 1885. This drop went against the broader trends in other school subjects, in which numbers rose.<sup>53</sup>

Drawing instruction under the Department of Public Instruction continued to decline throughout the 1880s. In 1885, the poor standard of drawing was attributed to: the failure to include it as compulsory in teacher exams; the fact it

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<sup>51</sup> Sydney Grammar School Archive.

<sup>52</sup> Barcan, *Two centuries of education in New South Wales*, Chapter 13.

<sup>53</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1885, vol.1, p.414.

had “been systematically undervalued or neglected by some of the Inspectors”; and that the methods of teaching had been defective.<sup>54</sup> There appears to have been some ambivalence toward the subject by teachers. While training teachers were required to hold certificates in Blackboard, Freehand and Model Drawing,<sup>55</sup> they did not appear to be passing drawing skills on to their students. Just 33,635 (or 29.5%) of primary school students sat a Drawing examination in 1887.<sup>56</sup>

Despite this general decline in interest in drawing instruction, in 1880 the Drawing curriculum was extended from second through to fifth class. In the report on education delivered to the New South Wales legislative assembly in 1881, the new stages of the drawing curriculum were outlined as follows:

Second class: Simple Rectilinear figures, on slates.

Third class: Fowles’ Elementary Drawing Books I, II and III, or some equivalent books.

Fourth class: Fowles Drawing Books IV, V and VI, on paper

Fifth class: Perspective drawing from Models.<sup>57</sup>

Instruction continued to follow the South Kensington system and remained focused on art for industry. However, it is unclear how many students were actually receiving drawing instruction in the later stages of their schooling.

In 1877, F. J. Gladman became principal of the training college for teachers in Victoria. Gladman’s ideas about education, including art education, became influential across Australia throughout the 1880s. In England Gladman had quickly advanced in his career, becoming principal of a school after just 3 years of teaching. He gained a Bachelor of Art and Bachelor of Science from the University of London. In 1862 he took up the position of Headmaster of the

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<sup>54</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1885-86, vol.4, pp. 19-20.

<sup>55</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1887, vol.3, p. 480.

<sup>56</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1887-88, vol.4, pp. 14-15.

<sup>57</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1880-81, vol.2, pp. 176-177.

Model and Practising School at the Borough Road Training College.<sup>58</sup> In the colony of Victoria, he worked to improve the quality of teacher training and raise the standards of new teachers. To this end, he published *School Work* in 1886, a manual for teachers. The book instructed teachers on how to cultivate an orderly classroom that promoted both the moral and intellectual growth of students.<sup>59</sup>

Gladman opened his chapter on Drawing by reminding readers of the importance of this branch of study:

The addition of a new subject of such importance to the curriculum, is to be accepted in a cheerful spirit, and its value fully recognised by all concerned.<sup>60</sup>

Gladman devoted space in his introduction to emphasising the role of the teacher in a successful drawing class. He notes that it is essential drawing is taught systematically throughout the year, as it is not a skill that can be crammed or learned in a short space of time. Gladman suggested the practical importance of drawing for many technical professions, again referring to art for industry.<sup>61</sup> He provides detailed instructions for teaching a number of technical branches of drawing, including: ruler drawing, plane geometry, solid geometry, model drawing and freehand drawing. He highlights the importance of correct posture, accuracy and drill.

Gladman's emphasis on the importance of drawing signified a broader shift in the latter part of the 1880s. Australian educators began expressing new interest in art education. This interest may have been spurred on by the attention given to art education at the International Health Exhibition held in London in 1884, during which art education reform became a focus.

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<sup>58</sup> R. J. W. Selleck, "Frederick John Gladman (1839–1884)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gladman-frederick-john-3619/text5623>.

<sup>59</sup> Campbell and Proctor, *A history of Australian schooling*, p.99.

<sup>60</sup> F. J. Gladman, *School work* (London: Jarrold, 1886), p.296.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*



## South Kensington's Alternative Syllabus in England

At the same time, in England, the South Kensington modes of drawing instruction had been subject to growing criticism. These came to a head at the 1884 International Health Exhibition at a conference on the theme: "the teaching of colouring and drawing as preparation for design and decorative work".<sup>62</sup> From the outset, the very theme was criticized as being too narrow for a full discussion of art in schools. The conversation moved to a consideration of the purpose of art in schools. Criticisms were led by Ebenezer Cooke, who had studied under and worked beside John Ruskin. He believed Ruskin's 'principles of drawing' were a better method of art education for children. Many of Cooke's beliefs about the role of art education were influenced by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, with whom he had studied from 1848-49. Cooke took many of Pestalozzi's principles about child-centred learning through into his beliefs in the role of art education. Cooke emphasized the importance of studying from nature. He placed creativity and invention at the centre of his art instruction and believed the South Kensington model used in London Board Schools too rigid.

Another critic of South Kensington was Thomas Ablett, who centred his complaints on drawing flat copies in outline. These criticisms might have reflected the new interest in child art by psychologists such as Professor James Sully who observed that children only ever learned to draw geometric forms when directed by a teacher; it was not a practice that was innate or natural.<sup>63</sup> Children were observed drawing natural forms such as animals and people from a very early age. The South Kensington system of drawing geometric shapes in outline went against many of these observations, as it focused on geometric shapes and ornaments. At the 1884 International Health Exhibition, Ablett asked, "What, for instance is the value of copying lines, known as freehand drawing? There can be little pleasure or value in such dreary discipline, without

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<sup>62</sup> Sutton, *Artisan or artist?: a history of the teaching of art and crafts in English schools*, pp. 153-65.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

innovation.”<sup>64</sup> Instead, like Cooke, he advocated teaching from nature: “Teach from Nature, and heed its teachings also.”<sup>65</sup>

In England in 1895, Cooke and Ablett’s efforts to change the South Kensington system took hold. An ‘Alternative Syllabus’ was published. This was based on two key principles:

1. The recognition of the child’s spontaneous activity, and the stimulation of this activity in certain well-defined directions by the teachers.
2. The harmonious and complete development of the whole of a child’s faculties. The teacher should pay especial regard to the love of movement, which can alone secure healthy physical conditions; to the observant use of the organs of sense, especially those of sight and touch; and to that eager desire of questioning which intelligent children exhibit.<sup>66</sup>

The Alternative Syllabus placed a greater emphasis on the natural abilities of the child, and encouraged curiosity. One of its principle features was the inclusion of ‘free-arm drawing’. Both Cooke and Ablett had attacked freehand drawing, which had been a key feature of the South Kensington syllabus. Freehand drawing involved drawing copies of shapes and ornaments in outline. The small and precise mark making was seen as being unnatural. In 1887 in a paper titled *Neglected Elements in Teaching Art*, Cooke suggested free-arm drawing as a better practice: “Tired of cramped fingers [the child] throws his whole hand and arm, his whole body into the delightful and rapid motion.”<sup>67</sup> Free-arm drawing encouraged large gestural mark making and was put forward as an exercise that combined physical and mental effort.

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<sup>64</sup> Ablett quoted by *ibid*, p.159.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>66</sup> Department of Science and Art of the committee of council of education, "Drawing in elementary schools: illustrated syllabus of the course of instruction in drawing under the department of science and art together with a scheme of instruction in drawing for small schools and an alternative illustrated syllabus of instruction in drawing in elementary schools," (London: Ere and Spottiswoode, 1995).

<sup>67</sup> Cooke quotes in Carline, *Draw they must: a history of the teaching and examining of art*, p.132.

Ablett had studied drawing with John Ruskin, and became a life-long advocate of his method of teaching art.<sup>68</sup> Ruskin has taught art to labourers at the Working Men's College; instructed girls at Winnington Hall; taught as the Slade Professor of Art at Oxford.<sup>69</sup> He believed in the power of education to improve society and placed particular emphasis on the value of teaching morals through art.

In his teaching at the Working Men's College, Ruskin made clear his opposition to the methods of instruction used by South Kensington. He believed in drawing from observation by rendering tone through the use of shading in light and dark, rather than drawing lines copied from two dimensional copy books. Ruskin also insisted that the art classes at the College have no formal examination in the way that other courses did. He suggested that any form of competition in art causes students to strive for 'effect' instead of truth, a direct dig at the examinations employed by South Kensington.<sup>70</sup>

In the preface to his lectures, *The Elements of Drawing*, Ruskin offered a few words of advice on art education for children. He did not advocate anything but the "most voluntary practice of art" and suggested children should choose their own subjects from what they see, such as birds, flowers or fruit.<sup>71</sup> He went on to suggest that a child's curiosity for art and drawing should be guided by the parent or teacher with clear and decisive criticism of their work.<sup>72</sup> Ablett promoted Ruskin's ideas in the Alternative Syllabus through the inclusion of figures familiar to the child, such as eggs, plants, birds and fish. Ruskin emphasised the agency of the child.

A new interest in displaying art in the classroom also emerged. Ablett suggested placing high quality pictures up in classrooms would appeal to children to stimulate their visual learning. This idea did not take hold until revived by

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<sup>68</sup> Arthur Efland, *A History of Art Education: Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), p.139.

<sup>69</sup> Sara Atwood, *Ruskin's educational Ideals* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2011), p.2.

<sup>70</sup> For more on Ruskin and his teaching at the Working Men's College see Roger Hewison, *John Ruskin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)

<sup>71</sup> John Ruskin, *The elements of drawing* (London: George Allen, 1859), p.ix.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p.x.

Marion Richardson decades later.<sup>73</sup> In Australia, Alexander Mackie, Principal of the Teachers College insisted on the importance of exposing pupil teachers to examples of high art. In 1908, when the college was in temporary digs at Blackfriars, Mackie spent £80 on “eight rather good carbon reproductions of famous paintings.”<sup>74</sup> Many pupil teachers had not had the opportunity to visit art galleries and museums. Mackie hoped that exposing them to prints of great art might arouse their curiosity in art.

### **A New Superintendent for Drawing in New South Wales**

By the end of the 1880s, the New South Wales Inspector of Public Instruction reported that there were some improvements in the standard of drawing in schools. However, he also noted that; “it is extremely doubtful whether the teaching of drawing will be placed on a fully satisfactory basis until a special officer is appointed who shall visit schools with a view to inquire and report whether the subject is receiving proper attention at the hands of teachers.”<sup>75</sup> He highlighted the need for a new Superintendent for Drawing.

In 1889, after eleven years without a superintendent for drawing, efforts were made to find a suitable appointment for the role. After ruling out local applicants, the Department engaged the Agent General in England to find an Englishman for the position. After many years without a superintendent, and the steady decline in the quality of drawing instruction, the new appointment was tasked with a difficult job.

The Department’s renewed interest in Drawing may have been initiated by the report made by Arthur Riley in 1888. Riley was the Superintendent for Drawing in New Zealand. He visited Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide in 1888 to report on art education. In his report on Drawing in New South Wales, Riley noted that Art was not taught until the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and suggests that an earlier acquaintance with

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<sup>73</sup> Bruce Holdsworth, "Marion Richardson (1892 - 1946)," in *Histories of Art and Design Education: Collected Essays*, ed. Mervyn Romans (Bristol; Portland: Intellect, 2005).

<sup>74</sup> Mackie quotes in Beverley Fletcher, "Shaping the College, 1906 - 1920," in *Sydney Teacher College: A History 1906 - 1981* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger Ptd Limited, 1995), p.38.

<sup>75</sup> New South Wales Legislative Assembly, votes and proceedings, 1887-88, vol.4, p.18.

the subject advisable. He also noted that pupil-teachers received instruction from specialist teachers, but that there was no supervision from a superintendent. In 1889, shortly after Riley's report was published, both these concerns were addressed by the New South Wales Department of Public Instruction.<sup>76</sup>

In the late 1880s slate drawing was introduced into infant's departments, perhaps in response to Riley's criticism. This introduced children to drawing instruction from an earlier age. Using slates, however, assured that drawing would not become a drain on resources, as students would not use up paper. Examination results were also recorded for the infants' school as well as the higher classes. Hilson suggests this may have led to an increase in the number of students examined in drawing in the following year.<sup>77</sup>

The Department's search saw F. W. Woodhouse appointed to the position of superintendent. His professional biography will be examined in greater detail in *Part II*. However, his contribution as it affected art education in Sydney schools will be considered here. Woodhouse was recommended by the principal of the drawing school at the South Kensington Department of Science and Art, Mr Armstrong, and then selected as the successful applicant by the Agent General, Saul Samuels.<sup>78</sup> Woodhouse was an experienced architectural draughtsman and had completed the teaching certificates at South Kensington. His appointment marked an attempt by the department to improve the quality and standard of drawing instruction. The choice of an Englishman, trained at South Kensington reflects the continued interest in teaching art for industry, following the English example.

Once he arrived in Sydney, Woodhouse set straight to work visiting schools, inspecting drawing classes and teaching model lessons in schools. In his first

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<sup>76</sup> Arthur Riley, "Report on technical and art instruction and drawing in primary schools in the Australian colonies," (1888), p.25. Held in NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>77</sup> Hilson, "Art Education in New South Wales. 1850s to 1930s with particular reference to the contribution of Joseph Fowles, Fredrich W. Woodhouse, and John E. Branch," p.102.

<sup>78</sup> 'Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99', 29 Nov 1889, NSW State Records.

report he highlighted the belief held by many school principals that Drawing was merely an 'accomplishment', of no real use to students. He wrote "it is not easy to persuade some that when rightly taught it is a valuable mental exercise as well as a training in observation."<sup>79</sup> This problem, first encountered by Fowles in the 1850s, continued to trouble drawing instruction. Woodhouse articulated the need for schools to allocate the proper time for Drawing, but also proposed a different marking system that offered students some positive reinforcement for their efforts in the subject.<sup>80</sup>

Over the years that followed, Woodhouse attempted a number of schemes to improve the standards of Drawing. He contributed frequently to the monthly teachers magazine; *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*. His articles were designed to help teachers to understand the Drawing curriculum and were illustrated with examples and sample lessons.<sup>81</sup> He also wrote a guide to the art collections around Sydney, offering readers some insight into art history and encouraging them to take advantage of local collections.<sup>82</sup>

It took some time before the South Kensington's 1895 'Alternative Syllabus' began to influence art instruction in Sydney schools. A copy of the syllabus is included in the State Record file for the Superintendent of Drawing from 1890-99, suggesting that Woodhouse knew about the new course of instruction. He also mentions it in his address at the teacher's conference held in 1902.<sup>83</sup> Yet in his copybook, *The Australian Drawing Book* published in 1899, the majority of figures are plucked from the standard South Kensington Syllabus. Woodhouse's reluctance to embrace the new philosophies of art education advocated by Ruskin, Cooke and Ablett may have been due to his lack of training in these new ideas.

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<sup>79</sup> New South Wales legislative assembly, votes and proceedings, 1891-92, vol.3, p.30.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> F. W. Woodhouse, *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, Vol 1, no.7, p.146; no.8, pp.158-60; vol 9, pp.179-80; vol 10, pp.196-197; vol 11, pp.218-219; Vol 4, no.7, pp.127-128; no.10, pp.188-189; Vol 5, no.1, p.5; Vol 6, no.9, pp.198-199; no.10, 202-204; Vol 7, no.5, p.101; Vol 7, no. 10, p.227; Vol 9, no.10, pp.229-300; Vol 10, no.1, pp.11-12; no.4, pp.80-81; Vol 11, no.3, pp.53-54.

<sup>82</sup> F. W. Woodhouse, "History of Art," *The New South Wales Educational Gazette* 1893.

<sup>83</sup> New South Wales Department of Public Instruction, "Conference of inspectors and departmental officers held Tuesday, 21 Jan. 1902 and following days" (1902).

In the 1890s, most teachers still lacked the skills and knowledge to teach Drawing. Several methods were employed in an attempt to remedy this: weekend and evening workshops were setup by the Superintendent for Drawing; easy to follow lesson plans and step-by-step exercises were published in *New South Wales Educational Gazette*;<sup>84</sup> and copybooks were promoted as effective tools for inexperienced teachers producing ready-made lessons. How effective these strategies were in improving the standard of art education remains to be seen, as inspector's reports continued to tell of the poor results of Drawing lessons for many years after they were brought into practice.<sup>85</sup>

### **Elite and middle class schooling**

Schooling that attracted elite and middle class families changed and grew throughout the nineteenth century. Education for girls changed throughout the nineteenth century. Education focused on 'the polite accomplishments' focused on drawing, singing and modern languages and was popular at the beginning of the century.<sup>86</sup> By the end of the century many girls were studying at schools that offered wider curriculum that traditionally only been taught to boys and that would prepare them for entrance to university and a subsequent professional career.<sup>87</sup> Lessons in music and drawing that had been central to the accomplishments curriculum began to be offered instead as "extras" at an additional fee.<sup>88</sup> Corporate schools emerged in Sydney in the final decades of the

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<sup>84</sup> Mandleson, "Norman Selfe."

<sup>85</sup> "Report of the minister for Public Instruction for the year 1891," (Sydney: Charles Potter Government Printer, 1892); "Report of the minister for Public Instruction for the year 1892," (Sydney: Charles Potter Government Printer, 1893); "Report of the minister for Public Instruction for the year 1893," (Sydney: Charles Potter Government Printer, 1894).

<sup>86</sup> For more on the female accomplishments see Theobald, *Knowing women: origins of women's education in nineteenth-century Australia*.

<sup>87</sup> Marcia Helen Cameron, *S.C.E.G.S.: a centenary history of Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994).

<sup>88</sup> Campbell and Proctor, *A history of Australian schooling*, p.87.

19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>89</sup> They taught a curriculum focused on academic studies, but also included some more practical subjects such as bookkeeping and sports, designed to prepare their young pupils for their future careers. Grammar schools also remained an important secular option for schooling. Fluid movement between corporate, grammar and public schooling was not uncommon.<sup>90</sup> Superintendent Joseph Fowles exemplifies this as he worked across a range of public, private-venture, corporate and grammar schools during his career.

Sydney Grammar School taught a curriculum influenced by the classical tradition, heavily focused on languages and literature. It also offered more commercial subjects.<sup>91</sup> Sydney Grammar School was Sydney's oldest grammar school, established in 1854. It was intended as a feeder school for the University of Sydney. Drawing was a part of its curriculum from the beginning. In the school's timetable of 1858, Drawing was to be taught twice weekly in the upper school and once weekly in the lower school.<sup>92</sup> Between 1863 and 1877 Joseph Fowles taught these lessons. It is likely Fowles taught drawing according to the South Kensington system, just as he is recorded doing in the public schools. In his letter of application for the position of Drawing Master, Fowles highlighted his familiarity with the English system, suggesting this was the school's interest.<sup>93</sup> It is curious to see that an elite grammar school taught art in such a utilitarian manner. Art as an extension of classical curriculum would have been more closely linked to the western canon, rather than studying ornamental design.

The Scots College, another boys' grammar school that catered to the elite and middle class families of Sydney, took a very different approach to their provision of art instruction. Like some of Sydney's elite private girls' schools, they employed Practising artists to teach art. Italian born artist Antonio Dattilo-Rubbo taught at Scots College at the turn of the twentieth century. He believed in the

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<sup>89</sup> For more on corporate secondary school in Australia see Geoffrey Sherington and Jill Quin, *Learning to lead: a history of girls' and boys' corporate secondary schools in Australia*, ed. R. C. Petersen and Ian D. Brice, trans. R. C. Petersen and Ian D. Brice (Sydney : Allen & Unwin, 1987).

<sup>90</sup> Campbell and Proctor, *A history of Australian schooling*, p.91.

<sup>91</sup> Clifford Turney, *Grammar: a history of the Sydney Grammar School 1819-1988* (Sydney: Sydney Grammar School in association with Allen & Unwin, 1989).

<sup>92</sup> Timetable printed in the Sydney Grammar yearbook of 1858. Sydney Grammar School archives.

<sup>93</sup> Letter of application to the headmaster, dated 1863. Sydney Grammar School archives.



value of art for the education of the eye. In the school's magazine in 1921, Dattilo-Rubbo addressed a "Common Question", writing; "I frequently hear it asked, "What is the use of Art when my boy is not going to be an a r t i s t ?"(original emphasis)<sup>94</sup> He goes on to forgive parents who ask this question and points out that many of them were educated at a time when the education system did not value art instruction. Dattilo-Rubbo also explained his belief in the importance of the 'grand tour' in Europe, suggesting that one's education was not considered complete without knowledge of art history and an understanding of the part it has played in civilization. The style of art education he would have offered the boys at The Scots College would have been markedly different from the more utilitarian approach taught by Fowles at Sydney Grammar.

Dattilo-Rubbo also taught budding artists and amateurs in private classes at his studio in the Australian Chambers building on Rowe Street. He was known for encouraging his pupils to experiment and engage with the ideas developed by post-impressionist artists working in France. Many of his pupils went on to enjoy careers as successful artists, such as Alison Rehfisch, Grace Cossington Smith and Roland Wakelin. Throughout his career Dattilo-Rubbo campaigned for the inclusion of art (and a more professional approach to its teaching) in the schools.<sup>95</sup>

Unlike Fowles' approach and the system introduced into the National and Denominational schools, Dattilo-Rubbo suggested that drawing should not be understood as a utilitarian skill. He was not concerned with the "training of eyes and hand—on the contrary, [he wrote,] its main object is to develop the vision of the mind."<sup>96</sup> For the boys attending The Scots College, art class was about learning careful observation and art appreciation.

At the beginning of the nineteenth-century, many girls' schools offered pupils a full course of instruction in the polite accomplishments, focused on languages,

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<sup>94</sup> Antonio Dattilo-Rubbo, "The common question," *The Scotsman* 1921.

<sup>95</sup> Carmel Oakley, "Antonio Salvatore Dattilo Rubbo," <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rubbo-antonio-salvatore-dattilo-8291>.

<sup>96</sup> Dattilo-Rubbo, "The common question."

art and music. Drawing and painting were often taught by a specialist drawing teacher for an extra fee, outside of the core curriculum. An 1811 advertisement for Mrs Hannah Jones' academy for girls in Sydney stated that the school teaches "the rudiments of useful and polite education – with proper masters to instruct drawing dancing etc." <sup>97</sup>

Engaging a specialist teacher to teach art remained common. Joan Lindsay's account of the art mistress in her fictional private girls' academy offers insight into instruction at many girls' schools. She described the art mistress Mrs Valange leaving the school, as she is helped into a dogcart:

"weighed down as usual by a sketching pad, umbrella and bulging valise. The contents of the valise were invariably the same: for the senior pupils, a plaster cast of Cicero's head wrapped in a flannelette nightgown in case his beak of a nose got chipped in the rattling of the Melbourne train; a plaster foot for the juniors; a roll of Michelet paper..."<sup>98</sup>

The equipment used for art instruction in many Sydney girls' schools was likely to have been similar to those described above. Many art teachers focused their instruction on academic traditions of drawing from the antique, using casts as models to draw from.

The character of art instruction within private, corporate schools and grammar schools, for both boys and girls depended heavily on the individual teacher. Instruction ranged from the ornamental design of the South Kensington system, to more traditional academic painting and other styles championed by individuals. The place of art also varied as different schools valued art in different ways. For a girls' school like Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School, Darlinghurst (SCEGGS), art became an important part of the curriculum, but in other school such as Sydney Grammar School, it was peripheral to a

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<sup>97</sup> *Sydney Gazette* quoted by Rogers, "A valuable aesthetic influence upon the working classes: the alternative syllabus and its aftermath," p.102.

<sup>98</sup> Joan Lindsay, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (London: Penguin, 1967), p.105.

classical curriculum. It is impossible to generalise about art in these schools for this reason.

Corporate girls' schools taught a curriculum focused on reading, writing, arithmetic and modern languages. The establishment of these corporate schools in Sydney in the 1890s coincided with the establishment of professional organisations for artists. The schools drew teachers from these locally trained artists. The way these artists approached art instruction differed considerably from the South Kensington system, as they incorporated their own approaches and artistic philosophies into their lessons.

It is difficult to make generalised statements about the art instruction offered at corporate girl's schools, as the content of courses depended heavily on the teacher in charge. At SCEGGS, art classes were first introduced in 1895. They were included as an "extra", as art was not yet part of the curriculum. The school engaged Miss Stephens to teach these. Stephens was a pupil at Julian Ashton's classes and became an accomplished artist in her own right.<sup>99</sup> She taught according to her practice: traditional landscape and still life painting. Her work and teaching is discussed further in *Part Two: People*.

In 1907 the school also engaged Albert Collins, who was trained at South Kensington, to instruct the girls twice weekly in Design. His course focused on South Kensington style skills-based training, much like the course of instruction employed in the Public Schools.<sup>100</sup> By 1913 art history lectures were also included in the art course. That same year, in response to the overwhelming interest in art instruction, the headmistress Miss Badham wrote to the Department of Public instruction. She requested that art and music be included in the curriculum so that it could "be given more serious consideration in the timetable".<sup>101</sup> The demand for both high art and design instruction at SCEGGS

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<sup>99</sup> Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School, *Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School 1895-1955* (Darlinghurst: Council of S.C.E.G.G.S, 1958), p.103.

<sup>100</sup> Edith Badham, "Principal's report," *Lux* 1913, p.8.

<sup>101</sup> Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School, *Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School 1895-1955*, p.102.

shows the broad interest in art education. The girls and their families were interested in both art for industry and refining taste.

### **After 1900: Educational reform**

The beginning of the twentieth century brought with it new interest in schooling. Federation was achieved in 1901, but decisions regarding education remained in the power of the states.<sup>102</sup> Worldwide interest in reassessing the function of schooling and new theories of educational psychology lead several prominent Sydneysiders to point out insufficiencies in the system of schooling. In June 1901, at the annual teachers' conference, several speakers criticised the education system of New South Wales, sending shock waves through the audience. The standout speech was given by Francis Anderson, who was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Sydney. Anderson criticised the system of education in New South Wales pointing out that "...our methods are, in comparison with those of other countries, grievously defective... judged by her own former standard, New South Wales is degenerating and losing ground".<sup>103</sup> Politician David Story claimed that the New South Wales system was "the finest in the universe",<sup>104</sup> but Anderson suggested that those in charge had put blinkers on, ignoring developments occurring in education systems overseas. Anderson also complained that teaching was too mechanical; teachers were not well trained; and the curriculum was split into too many different subjects.<sup>105</sup> *The New South Wales Educational Gazette* reveals some of the shock that met Anderson's speech.<sup>106</sup> Having been fed the line that the New South Wales system was 'the best' it was incompressible to many people that Anderson, a respected educator, could make such criticisms.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Campbell and Proctor, *A history of Australian schooling*: Chapter four.

<sup>103</sup> Francis Anderson, *On teaching to think: an address to teachers* (Sydney: William Brooks & Co., 1903).

<sup>104</sup> A. R. Crane and W. G. Walker, *Peter Board: his contribution to the development of education in New South Wales* (Melbourne Australian Council for Educational Research, 1957), p.13.

<sup>105</sup> Smith and Spaul, *History of education in New South Wales (1788-1925)*, p.190.

<sup>106</sup> *Australian keepsake 1855*, (Sydney, Melbourne: Sands and Kenny, n.d.), pp.33-34.

<sup>107</sup> Wade, "Pedagogic objects: The formation, circulation and exhibition of teaching collections for art and design education in Leeds, 1837-1857," pp.201-04. Crane and Walker, *Peter Board: his contribution to the development of education in New South Wales*, pp.13-14.

Each of Anderson's major criticisms might also be applied to the state of drawing instruction. Most branches of Drawing were not compulsory for teachers in training. Only free-hand and blackboard drawing were required.<sup>108</sup> A more rigorous teacher training system would certainly have benefited drawing instruction. Though Anderson's criticisms did not specifically address the drawing curriculum, his claim that teaching techniques were mechanical was true of drawing. Most drawing lessons focused on mindlessly copying figures in outline. Many teachers relied on basic copybook exercises, despite syllabus instructions from the Superintendent of Drawing to include observational drawing.<sup>109</sup> Improved teacher training could help teachers move beyond the basic mechanical exercises to teach all aspects of the syllabus. Anderson emphasised practical education over book instruction.<sup>110</sup>

Anderson's criticisms sparked interest in educational developments overseas. Shortly after the conference, in October 1901, *The New South Wales Educational Gazette* published an article by M. Louise Hutchinson from *The School Journal* (America) on the curious new practice of ambidextrous drawing.<sup>111</sup> This technique was not part of the South Kensington system and had not been taught in New South Wales. The article detailed the benefits of teaching ambidextrous drawing. It includes photographs of students drawing symmetrical patterns with both hands at once on the blackboard (Figure 1). She lists the advantages of the method to improve: "freedom of movement"; "fearlessness"; "accuracy"; "rapidity"; "strengthening and developing left as well as right side"; "greater symmetry"; "creative power".<sup>112</sup> The tone of writing is persuasive, but not particularly instructive. Teachers unfamiliar with this new form of drawing would have to guess from the images accompanying the article, how one might undertake an ambidextrous drawing lesson. The article's inclusion appears to be

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<sup>108</sup> *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, June 1901, p.5.

<sup>109</sup> Anderson, *On teaching to think: an address to teachers*

<sup>110</sup> Roselyn R. Gillespie, "Australian education: ideas in transition 1900-1914" (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1976), pp76-80.

<sup>111</sup> M Louise Hutchinson, "Ambidextrous Drawing," *The New South Wales Educational Gazette* 1901, Vol 11, No 5, pp.101-03.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

aimed at making local teachers aware of new methods of art instruction, rather than offering them the tools in which to use it in their own classes.

In 1902, *The Gazette* continued its new interest in American modes of drawing instruction with a review of J. L. Tadd's Art teaching manual, *New Methods in Education*.<sup>113</sup> The book is described as "a complete system of aesthetic and manual training combined",<sup>114</sup> including many forms of art instruction not yet offered in many Sydney schools, such as modelling in three dimensions. The discussion of these methods and their absence from Sydney schools made it clear that Sydney's art instruction was lagging behind the United States.

In April 1904, a series of broader education conferences addressing the need for education reform took place. The Report of the Commissioners Knibbs and Turner was presented. The report had been commissioned after Anderson's address in 1901. The commissioners had been sent to examine systems of education across Europe and America. Their recommendations included the need to restructure the education system to create a clearer pathway from primary to secondary and then further education. The significance of this for art instruction was that it would then be possible to design a syllabus that would prepare children with basic drawing skills that could be developed in the more advanced stages of training.<sup>115</sup>

At the same conference, Peter Board disseminated a succinct 12-page pamphlet of recommendations for New South Wales' schools. Board was a young educator who had aligned himself with the New Education movement.<sup>116</sup> He had self-funded an educational tour of Europe. He made many of the same suggestions as the commissioners. However, the brevity of his pamphlet made his message easy to comprehend and his recommendations had a great impact. In January 1905

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<sup>113</sup> J. L. Tadd's, *New Methods in Education*, p. 131.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> G. Knibbs and J. W. Turner, *Report of the Commissioners, mainly on primary, secondary and technical education: containing the summarized reports, recommendations, and extended reports of the Commissioners* (Sydney: Government Press., 1904).

<sup>116</sup> For more on Peter Board see Crane and Walker, *Peter Board: his contribution to the development of education in New South Wales*.

Board was appointed the first Director of Education, under the new system. Under Board's leadership, the school curriculum had a new emphasis on subjects such as history and nature study.<sup>117</sup>

Educational innovations across the globe saw questions asked about the static nature of Drawing instruction. In 1902, the superintendent of Drawing, William Woodhouse, was questioned at the conference of inspectors and departmental officers of education. They wanted to know whether he was abreast of the new innovations in art instruction occurring abroad and when he planned to bring them to Sydney's schools.<sup>118</sup> Woodhouse defended his efforts to first ensure all teachers and students had a good basic knowledge of drawing before bringing in more complex methods. Woodhouse was not pleased with the questions asked of him and resigned shortly after the conference and returned to England.<sup>119</sup>

Woodhouse's assistant John Branch was hired as Superintendent (examined in greater detail in *Part Two*). Branch brought with him ten years of experience in London Board schools and a good understanding of South Kensington's Alternative Syllabus. He also had energy and passion for art education. *The New South Wales Educational Gazette* described him as having "a pleasing manner before a class, and his practical demonstrations, accompanied by lucid exposition of principles, prove him a thorough master of his work."<sup>120</sup> For the first time, the character of the Superintendent was remarked upon, perhaps implying Woodhouse did not have the same presence as Branch.

Branch immediately set about designing a new art syllabus. In July 1904 the new art syllabus was published in the *New South Wales Educational Gazette*. The syllabus was presented clearly in the form of a table. It included a combination of memory drawing, model drawing, ambidextral (sic) drawing, observational drawing, pattern and ornamental design. The equipment used for these classes

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> New South Wales Department of Public Instruction, "Conference of inspectors and departmental officers held Tuesday, 21 Jan. 1902 and following days."

<sup>119</sup> *New South Wales Educational Gazette*, October 1903, Vol 13, no.5, p. 117.

<sup>120</sup> *New South Wales Educational Gazette*, June 1903, Vol 13, no.1, p. 1.

was also specified. Branch suggested the use of a board or surface “as large as possible” - or at the very least, a slate - covered in brown paper for students to draw on.<sup>121</sup> Woodhouse had not explicitly published instructions of what materials should be used. By contrast, Branch made no assumptions about teacher’s level of knowledge. He offered clear instructions for the uninitiated teacher.<sup>122</sup>

Branch’s knowledge and experience teaching South Kensington’s Alternative Syllabus is evident in his inclusion of both ‘free-arm’ and free-drawing time. Students are allocated lessons to “draw as what they please”,<sup>123</sup> an exercise that responded to Cooke and Ablett’s interest in engaging the child’s curiosity in drawing. Branch also encouraged students to spend time drawing directly from nature. This careful observational drawing was then used to encourage students to make ornamental designs of their own invention.<sup>124</sup> Though still drawing ornamental designs, Branch encouraged students to think more about what they were drawing and to take a more active role in their creations.

The new art syllabus in 1904 marked an attempt to bring students into contact with nature and to engage with their art-making. In September 1904, Branch contributed an article to the New South Wales Educational Gazette that stated: “work should be done directly from Nature, and the design must be the scholar’s own invention”.<sup>125</sup> However, this was to be preceded by a “certain amount of drill”, so that students had a good command of the brush and the ideas of design. Branch offers a series of progressive exercises in brushwork, clearly directing the teacher through his course of instruction. He suggests that the teacher should gradually leave a little more freedom to the students for the exercise of their own “inventive faculties”.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, July 1904, Vol 14, no.2, pp.29-30.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, July 1904, Vol 13, no.3, p.70.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, Vol 13, no.6, pp.133-134.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.



The new syllabus placed special emphasis on the child's ability to invent. In Branch's syllabus, it was made clear that the early stages of copy exercises intended to ensure students developed a good command of the medium and develop the skills necessary to express their ideas. These lessons were an important foundation for later classes that encouraged invention and self-expression. Branch also suggested that art lessons should relate to other lessons. For example, he suggested that if a lesson on "the lemon" was to be given, it should be accompanied with a drawing lesson of a lemon in mass and in colour.<sup>127</sup>

Branch's syllabus was also the first instance of tasks being assigned by gender. While both girls and boys were instructed to make designs of the same based on the same blossoms (Geranium, Marigold, Bouvardia Pansy, Fuchsia etc) and in similar formations such as inside a repeating border; boys were instructed to create a border for use as a dado, while girls should design one for a child's dress. This may be an attempt by Branch to give the lessons greater significance to his pupils and fit in with their interests.<sup>128</sup>

From 1905 - 1910 special attention was given to training teachers. Throughout the period the *Gazette* was published, pupil teachers were required to study drawing as part of their training. Under Woodhouse's supervision, from 1891 to 1903, there were regular articles in the *Gazette* after each of the examinations providing the solutions to the drawing exam and feedback about the quality of the papers marked. In almost every case, the comments were negative, stating the poor standard of drawing by pupil teachers, or the large number of non-attempts. These suggest that very few pupil teachers took drawing instruction seriously.

Pupil teachers were examined on geometric drawing, object drawing and blackboard drawing. The example solutions printed in the *Gazette* were difficult. They feature complex symmetrical designs (Figure 2). Woodhouse accompanies

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

these illustrations with descriptions of how the drawings can be achieved, but these descriptions were complicated and difficult to follow. From 1903, when Branch took over as superintendent, these explanations were far easier to follow. He provided a step-by-step explanation, with illustrations at each stage of completion, making it much easier to understand and reproduce a correct solution.

Though both teachers and students appeared to have been more receptive to art instruction under Branch, it is unclear how much art instruction really changed. The Board had expressed interest in instituting new techniques of art education from overseas - such as ambidextrous drawing - but their interest appears to have been superficial and fleeting. Ambidextrous drawing went out of favour just as quickly as it had been introduced and the majority of Branch's syllabus remained similar to that instituted by Woodhouse. Branch was more effective at communicating the significance of art education and engaging both students and teachers, but his style of instruction mirrored what had been taught in schools throughout the latter part of the nineteenth-century.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has traced the chronology of art education in schools allowing us to see the way instruction changed throughout this foundational period. In some respects, the way art was taught changed very little. The South Kensington system remained a significant influence from the time Drawing entered the school curriculum to the end of the period. Children were just as likely to be found drawing ornamental figures in outline in 1854 as they were in 1915. However, a significant shift appears to have taken place in wider attitudes to art in schools. In the early part of this period there was resistance towards teaching drawing in schools: teachers' were uninterested and there was a prevailing belief that art was an unnecessary frill on a core education of reading, writing and arithmetic. When Branch took over as Superintendent in 1903 amid wider reforms in education, a shift in attitude occurred. By 1915 there was wider support for art education in schools and a greater interest by wider society.

This chapter examined the motivations that informed the provision of art education in Sydney schools. Previous scholarship has dismissed the early art curriculum as being rigidly skills-based. This chapter re-considered the art curriculum and examined why art instruction was offered. I demonstrated the interest in establishing 'art for industry', and the way in which the South Kensington skills-based courses responded to this. Understanding the art curriculum in this context allows us to see why skills-based instruction was instituted. It equipped children with design skills required for industry.

By the end of this period, educators had begun looking beyond England to America and Europe for the latest innovations in art education. Though the desire to teach art for industry did not disappear completely, we see a growing interest in the broader educational benefits of art education, such as hand-eye coordination and visual communication.

## CHAPTER TWO: TECHNICAL EDUCATION

The art instruction offered through Sydney's technical school was one of the few opportunities for adults and amateurs to study art. The Sydney Mechanics' School of Art was the first institution to offer art classes in the colony. It continued to play a significant role in providing art education. Unlike Melbourne and Adelaide, no government-supported art school was established in Sydney in this foundational period. In the absence of a dedicated art school, the technical college and private providers rose to fill the void. This chapter examines the important role technical education played in the provision of art education.

Like schooling in Australia, the establishment of technical education was heavily influenced by British ideas and systems of instruction. Gary Wotherspoon traces the history of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Art to its origins in the Mechanic's Institute movement of Scotland led by George Birkbeck.<sup>1</sup> Birkbeck, a Quaker and professor of natural philosophy, advocated the establishment of adult and technical education. He helped establish the Mechanics' Institute movement, helping to extend educational opportunities to workingmen. Schools of Art and Mechanic's Institutes were soon established throughout the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

Philip Candy argues that the desire to establish the Sydney Mechanics' School of Art may also have been an extension of radical middle-class culture, or the literary and philosophic societies of the 1780s and 90s. He suggests it may have been part of radical mobilisation of the working classes occurring as part of the major social and political changes in England in the 1820s and 30s, or perhaps even an extension of the Sunday school movement.<sup>3</sup> Each of these movements was governed by a belief in the transformative power of education. Candy points to the fact that "virtually every institute included in its objectives a statement

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Wotherspoon, *The Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts: a history* (Sydney: Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 2000), p.11.

<sup>2</sup> For more on technical education in England see Argles, *South Kensington to Robbins: an account of English technical and scientific education since 1851*.

<sup>3</sup> P. C. Candy and John. Laurent, *Pioneering culture: Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Art in Australia* (Adelaide: Auslib Press, 1994), p.2.

about the provision of 'rational recreation.'<sup>4</sup> In this, the motivations that informed the establishment of Sydney Mechanics' Schools of Art were similar to those that proclaimed the civilising power of art instruction and the desire to teach taste. Joan Cobb describes the development of technical education in New South Wales as "aspirational".<sup>5</sup> She suggests that the community leaders who formed the driving force in establishing the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts set out to improve the economic, moral and spiritual well being of the community. Courses were open to any one who wished to enrol. At the founding meeting of the Schools of Arts, the first president made clear this intention:

When we consider that the power to extend the dominion of civilized man across regions peopled hitherto only by savages is derived from Art and Science...<sup>6</sup>

Art education and teaching 'taste' through lectures and instruction in drawing was part of a broader effort to establish a civilized society in Australia. This was art education for all sections of society.

The role of technical education was the subject of debate frequently throughout the history of technical instruction in Sydney. The report of the Committee of the Technical College of 1881 opens with a short summary of the Board's history and success, stating:

The early committees of management of the School of Arts were ever mindful of its special mission as a Mechanic's School of Arts, and as far as means would permit endeavoured to afford evening instruction to any artisans and apprentices desirous of improving their minds.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.13.

<sup>5</sup> Cobb, *Sweet road to progress: the history of state technical education in New South Wales to 1949* pp.24-49.

<sup>6</sup> SMSA minute book quoted in *ibid*, p.24.

<sup>7</sup> Committee of the Technical College, *Report from the Committee of the Technical College at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts* (Sydney: Samuel Edward Lees, 1881), p.5.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the issue of who the college should cater to, arose again. The desire to ensure access to working class students who wished to learn a trade inspired reforms in 1913-1915. Throughout the discourse surrounding technical education, there was an insistence on the School's mission to educate the working classes may point to the founders' own philanthropic motivations more than to the reality of what they created.

This chapter examines the tension between teaching taste and teaching art for industry within technical education. The way technical education changed throughout the period will be considered, with attention to the way these changes affected the character of art instruction. I examine the art classes taught at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, assessing the way in which individual art teachers brought their own artistic interests and personalities shape the character of art instruction. The influence of the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition will be examined for the role it played in fostering greater interest in practical education. The final section of this chapter will consider the shifting motivations that informed the provision of technical education at the beginning of the twentieth century, inspiring a shift towards more vocational styles of art instruction.

### **Art Education at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Art**

The Sydney Mechanics' School of Art was one of the first places to offer art classes in Sydney. The School was established in 1833. From 1841 their program included lectures in art. This series of lectures was titled 'Principles of Taste' and was delivered by John Rae.<sup>8</sup> Rae worked as a public servant and author as well as a painter and photographer.<sup>9</sup> As an artist, he was principally known for his landscapes, which were characterised by a great degree of accuracy. His panoramic views of Newcastle, Wollongong, the Valley of the Upper Murray from Welaregang [sic] Station and Sydney Harbour from the Macquarie Light House

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<sup>8</sup> Riley, "The movement's contribution to the visual arts: three New South Wales case studies," p.212.

<sup>9</sup> Nan Phillips, "John Rae (1813-1900)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, ed. Geoffrey Serle, Bede Nairn, and Russel Ward (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1976).

were made using a camera obscura of his own invention, in order to achieve “absolute fidelity”.<sup>10</sup>

Rae’s lectures for the School of Art explored the notion of ‘taste’. He suggested that “bad taste may reign for a season... but our present morbid and rabid taste for the low and vulgar... must soon give place to what is refined, polished, and in accordance with our best feelings of morality and religion.”<sup>11</sup> He believed that the School of Arts should help extend education to all sections of society to improve standards of taste. The press report on his lecture described him as “spirited”; “highly polished”; “dramatic and effective”, suggesting that he must have made an engaging teacher.<sup>12</sup> This no doubt made his lectures popular.

Also lecturing and instructing art at the Sydney Mechanics’ School of Art in 1841 was John Skinner Prout. Prout was the nephew of the acclaimed artist Samuel Prout, whose work had been much admired by John Ruskin.<sup>13</sup> He emigrated to Sydney in 1829 and was best known for his topographical and landscape painting. His views of Sydney appear in a volume he collaborated on with John Rae, *Sydney Illustrated*.<sup>14</sup> Prout was also described as an engaging lecturer. Reporting on his lectures at the School of Arts, the *Australian* wrote that he “not only understands painting but can clearly and popularly explain its principles.”<sup>15</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald* also wrote that he was an engaging presenter when reporting on a lecture he gave later that year: “it would have been difficult not to listen attentively to Mr. Prout’s explanations, impressed as they were by the beautiful illustrations, without picking up something that we did not formerly know.”<sup>16</sup> These lectures were clearly appealing to a general audience who might not be well versed in art.

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<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Webby, "John Rae," <http://www.daa.org.au/bio/john-rae/biography/>?

<sup>11</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, Tuesday 27 July 1841, p.2.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> V. W. Hodgman, "John Skinner Prout (1805-1876)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography Volume 2, 1788-1850 : I-Z*, ed. A. G. L. Shaw, Manning Clark, and C. Clark (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1967).

<sup>14</sup> John Skinner Prout and John Rae, *Sydney illustrated* (Sydney J.S. Prout, 1842-44).

<sup>15</sup> *The Australian* quoted by Hodgman, "John Skinner Prout (1805-1876)."

<sup>16</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, Friday 17 December 1841, p.2.

*The Herald's* account of Prout's lectures offers some further insight to one lecture on 'light and shadow'. In rendering a landscape, Prout suggested students should begin by sketching a slight outline of the scene. He explained that shadow could be stumped in after this, before adding details. He illustrated his instructions with part-finished works, and a painting demonstration. This technique of beginning in outline can be seen in his work, such as *City of Sydney N.S.W. From the Government Paddock. Parramatta Street.* (Figure 3) The details carefully laid over broader areas of light and shadow.

Although the outline studies Prout described may have been linked to the South Kensington approach of drawing in outline, his approach was more clearly aligned with high art training. He placed emphasis on the importance of sketching from nature:

Now it was very clear that every subject which was worth sketching at all, was worth sketching well; and what time and place could be so well suited for this purpose than when the subject was before our eyes, and the place where the sketch was made!<sup>17</sup>

Prout's insistence on drawing from nature suggests the influence of Ruskin and the Pre Raphaelites who championed art that was 'true to nature'. It is a practice that separates his lessons from the copy-exercises of the South Kensington course.

Prout gave lectures on drawing and practical classes for 15 shillings per quarter for non-members and ten shillings for members. Riley suggests that this substantial fee was likely to have been beyond the means of working class students.<sup>18</sup> This suggests that his style of instruction was intended for middle and upper class students who were interested in art as an accomplishment and to refine their knowledge of taste.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Riley, "The movement's contribution to the visual arts: three New South Wales case studies," p.213.



The establishment of the University of Sydney in 1850 stimulated new interest in adult education. Attendance at classes offered by the School of Arts had declined through the 1840s. In the 50s, the fine arts were a major part of reviving the institution's program. In 1848 the School of Arts began offering drawing classes in geometrical and architectural drawing. In August 1854, the same year he became Superintendent for Drawing, Joseph Fowles offered his services to the Sydney Mechanics' School of Art. He taught drawing there for several years. Cobb suggests that under Fowles, classes were more efficiently run and the committee appointed an art examiner.<sup>19</sup> He most likely taught a course based on the South Kensington model that he was familiar with from the primary school curriculum; a more utilitarian approach to art instruction than the school had previously offered.

Fowles, together with the School's secretary, Joseph Dyer, organised a major Fine Art exhibition in 1857. It was held in the school's hall and consisted mainly of European paintings by contemporary and old masters including Bonington, Gainsborough, Claude, Rembrandt, Caravaggio, Titian and Velazquez.<sup>20</sup> Local artists F. C. Terry, S. T. Gill, W. Dexter and J. Fowles himself, were also represented among the 336 works. This exhibition offered Sydney-siders a rare opportunity to see well-respected paintings. With no permanent collection, temporary exhibitions such as this formed a key opportunity for informal art education in Sydney.

Coverage of the exhibition by *The Empire* commends the exhibition organizers for issuing a catalogue of paintings, but criticizes the brevity of the descriptions provided. The short entries were compared with the more comprehensive catalogue available for assisting viewers to the National Gallery in London. They suggest that "to an Australian public, such commentaries would be even far more necessary and acceptable...".<sup>21</sup> This exhibition was promoted as an educational

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<sup>19</sup> Cobb, *Sweet road to progress: the history of state technical education in New South Wales to 1949*, pp 24-40.

<sup>20</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 January 1857, p.5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

opportunity. The brevity of the catalogue entries were seen as a lost opportunity to realize this in full.

Edmund Thomas took over the drawing classes at the School in 1861.<sup>22</sup> Best known for his lithography, Thomas had set up a shop with Scipio Clint advertising as “landscape and portrait artists” in 1854.<sup>23</sup> At the beginning of 1861, Thomas taught drawing two afternoons a week at the Australian Ladies College in Brougham Lodge, Darlinghurst. Later that year, he replaced Fowles as the drawing teacher at the School of Arts. He taught classes in figure drawing, landscape drawing, geometrical drawing, model drawing and practical perspective; a far greater range of art classes than previously offered. However, attendance was poor. His classes were rationalised, and practical perspective cancelled altogether. By 1865 he was only teaching one combined figure, landscape and flower drawing class. The preference for this style of art over the more ‘useful’ forms of drawing, suggest his classes attracted amateur artists and those wishing to pursue art as an accomplishment. However, even these were not well attended, with an average of just seven students reported in the examinations of that year.<sup>24</sup>

Frederick Casemero Terry acted as an examiner for the School’s drawing classes from 1861. Terry was well respected for his engravings, winning second prize for his medal design at the 1855 Paris Universal Exhibition. He also had his paintings exhibited there alongside Conrad Martens, George French Angas and Adelaide Ironside. Merle Peters claims that it was the first time painting and sculpture by Australian had been included in a major overseas exhibition. His engravings of Sydney street scenes were published by Sands and Kenny in the *Australian Keepsake 1855* (although his name was misprinted as Fleury).<sup>25</sup> In 1857, Terry has also exhibited his work at the ‘Further Exhibition of the Society for the

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<sup>22</sup> Riley, "The movement's contribution to the visual arts: three New South Wales case studies," p.214.

<sup>23</sup> Design and Art Australia Online, "Edmund Thomas," <http://www.daa.org.au/bio/edmund-thomas/biography/>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Merle Peters, "Terry, Frederick Casemero (1825–1869)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, ed. Geoffrey Serle, Bede Nairn, and Russel Ward (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1976).

Promotion of the Fine Arts in Australia', which was held in the School of Arts. He showed a watercolour entitled: *Picnic Party, Middle Harbor*.<sup>26</sup> The exhibition was commended in *The Empire* where it was suggested; "the admiration excited for the skill displayed in the works will tend to elevate public taste as well as diffuse a taste for the elegant accomplishment"<sup>27</sup> Teaching taste remained a motive for providing accessible art education at the school. Terry's artistic achievements rendered him a suitable examiner for the school's art classes.

In 1863, Terry began teaching day and evening drawing classes at the School of Arts in Balmain. In 1867 he became drawing master at the Mechanics' School of Arts, but taught for a short time before the Committee declared he had resigned 'in consequence of his non-attendance'.<sup>28</sup> He died in 1869, remembered as "one of the best watercolour artists in Australia".<sup>29</sup> In his absence, there were no fine art classes at all; revealing the impact a single teacher could have on the art classes offered through the school at this time.

In 1865, Norman Selfe began teaching classes in Mechanical Drawing at the School of Arts. Selfe was an engineer. He had worked as chief engineer and chief draughtsman at Mort Dock and engineering company, known for their innovation.<sup>30</sup> Selfe's classes at the School offered practical instruction for industry. Mandleson suggested that the popularity of these classes reflected the changing character of colonial society and the increasing need for skilled artisans and tradesmen.<sup>31</sup>

In 1870 the Committee agreed to establish a School of Design, within the Sydney Mechanics' School of Art. The idea of establishing a School of Design mirrored the reforms in England made through the 1830s and 40s that culminated in the establishment of an institution also named the 'School of Design'. It later became the South Kensington Department of Science and Art. The Committee's desire to

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> *Empire*, 8 January 1857, p.4.

<sup>28</sup> Bruce Candice, "Frederic Casemero Terry," <http://www.daa.org.au/bio/frederic-casemero-terry/biography/>

<sup>29</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, Wednesday 1 September 1869, p.12.

<sup>30</sup> For more on Selfe's career see Mandleson, "Norman Selfe."

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

model their new school on the English example was reinforced by their decision to hire Mr. Philips, “a talented South Kensington student”, as the first instructor.<sup>32</sup> This marked a shift in the school’s approach to art education from classes for amateurs teaching taste to art for industry.

### **International Exhibition and the Technological Museum**

The International Exhibition held in Sydney in 1879 stimulated new interest in technical education. The exhibition exposed Sydney-siders to examples of skilled craftsmanship. This showcased achievements in science and art. It highlighted the importance of education and innovation. The Sydney Mechanics’ School of Arts benefited directly by engaging visiting exhibitors to give guest lectures. They also acquired a “considerable amount of apparatus” for their classes.<sup>33</sup>

After the 1879 international exhibition in Sydney, many specimens were acquired for a technological museum. However, they were housed in the Garden Palace until the Palace was destroyed by fire in 1882. The collection was destroyed with it. Efforts were made to quickly amass a new collection, which was opened to the public in 1883. The new collection was housed in a temporary storage space. When Arthur Riley was commissioned by the New Zealand government to report on art education in Australia, he described the new building that housed the collection as a “shed”. He went on, writing that it was “a disgrace to the Government of New South Wales.”<sup>34</sup> He suggested an urgent need to find more suitable accommodation, or the college might risk losing the collection to fire once again.

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<sup>32</sup> Technical Education Branch, *A Quarter Century of Technical Education in New South Wales: A monograph published on the occasion of the exhibition of student's work held at the Sydney Technical College, Easter Week 1909* (Sydney: William Applegate Gullick, Government Printer, 1909), p.84.

<sup>33</sup> Cobb, *Sweet road to progress: the history of state technical education in New South Wales to 1949* p.29.

<sup>34</sup> Riley, "Report on technical and art instruction and drawing in primary schools in the Australian colonies," p.45.

In the catalogue for the exhibition of staff and student work, held at the technological museum in 1914, the objects of the museum are laid out. Among their key objectives were:

To furnish correspondents and visitors with information on their own and Museum Specimens... [and] To collect and exhibit the various economic products of the world, and to gather, as far as possible, all information relating to them.<sup>35</sup>

The specimens were also available to illustrate lessons run within the Technical college and Public Schools. The collection was intended to be educational. Riley suggested that it filled the same "purpose in the colony which the South Kensington Museum, the Bethnal Green Museum, the Museum of Practical Geology, the Patent Office Museum and the Parkes Museum of Hygiene do in London."<sup>36</sup> When Riley visited, the museum contained over thirty thousand specimens representing a huge range of interests.<sup>37</sup> The artistic collection included ceramics, pottery and porcelain; glass; original specimens of artistic workmanship; photographs, electrotypes, plater reproductions. These objects exemplified artistic design. Art students at the college were also encouraged to study the collection to inform their work.

## **Practical Education**

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<sup>35</sup> Dept. of Public Instruction Technical Education Branch, "Catalogue: Exhibition of work of the stadd of the technological museum and students of technical colleges and trade schools of the Technical Education Branch, Dept. of Public Instruction, N. S. W. from Oct. 6th o Oct.24 1914," (Sydney: Anthony Horden and Sons, Ltd, 1914), p.10.

<sup>36</sup> Riley, "Report on technical and art insturction and drawing in primary schools in the Australian colonies," p.44.

<sup>37</sup> Riley lists these: Animal Products, Economic Entomology, vegetable products, waste products, foods, economic geology, ceramics, pottery and porcelain; glass; original specimens of Artistic workmanship; photographs, electrotypes, plater reproductions; ethnological specimens; metal lurgy, mine-engineering, specimens illustrative of the Mechanical properties of various kinds and qualities of structural materials; military and naval armaments, ordinance, firearms, and hunting-apparatus; naval architecture, agriculture, instruments of precision, and apparatus for Observation, research, experiment and illustration; sanitary conditions, appliances, and regulation; educational; chemical and pharmaceutical products; models, drawings and descriptions of patents, exhibition-catalogues, trade-journals, price-lists and descriptions of new Processes, or industries. Ibid.

Local industry grew in Sydney in the 1870s. The Sydney Mechanic's School of Arts began cooperating with professional organisations to improve the provision of practical training. In 1873 Edward Dowling proposed the establishment of a Technical, or Working Men's College. The college was given some accommodation at the back of the School of Arts. In 1878 Parliament granted £2000 to the inauguration of the college, allowing classes to commence in a new building. The college focused on offering more practical instruction to workers through evening and weekend classes.<sup>38</sup> It was an immediate success, indicating the demand for greater provision for technical instruction.<sup>39</sup> The structure and curriculum of the Technical College was influenced by Thomas Huxley's work at the Livery Companies' Technical College. Huxley had been instrumental in the establishment of technical education in England. He aimed to offer education to artisans that was practical and relevant to their work.<sup>40</sup> The art offered through the College reflected these goals. Classes focused on skills for design.

In the 1880s, new interest in the economic value of technical education emerged. The Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts had focused on extending education to improve society: their classes were intended to teach taste. The discourse surrounding the Technical, or Working Men's College was different. The curriculum was focused on Practical instruction. The new Technical College awarded certificates for students who satisfied examiners "as to [their] technical knowledge and ability in the use of tools".<sup>41</sup> Completing all certificates in a particular area enabled students to be awarded a certificate as an 'industrial expert of the Sydney Technical College'.<sup>42</sup> Student work was also sent to London to be examined by the Department of Science and Art at South Kensington from

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<sup>38</sup> Archibald Liversidge, "Report upon certain museums, for technology, science and arts and also upon scientific, professional and technical instruction, and systems of evening classes in Great Britain and on the continent of Europe.," (Sydney: Thomas Richards, Government Printer, 1880), p.xxiv.

<sup>39</sup> Catherine Freyne, "Sydney Technical College," [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/sydney\\_technical\\_college](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/sydney_technical_college). Accessed May 2014.

<sup>40</sup> Committee of the Technical College, *Report from the Committee of the Technical College at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts*, p.7.

<sup>41</sup> Board of Technical Education, Minutes 1883-6, 'Curriculum for Sydney Technical College as approved by the Board of Technical Education on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1883'.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

1885. This shows the way art classes fit within the South Kensington system and that their work held up to this English standard.

By 1880, the College was teaching a range of different drawing styles. The subjects included: Mechanical Drawing; Freehand Drawing (advanced and elementary); Drawing (ladies morning, afternoon); Design; Architectural Drawing; Practical Geometry and Perspective. Modelling was also offered for the first time and quickly became popular.<sup>43</sup> These new courses offered more practical art instruction for artisans. Many of the courses were directly applicable to work in engineering, architecture and manufacturing design. The character of art instruction at the College became more 'useful', but fine art classes in drawing and painting were still offered.

In its first years, the college was poorly funded and understaffed. The 1881 report of the committee suggests that the success of the college had only been possible through the devotion and energy of those who gave their time to run the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts.<sup>44</sup> The community ran the School with the assistance of a government subsidy. Industrialists, understanding the need for technical education, had led the way, volunteering their time and expertise. Their interest and belief in the importance of technical education saw them remain involved in technical education through the 1880s, even after the government took over. Cobb suggests that the on-going success of their work also indicates the popular interest and desire for technical training in Sydney.<sup>45</sup>

Throughout the 1880s the Board of Technical Education was plagued with frustrations. Debates raged over whether their role was to provide theoretical or practical instruction. The provision of practical instruction was made especially difficult during this period due to a lack of suitable accommodation. They did not have the space or facilities to offer many courses that required large

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<sup>43</sup> Committee of the Technical College, *Report from the Committee of the Technical College at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts*, p.7.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Cobb, *Sweet road to progress: the history of state technical education in New South Wales to 1949*, p.24.

equipment.<sup>46</sup> The place that technical education should occupy in relation to existing structures of education was not clear and was frequently the subject of debate.

In 1880, Archibald Liversidge produced the first major report for New South Wales on technical education abroad and made a series of recommendations based on his observations of overseas systems of technical education.

Liversidge's recommendations were made with his knowledge of the school's past. Aware of the struggles of the Mechanics' School of Arts through the 1860s, he did not suggest a full-time day college would work in New South Wales. He wrote:

The colony is probably not in a position or ripe for the establishment of a properly equipped Technical School or Polytechnic Institution similar to the magnificent institutions in Europe. Even on a reduced scale it would be utterly hopeless to entertain the idea at the present time. The population is far too limited; and, moreover, there are as yet no schools in the Colony which could serve as "feeders" to supply sufficiently educated students for a special institution of the kind.<sup>47</sup>

Instead he recommended the establishment of a technical college attached to existing structures of education. Liversidge also recommended the establishment of a technical museum to accompany the school, similar to the South Kensington museum in London. His report suggests that the popular interest in establishing a museum was such that he could "assume that the want was thoroughly felt, and the benefit and advantage to be derived [was] fully realised."<sup>48</sup> He hoped the opportunities offered by the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879 and Melbourne in 1880 would be taken to acquire objects for a collection. His co-

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<sup>46</sup> Mandleson, "Norman Selfe," p.123.

<sup>47</sup> Liversidge, "Report upon certain museums, for technology, science and arts and also upon scientific, professional and technical instruction, and systems of evening classes in Great Britain and on the continent of Europe," p.xiv.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xi



commissioner at the 1878 Paris exhibition, and president of the Board of the Technical College, Edward Combes, supported his views.

However, not all agreed with Liversidge that the new technical college should offer the style of instruction of European polytechnics. John Plummer had other ideas about the role of technical instruction. Plummer was a journalist and graphic designer.<sup>49</sup> He advocated the adoption of the South Kensington system, through the establishment of a dedicated school.<sup>50</sup> Plummer taught art at Fort Street Model School from 1881-90.<sup>51</sup> His classes, like Fowles before him, followed the South Kensington syllabus. But Plummer's ideas were criticised by Dixon who emphasised the need to bring only the best practices from overseas models to Australia. He suggested that importing the South Kensington model would bring the worst of the English education system to Australia.<sup>52</sup> The technical college did not institute the South Kensington syllabus directly, but only the courses seen as useful in preparing their students for a vocation.

On October 28 1880 the Trades and Labour Council came together with the Sydney Mechanic's School of Arts in a public conference. The conference was chaired by colonial secretary Henry Parkes; suggesting the importance attached to technical education at the time. The builder and politician John Sutherland and Edward Combes MP made resolutions that were passed to secure government funds for technical education in the suburbs and country districts.<sup>53</sup> This meeting marked a turning point in the provision of technical education, as the government became more active in supporting and organising technical education.

In 1881, the report of the Technical College held a proposal to re-organise in a more logical fashion. The report suggested that there should be a "closer

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<sup>49</sup> Ken Stewart, "John Plummer (1831-1914)," <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/plummer-john-8066>. Accessed May 2014.

<sup>50</sup> Cobb, *Sweet road to progress: the history of state technical education in New South Wales to 1949*, p.30.

<sup>51</sup> Stewart, "John Plummer (1831-1914)".

<sup>52</sup> Mandleson, "Norman Selfe," p.116.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p.117-20.

connection [between] the educational institutions of the Colony.”<sup>54</sup> It was hoped this would assist pupil teachers at both metropolitan and country schools gain access to useful materials and training. The proposal also suggested that better coordination of educational institutions in the colony would lead to greater efficiency and prevent current overlap of teaching. The roles and responsibilities of the different institutions needed to be clarified. The committee stated that the “higher branches of art, such as painting in oil and water colours, which should be given in connection with the Art Gallery.”<sup>55</sup> They suggested that other more ‘useful’ forms of art instruction could remain within the Technical College. They also suggest that better communication between the institutions might enable the elementary schools to teach children the basic skills that would prepare them for higher learning.

Art remained a significant part of the Technical College curriculum. The 1881 report quoted the success of instruction “evidenced by the drawing classes winning the School of Design Certificate, equal to a gold medal, for the best collection of drawings at the Melbourne International Exhibition, and by two of its late students obtaining honours at the Edinburgh University.”<sup>56</sup> This external validation suggests that the instruction offered by the College stood up to a high standard.

There was a growing demand for art classes in both high and useful art. An article published in the *Illustrated Sydney News* in 1882 made this clear:

There is a closer connection than many suppose between pictorial and industrial art. The demand for technical instruction, although less glamorous, is not the less determined, and, when Parliament meets, the Government will have to declare their intention in the matter, which cannot be shelved any longer. If they refuse to aid in furnishing facilities for art instruction of a superior character, they will find themselves in danger of

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<sup>54</sup> Committee of the Technical College, *Report from the Committee of the Technical College at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts*.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p.15.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p.18.

being called to account by the more intelligent members of the community.<sup>57</sup>

The article went on to suggest that a course in high art would be very beneficial. It concluded that “[it] may not be the destiny of Australia to rival the art glories of ancient Greece or Rome; but there is no reason why she should not in course of time attain an honourable position in the world of modern art.”<sup>58</sup> Both high art and design were considered to be important areas of study, beneficial to Australian society.

## **Lucien Henry**

In 1881 Lucien Henry, a French-born artist, began teaching a class in modelling at the Working Men’s College. His class grew quickly from nine to fifty students. In 1882, Henry offered a series of classes that would allow students to study from nature, examining foliage and animals. The class was started “for the purpose of affording an opportunity to young Australian artists to bring into practical use their knowledge of drawing and should be attended by young men in pottery and architectural works.”<sup>59</sup> In 1884 Henry was made the first instructor for the Department of Art at the recently established Sydney Technical College. Like his classes at the Mechanics’ School of Art, he quickly amassed a following. By 1889 his course was extended to include five years part-time study.<sup>60</sup>

Henry’s artistic training differed significantly from the other art masters who had previously taught art at the Technical College. He was educated under Jean-

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<sup>57</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 10 June 1882, p.2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Technical or Working Men’s College, Sydney, Calendar, 1882*, quoted in Ann Stephens, *Work of Lucien Henry - Paris - Noumea - Sydney* (Powerhouse Museum: Sydney Powerhouse Publishing, 2001), p.11.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

Léon Gérôme at the École des Beaux Arts, Paris.<sup>61</sup> The school was known for its rigorous training that combined the figural studies of the Academy with the ornamental design work needed for artisans. Students' training included exercises in copying antique sculptures; work that was widely acknowledged to be the great pinnacle of artistic achievement. Henry brought this emphasis on studying from the antique to his classes in Sydney. He imported a series of plaster casts taken from classical sculptures for students to copy. These casts were eventually reproduced by the College and supplied at cost price to schools associated with the Department of Public Instruction.<sup>62</sup> Henry also drew a series of examples from antique casts to hang on the walls of his room to offer guidance to his students.<sup>63</sup>

Henry's instruction cannot have been entirely different to the South Kensington course, as he too believed in the importance of building a good foundation in geometry and perspective. He also believed in the importance of art for industry. His students were also assessed through examinations administered by South Kensington. This ensured a certain standard, until in 1889, "as a measure of confidence, the board no longer required students to sit the British examinations."<sup>64</sup> Henry continued teaching elements of the South Kensington course combined with his own syllabus of instruction that expressed his artistic philosophy. Henry was remembered for his emphasis on drawing from the round "as opposed to drawing from the flat, which has them many supporters."<sup>65</sup> This was one instance of his departure from typical South Kensington instruction that focused on copying from the flat.

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<sup>61</sup> A communard, he was sentenced to death for political offences in the 1871 Paris commune but was exiled to New Caledonia, and later moved to Sydney. Further biographical information can be found in Stephens, *Work of Lucien Henry - Paris - Noumea - Sydney*.

<sup>62</sup> Technical Education Branch, *A Quarter Century of Technical Education in New South Wales: A monograph published on the occasion of the exhibition of student's work held at the Sydney Technical College, Easter Week 1909*, p.84.

<sup>63</sup> Stephens, *Work of Lucien Henry - Paris - Noumea - Sydney*, p.65.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Technical Education Branch, *A Quarter Century of Technical Education in New South Wales: A monograph published on the occasion of the exhibition of student's work held at the Sydney Technical College, Easter Week 1909*, p.84.

Art became an increasingly important department in the college. The numbers of students attending the classes was testament to their success. Art classes were the most popular course at the College with an average of 140 students taking classes in freehand drawing.<sup>66</sup> This compared with less than one hundred students in other courses.<sup>67</sup> The 1888 report also quoted Philip Magnus on the value of art instruction. Magnus had been active in establishing technical education in England. He made it clear he believed that *all* children should be receiving art instruction, regardless of their 'aptitude' for the subject. He suggested that by teaching all children to draw, those with passion and skill would make themselves known and be encouraged to undertake further training for industrial design.<sup>68</sup> Magnus also endorsed Henry's preference for observational drawing from three-dimensional objects:

... in order that drawing may yield its full value as a means of mental training, the pupil must be brought face to face with natural objects. It helps him little or nothing that he can copy copies. He must depict things. He must look at all things till he knows them, and must acquire the ability to represent them on paper.<sup>69</sup>

He linked this type of observational drawing to the observational skills required for scientific investigation. In highlighting the importance of observational drawing, Magnus reinforced the value of art instruction for its vocational benefit. This statement of support for drawing from nature was strengthened with a quotation from Sir Frederic Leighton, President of the Royal Academy: "I should strongly advise work almost exclusively from the round, and not from drawings and prints."<sup>70</sup> Norman Selfe had designed "combination seats and stands in wrought iron" for students to work from specimens in free-hand drawing and modelling.<sup>71</sup> At a time when the Department of Public Instruction relied on

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<sup>66</sup> Board of Technical Education of New South Wales, *Report of the Board of Technical Education of New South Wales for 1888* (Sydney: Pepperday and Vider, 1889), p.9.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Magnus quoted in *ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>70</sup> Leighton quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

copybooks for art instruction, the technical college instead supported observational drawing from three-dimensional objects.

The 1888 report also provides a breakdown of the organisation of the Department of Art. Three key areas of study included: practical plane geometry, perspective and freehand drawing. The full course took five years to complete and included study in the following styles:

- 1, Egyptian and Assyrian
- 2, Greek-Pomeranian
- 3, Etruscan-Roman
- 4, Byzantine, Romanesque
- 5, Moorish and Arabian
- 6, Gothic
- 7, Renaissance – Italian
- 8, French, English
- 9, Persian and Indian
- 10, Chinese and Japanese
- 11, Modern
- 12, Australian subjects applied to the decorative arts.<sup>72</sup>

Apart from the final addition of Australian subjects, these styles read like the contents page to Owen Jones' *Grammar of Ornament*.<sup>73</sup> Stacey Sloboda has argued that Jones' "bible" of ornament "synthesised the industrial and imperial ethos of the period through universal principles of design."<sup>74</sup> He codified ornamental design in a way that could be easily understood. They were reproduced across the British Empire. This is exemplified by the Technical College curriculum.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Owen Jones, *The grammar of ornament: illustrated by examples from various styles of ornament* (London: Day and Son, 1856).

<sup>74</sup> Stacey Sloboda, "The grammar of ornament: cosmopolitanism and reform in British design," *Journal of Design History* 21, no. 3 (2008), p.223.

Beyond the classes, the Technical College offered additional opportunities for art education through the regular exhibition of student work. Student work was also frequently drawn on to exemplify lectures and lessons. The Technical College also offered art instruction to pupil-teachers. The 1888 report includes a note that special classes were being held for teachers from both metropolitan and country districts to learn free-hand, geometrical and perspective drawing.<sup>75</sup> By extending instruction to teachers-in-training, the Technical College extended its influence. Their methods of art instruction would be reproduced in classrooms all over the colony.

## **Fees**

Membership fees for the Sydney Mechanic's School of Arts had been substantial in its early days. Riley suggests that until 1851 when workers' wages improved in Sydney, the fees would have been out of reach to many workers.<sup>76</sup> Cobb suggests that the college came to serve the learning needs of a diverse range of people. Their professions of students attending the college included "clerks, lawyers, shopkeepers, accountants, engineers, teachers, tradespeople and unskilled workers were all there, often in classes quite unrelated to their work."<sup>77</sup> Their interest in learning was not always driven by a need to acquire skills for work.

High fees remained an issue through the beginning of the 1880s. It was a delicate juggling act trying to prevent course fees from being prohibitively expensive while also keeping the school in the black.<sup>78</sup> Often, course fees did not cover costs. In 1881, the Committee report noted, than in an effort to make classes accessible to all, fees were reduced to half for those unable to pay. However, "a large number of people well able to pay the full fee took advantage of this

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<sup>75</sup> Committee of the Technical College, *Report from the Committee of the Technical College at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts*, p.18.

<sup>76</sup> Riley, "The movement's contribution to the visual arts: three New South Wales case studies," p.211.

<sup>77</sup> Cobb, *Sweet road to progress: the history of state technical education in New South Wales to 1949* p.27.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, pp.34-36.

concession, and thereby entailed a great strain on the limited resources of the College...".<sup>79</sup> Students were taking advantage of efforts to make education accessible to all.

The College relied on government subsidies with increasing need. In 1883 the growing recognition of the importance of technical education saw the passing of The Technical Education Act which transferred financial control of the College to the Government and the establishment of a Board to administer the college.<sup>80</sup> The activities of the College expanded so that by 1886, workshops offered more practical courses of study. This enriched the theoretical program that had long been offered by the School of Arts. It was also in line with the developments occurring abroad and responded to a growing interest in vocational training.<sup>81</sup>

The relationship between the Board of the Technical College and the Department of Public Instruction was strained. In 1889, the responsibility of the Technical College was transferred to the Technical Education Branch of the Department of Public Instruction.<sup>82</sup> This decision was criticised by the acting president of the Board, Norman Selfe, who believed that technical education should be overseen by men with practical knowledge and experience, rather than those in government office.<sup>83</sup>

By 1889, the Board of Technical Education was under pressure to find suitable accommodation for the College. The Board had purchased a 1.5 hectre site in Ultimo in 1883. However, the Minister Joseph Carruthers believed the location was too remote to be attractive to students. After some months of searching in vein, Norman Selfe eventually took Carruthers to the site:

It was ... arranged that in conjunction with Mr James Barnet and the writer,

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<sup>79</sup> Committee of the Technical College, *Report from the Committee of the Technical College at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts*, p.8.

<sup>80</sup> Cobb, *Sweet road to progress: the history of state technical education in New South Wales to 1949*, pp.24-40.

<sup>81</sup> Mandleson, "Norman Selfe," p.121.

<sup>82</sup> Freyne, "Sydney Technical College".

<sup>83</sup> Mandleson, "Norman Selfe," p.117.



that the Minister would visit the Ultimo site. The morning selected turned out fine and clear and the writer, acting as pilot, first took his companions to the top of Messrs Hordern's tall building at the Haymarket for a preliminary outlook, whence the suburbs of Pyrmont, Balmain, Glebe, Redfern, etc, and even Leichhardt and Petersham appeared quite close at hand, while Ultimo House apparently lay right under foot. Mr Carruthers, like many others, had not realised that the Ultimo site was so close to the Haymarket and George Street, and when he had walked to the spot, he admitted at once its central character and grand superiority to all the other sites that had been proposed for a College.<sup>84</sup>

The site was purchased and classes began amongst building work in 1891. The plans also included space for the Technological Museum and two high schools. For the first time, the Technical College had a permanent home.<sup>85</sup>

In 1892 the branch introduced 4 new categories of awards. These marked an attempt to formalize and standardize the courses offered by the college. The four new awards included: Certificates (on completing a full class with exams), Diplomas (completed classes offered by a department – several different classes), Associateships (who passed a course with honours – allowed to attend lectures for free, and use labs at reduced fees) and Fellowships (for associates with 6 years practical experience).

### **Technical Education in the twentieth century**

At his address at the 1901 conference of teachers, Francis Anderson, lecturer of philosophy at the University of Sydney, criticised several aspects of the education system in New South Wales. Some of his criticisms have previously been discussed in relation to art in schools. He also expressed the desire to see a more serious role of technical education in Sydney. He claimed that the Department of Public Instruction remained too focused on primary schooling. Anderson's

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<sup>84</sup> Norman Selfe quote in Freyne, "Sydney Technical College".

<sup>85</sup> Norm Neill, *Technically and further: Sydney Technical College 1891 - 1991* (Sydney: Southwood Press, 1991), p.7.

criticisms fostered new interest in education reform in both schools and technical colleges.

The Knibbs and Turner report that was commissioned to survey and assess systems of education across America and Europe included a volume on technical education. The report, published in 1905, included a series of recommendations. As stated previously, their key message being that there was a need for a better unified system of education that included a logical progression through the various stages of schooling, where one level of schooling should prepare students for later, more advanced study.<sup>86</sup> The commissioners also suggested that technical education should hold a higher status, and become a 'university' for practical instruction. Few of these recommendations were implemented with any haste. Reforms for technical education did not arrive until 1913.

In the first years of the twentieth century, the Technical Education Branch focused on providing technical instruction for those wishing to pursue a trade. Under the fourth Superintendent, D. J. Cooper, restrictions and entry requirements were imposed for the first time. He wanted to weed out 'dilettante' students who were attending classes for pleasure, without any intention of using their new skills for their careers.<sup>87</sup> The new restrictions required students to be over the age of 14 and under 40. Many courses also required prospective students to meet prerequisite requirements.

Art continued to flourish at the technical college in the twentieth century. The report of 1909 stated that "classes [in the Art Department] are well attended, the teaching staff is zealous, and there is a fine *esprit de corps* among the students."<sup>88</sup> The aims of the Art Department were:

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<sup>86</sup> Knibbs and Turner, *Report of the Commissioners, mainly on primary, secondary and technical education: containing the summarized reports, recommendations, and extended reports of the Commissioners.*

<sup>87</sup> NSW Department of Technical and Further Education, *Spanners, easels & microchips: a history of technical and further education in New South Wales 1883-1983* (Sydney: NSW Council of Technical and Further Education, 1983).

<sup>88</sup> Technical Education Branch, *A Quarter Century of Technical Education in New South Wales: A monograph published on the occasion of the exhibition of student's work held at the Sydney Technical College, Easter Week 1909*, p.99.

... to develop in the students under their care self-reliance, individuality and originality; to assist those who desire to make a knowledge of Art a part of their general education; also, to give facilities for the training of persons who intend to adopt Art as a profession, or to include it in their general qualifications, as Teachers in public, elementary, or other schools.<sup>89</sup>

The broad scope of their educational goals were clear. Unlike many other departments, The Department of Art offered a general education in art that would assist students across a range of vocations, not just those wishing to take on their studies in art professionally.

In order to provide for a range of different students and their varied interests, the Art Department widened its offerings significantly. Classes in geometrical, freehand, perspective and model drawing continued, catering to those who wished to develop their skills in design and the useful arts. However, a number of new courses were introduced, offering students the artistic instruction one might expect at an Academic school in Europe. Courses of drawing, painting and modelling from the antique figure were offered alongside life study, landscape painting and drawing from nature, and still life painting.<sup>90</sup>

Just like students of the Academy schools, pupils at the Technical College could focus their studies on figurative art. Students enrolled in this course would be put through their paces in their first year: drawing and shading from the head, bust, feet, hands and other details from antique examples. This course was often accompanied by studies from life. Life drawing was described as “an important part of the course of Art at the College and may easily be classed as the most difficult of all Art studies; its importance is beyond question.”<sup>91</sup> The classes were offered to both men and women, but were separated and taught at different

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p.143.

<sup>90</sup> Technical Education Branch, *A Quarter Century of Technical Education in New South Wales: A monograph published on the occasion of the exhibition of student's work held at the Sydney Technical College, Easter Week 1909*, p.143.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

times. Day classes were scheduled for ladies, under the instruction of Miss R. Blakemore, three times per week. Men's classes were taught in the evening after work hours. There were no official restrictions on women taking night classes. However, most did not venture out at night alone for the sake of propriety.

Lessons in still life painting introduced students to colour. Students were expected to first complete the course of model drawing, before moving on to still life painting. The 1909 report claimed that "much depends upon the way in which he is handled whilst going through this course whether his future painting will be intelligently performed or not."<sup>92</sup> The course taught important foundational knowledge of colour and technique in both oil and watercolour. Similarly, the course of Flower Painting introduced students to oil painting and watercolours, working directly from nature. Of Flower Painting, the report states, "this is a popular class, attended mostly by young ladies."<sup>93</sup> The China Painting course also attracted predominantly female students. It was incredibly popular with over one hundred students enrolled in 1908. The popularity of these courses may be attributed to women's interest in affordable accomplishments training. But these courses also equipped students with skills that could be used commercially. Both flower paintings and painted china were popular gifts.

The class in china painting was rigorous. It introduced students to working with colour and how they should be mixed for painting on china. It then progressed to a range of further instruction:

Tracing sketching in outline, the use of the rigger; simple studies in monochrome, the treatment of backgrounds, simple geometric designs for decorative purposes, &c. In the second year, instruction is given in the use of golds and bronzes, their preparation before being used on the water; raised gold birds and flowers, coloured and chased; painting on coloured

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<sup>92</sup> Technical Education Branch, *A Quarter Century of Technical Education in New South Wales: A monograph published on the occasion of the exhibition of student's work held at the Sydney Technical College, Easter Week 1909.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

grounds with enamels and traced with gold. In all cases where possible, students work directly from nature, using the Australian flowers, which lend themselves so well to china painting.<sup>94</sup>

Lucien Henry first introduced classes in Australian flower painting at the end of the nineteenth-century. Using native flora forced students to draw from nature, as there were no examples of historic ornamental designs. Henry also believed that using Australian native flora as the basis for design and ornament was the way to develop a distinctly Australian aesthetic. This 'Australian aesthetic' was exemplified in the decorative scheme of the main technical college building on Mary Ann Street. It echoed the sort of ornamental figures Henry taught, based on Australian flora and fauna. The building was built in the Romanesque revival style, ornamented with stonework that featured Australian flora and fauna.<sup>95</sup>

Student work included in the 1909 monograph published to celebrate a quarter century of technical education provides further insight into the character of the art department at this time.<sup>96</sup> The first example is a figure drawn from life, the very highest achievement in an artist's training (figure 4). In placing this image first, the department emphasised the seriousness with which they offer art instruction. All of the remaining images are still-life and landscape paintings. These subjects were popular in the accomplishments curriculum and popular in the local art market.

## **1912-1915**

In 1912, two significant royal commissions were held in New South Wales related to technical education. One enquired into juvenile labour and the other into apprenticeships. Serious questions were asked about what sort of courses

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p.60.

<sup>95</sup> Neill, *Technically and further: Sydney Technical College 1891 - 1991*, p.15.

<sup>96</sup> Technical Education Branch, *A Quarter Century of Technical Education in New South Wales: A monograph published on the occasion of the exhibition of student's work held at the Sydney Technical College, Easter Week 1909*, pp.143-54.

should be taught by the Technical College, and to whom they should be offered.<sup>97</sup> Questions were asked about the age of children beginning technical training and about what sort of training should be offered. Efforts were made to consult leading employers in industry in order to make courses more relevant.<sup>98</sup>

The reports from these conferences recommended that apprenticeships be extended with supplementary trade classes and full time day courses (like those taught at European Polytechnics) be abandoned. Superintendent Nangle took up these recommendations. Diploma courses were upgraded and re-designed. There was new emphasis placed on practical experience for professional recognition.<sup>99</sup> Students must be working in a field related to their course of study and there was an expectation that a certain amount of practical experience should be gathered in the workplace. However, in reality, many smaller businesses could not offer their apprentices the range of experience the course demanded. Many of these new requirements were not implemented for students in the art department.<sup>100</sup>

The Technical College was faced with a problem: with their limited budget, they could restrict their course offerings to a limited number of courses catering only to those students who most needed instruction for their chosen professions. To extend courses and open to a larger number of students, the college needed a larger budget. From 1913, under Superintendent Nangle, the college followed the smaller and more efficient option.<sup>101</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown the ways that technical education filled a gap in Sydney's landscape of art education. The absence of an art school connected with the art

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<sup>97</sup> Neill, *Technically and further: Sydney Technical College 1891 - 1991*, p.25.

<sup>98</sup> Technical Education Branch, "Catalogue: Exhibition of work of the stadd of the technological museum and students of technical colleges and trade schools of the Technical Education Branch, Dept. of Public Instruction, N. S. W. from Oct. 6th o Oct.24 1914."

<sup>99</sup> NSW Department of Technical and Further Education, *Spanners, easels & microchips: a history of technical and further education in New South Wales 1883-1983*.

<sup>100</sup> Neill, *Technically and further: Sydney Technical College 1891 - 1991*, p.26.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p.16-17.

gallery in Sydney saw the Technical College fill in, offering a range of classes in both high and useful art. These classes were taught within the context of technical education and teachers remained aware of the practical application of their classes. The art classes offered through the Technical College were open to a range of students: interested amateurs and those training for a trade.

Art education offered through the technical school was motivated by both the desire to teach taste, and developing students' design skills to improve industry. Through lectures on art appreciation to classes in practical geometry, we see the way these different aims for art instruction came together in Sydney's technical education. Students who would go on to work in manufacturing could develop their skills in design and others could develop their knowledge of art to refine their taste, producing more discerning consumers and a greater demand for high quality design.

Towards the turn of the twentieth century we see greater interest in developing art classes that would help foster the creation of a uniquely Australian art. Observational studies from Australian flora were seen to inspire a new style of design that could convey the character of Australia. In the early twentieth century, continued concerns about the structure of technical education, and issues of funding meant that the art offered by the Technical College refocused on art instruction for more practical training and an emphasis on art for industry re-emerged.

Technical education has not previously been considered as a site for art education in Sydney. This chapter has shown that, not only that it filled a gap in Sydney's art education, but that the art instruction offered through the technical college was linked with the instruction offered through the school curriculum. There were human links, as some of the same individuals were involved in art education across these institutional boundaries. There were physical and visual links, as many of the same pedagogical tools were employed (discussed further in *Chapter Seven*). But more importantly, there were philosophical links, as the

art offered by both schools and some courses offered through the technical college were motivated by the desire to improve art for industry.



## CHAPTER THREE: EXHIBITIONS AND THE ART GALLERY

Exhibitions, galleries and museums are not frequently included in histories of art education. They do not fit within what we might typically consider 'education': the classroom, or teacher-led lesson. Yet, exhibitions, galleries and museums held a significant position in nineteenth-century discourse on education.

Kathleen Fennessey has examined the place of 'The Institution' in Melbourne, showing the way government-funded museums occupied an important place in the Australian educational landscape.<sup>1</sup> British histories of art education have examined the impact of exhibitions such as London's Great Exhibition of 1851 and the way it stimulated interest in the need for art education.<sup>2</sup> However, the educational opportunity exhibitions and the art gallery offered Sydney-siders has not yet been the subject of scholarly attention.

Tony Bennet has theorised that museums in the late nineteenth century sought to create "a new form of public didacticism".<sup>3</sup> Through educational displays, museums became machines for maintaining social order as they taught working class audiences how to understand the world around them.<sup>4</sup> Both Fennessey and Bennett have established the nineteenth century museum as a space for education. In this chapter I seek to examine how this education was delivered through exhibitions of art mounted in Sydney between 1850 and 1915.

Sydney had no public art gallery until 1881, several decades after Adelaide and Melbourne. The absence of a public institution of this kind meant that the Sydney public relied on temporary exhibitions to gain access to art. This chapter includes three case studies that allow us to explore the way exhibitions contributed to Sydney's landscape of art education. The exhibitions are drawn from throughout the period 1850-1915 and represent a range of different displays. Although each display was different, they have several features in

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<sup>1</sup> Fennessey, *A people learning: colonial Victorians and their public museums 1860 - 1880*.

<sup>2</sup> Macdonald, *The history and philosophy of art education*.

<sup>3</sup> Tony Bennett, "Museums, legibility and the social order" in Sharon Macdonald (ed), *Politics of Display* (Psychology Press, 1998), p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, pp 25-35.

common. First, they were all incredibly popular, making them some of the best-attended sites of art education in Sydney in this era. Second, despite showing a range of different works of art, the discourse surrounding these exhibitions had a common theme. Commentary focused on teaching 'taste' and promoted the belief that teaching taste through the display of art could have an uplifting impact on audiences.

These case studies represent exhibitions that went on display throughout the period examined. They include: the cast collection was made available to the public by W. G. Nicholl in the 1850s and considered Sydney's first public collection of high art; the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879 which also attracted enormous crowds, with particular interest in the art gallery; and finally, the establishment of the National Art Gallery of New South Wales in the 1880s and the exhibition of William Holman Hunt's *Light of The World* there in 1906 to unprecedented audiences.

Some of these exhibitions have already been the focus of scholarly research. Jeremy Maas has written on Hunt's *Light of the World*,<sup>5</sup> including a chapter on the painting's tour of the colonies: Canada, New Zealand, and then Australia. He highlights the works popularity in Australia and reflects on the reasons for its success.<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Troughton examined the paintings tour in New Zealand, highlighting the protestant religiosity its popularity revealed.<sup>7</sup> In their dissertations, both Cecilia Alfonso and Noel Hutchinson trace the history of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, offering insight into the motivations behind the establishment of the institution.<sup>8</sup> An edited collection of essays on Sydney's International Exhibition includes an essay by Linda Young examining the

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<sup>5</sup> Or more precisely, the three images Hunt made of the same subject by the same title.

<sup>6</sup> Jeremy Maas, *Holman hunt and the light of the world* (London and Berkeley: Scolar Press, James Price Publishing Ltd., 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Troughton, "Light at the end of the world: Holman Hunt's the light of the world in New Zealand, 1906" *Australian Historical Studies*, 37, 128, 2006, pp.55-71.

<sup>8</sup> Cecilia Alfonso, "The Art Gallery of New South Wales: changing shape, changing functions 1871 - 1987" (Honours thesis, University of New South Wales, 1988); Noel Hutchinson, "The establishment of the Art Gallery of New South Wales: politics and taste" (Honours thesis, The University of Sydney, 1968) held in the Art Gallery of New South Wales Archives.

broader educational benefits of the exhibitions as a whole.<sup>9</sup> Yet none focus on the contribution of these exhibitions to art education. This chapter brings together this scholarship to consider the ways these spaces offered a wide-range of Sydney's population access to art education. Additional archival research has been undertaken to gather insight into the educational interests in mounting these displays, and to better understand whether audiences engaged with them as educational events.

This chapter seeks the answers to three key questions: Were those who mounted the exhibitions motivated by a desire to educate their audiences? How was their educational impact discussed in the press? And where we can ascertain the audience reaction to the shows, did they consider them educational experiences?

## **Background**

There was significant public interest in art exhibitions in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century. For working people, they offered access to high quality art that had not existed before.<sup>10</sup> In centuries past, collections were held privately and the vast majority of the population had no access.<sup>11</sup> In England, in the early part of the nineteenth-century, advocates for the establishment of public galleries suggested they might offer a civilized space for workers' recreation. Mervyn Romans recounts the belief by many, "that the diffusion of knowledge among the lower classes would promote temperance."<sup>12</sup> Siegel quotes one politician who went so far as to suggest that a public museum would offer a space for the working classes to spend their leisure hours, "... instead of resorting to alehouses, as at present".<sup>13</sup> Museums were seen to be transformative spaces.

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<sup>9</sup> Young in Peter Proudfoot, Roslyn Maguire, and Robert Freestone, eds., *Colonial city, global city: Sydney's international exhibition 1879* (Darlinghurst, NSW: Crossing Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Tony Bennett, *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1995), Chapter One.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Romans, *Histories of art and design education: collected essays*, p.47.

<sup>13</sup> Jonah Siegel, ed. *The emergence of the modern museum: an anthology of nineteenth-century sources* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.61.

The British Museum was the first government-supported collection opened to the public in 1759. However, in its early years it was made inaccessible to many by a complicated system of booking entrance times, short opening hours, and limited tickets.<sup>14</sup> Robert Anderson highlights some of the arguments that were made against the government support of a museum: the principle one being that it was unfair to take the taxes from the whole population that was only utilised by a select few.<sup>15</sup> From the middle of the century, after the overwhelming success of The Great Exhibition in 1851, interest in establishing accessible public collections won popular support.

The recommendations of the 1835-6 Select Committee in England placed a special focus on the importance of art education, including the establishment of public museums. Their report stated that "... to us, a peculiarly manufacturing nation, the connexion between arts and manufactures is most important...".<sup>16</sup> By establishing public collections of art and design, it was hoped that working class people might improve their standards of taste, creating increased demand for quality design. The Select Committee also hoped that opening a museum with the finest art treasures from around the world and throughout history would allow workers access to "the most refined species of pleasure" and use this as inspiration for their own designs.<sup>17</sup> They argued that the public museums could improve the English manufacturing industry.

After the success of the Great Exhibition of 1851, a museum was established within the South Kensington Department of Science and Art. The museum was part of Henry Coles' vision, as he believed "we cannot expect grown-up men and women to go to schools to learn the elements of form and colour.... But the museum and lectures may become their teachers."<sup>18</sup> Much of the museum's collection was acquired from the Great Exhibition. They put on permanent

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<sup>14</sup> Anne Goldgar, "The British Museum and the virtual representation of culture in the eighteenth century," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 32, no. 2 (2000), pp 843-871.

<sup>15</sup> Robert W. Anderson, "British Museum, London: institutionalizing enlightenment," in *The first modern museums of art: the birth of an institution in 18-and early-19th-century Europe*, ed. Carol Paul (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Colquhoun quoted in Bennett, *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics*, p.19.

<sup>17</sup> Siegel, *The emergence of the modern museum: an anthology of nineteenth-century sources*, p.85..

<sup>18</sup> Anthony Burton, *Visions and Accident* London: V&A Publishing

display those objects that were considered excellent examples of ornamental design. In 1857, the museum was reopened as the South Kensington museum, its establishment funded by the profits from the Great Exhibition.

In regional parts of England, Wade suggests that the public gallery was also imagined as a space for the working classes to enjoy their leisure hours in a productive manner, through self-education and self-improvement.<sup>19</sup> In an article about an exhibition held at the Leeds School of Design, *The Leeds Mercury* explained that teaching taste, through viewing art could have a significant impact on visitors:

... Acquaintance with beauty of form; and having constantly before his eyes specimens of art by the great masters, his mind will gradually become coloured with their feeling – he will learn to distinguish the true from the false, and his gradually and naturally refining taste will stamp itself upon the labour of his hands.”<sup>20</sup>

The idea that museums could be instrumental in teaching taste, and through this, improve the quality of design for manufactures, was an oft-repeated argument.

### **Teaching Taste in Australia**

The notion that exhibitions of art could have an uplifting effect on society carried through to the Australian discourse. In 1848, in his speech to open the first exhibition of art held at the Mechanics' Institute in Tasmania, R. J. West stated that after viewing the exhibition, “the youthful visitor... will feel a new interest in his race, and a fuller consciousness of its mental dignity”.<sup>21</sup> West's view, that visiting exhibitions and viewing art could stimulate curiosity and provide an opportunity for self-education, was not uncommon.

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<sup>19</sup> Wade, "Pedagogic objects: The formation, circulation and exhibition of teaching collections for art and design education in Leeds, 1837-1857", pp.14-43.

<sup>20</sup> 'Leeds School of Design', *Leeds Mercury*, 12 December 1846, p. 8. Quoted in *ibid*, p.15.

<sup>21</sup> West, R. J., *The Fine Arts: A Lecture, delivered at the request of the Launceston Mechanic's Institute*. (Launceston: The "Examiner Office" Brisbane St. 1848).

In Sydney, a newspaper report on the exhibition at The Sydney Mechanics' School of Art in 1857, restated the importance of art exhibitions for society "... exhibitions have a powerful influence in refining the taste, educating the mind, and even in improving the morals of the community...".<sup>22</sup> The importance of public collections for art education was not limited to the city. In the regional centre of Ballarat in Victoria, the Bishop insisted, "that an art gallery was one of the most important and elevating exhibitions that could be introduced into any civilised community."<sup>23</sup> Others suggested that access to collections of art and design were of even greater importance in regional areas than in the city, as they made art immediately accessible to those working in regional industry.<sup>24</sup>

In her work on *The Institution in Melbourne* Fennessey asks us to consider the Gallery as an educational institution.<sup>25</sup> Previous scholarship had examined the Gallery as a display of cultural values, national identity, or as a method of social control,<sup>26</sup> but few have examined the contribution museums have made to public art education. Fennessey explores the ways in which public institutions in late nineteenth-century Melbourne offered art education to adults and filled a gap in the educational framework of the period. The Gallery was a space where any interested person could learn about art, whether this was to develop their vocational skills or simply pursue a personal interest. When we consider the great number of people visiting the Gallery and other exhibitions in Sydney, these may be the chief sources of art education.

The National Gallery of Victoria was the first gallery established in Australia in 1861 and its associated art school was founded in 1867. In Sydney, the Academy of Arts was established in 1871, with the intention of establishing a gallery, but no permanent exhibition space until 1879. Unlike Melbourne, Sydney had no permanent accessible art collection for much of the nineteenth-century. No

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<sup>22</sup> *Empire*, Jan 12, 1857, p.5.

<sup>23</sup> The Bishop of Ballarat, 1885 quoted in Jordan, "The South Kensington Empire and the idea of the regional art gallery in nineteenth-century Victoria," p.36.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p.36.

<sup>25</sup> Fennessey, *A people learning: colonial Victorians and their public museums 1860 - 1880*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*.

associated art school was ever established. However, throughout the nineteenth-century, a number of exhibitions were held in Sydney, offering sporadic, but important opportunities for the community to view and study art. This chapter examines a number of these exhibitions, to consider the way they sat within Sydney's landscape of art education.

### **Nicholl's Casts: 1851-53**

In 1850, William Grinsell Nicholl arrived in the colony of New South Wales.<sup>27</sup> He brought with him 100 casts of great works of European sculpture. Shortly after his arrival he opened a gallery dedicated entirely to these plaster sculptures; the first collection of its kind in the colony.<sup>28</sup>

In England Nicholl had not had a particularly successful career as a sculptor. Emma Hardy's short biography recounts a series of unfavourable reviews of his work in the Royal Academy show of 1822 and again in 1831.<sup>29</sup> His submission of a model to the Royal Academy exhibition of 1836 (a colossal statue of Satan, inspired by a passage from Milton's *Paradise Lost*), was criticized by the Lutheran minister Passavant: "The tame and feeble proportions of the model are little calculated to express the terrors of his Satanic Majesty".<sup>30</sup> His submission in 1844 to a Westminster Hall exhibition, a model for a statue of Captain Cook, was also criticised. The *Literary Gazette* described it as "a tame, crabbed looking person".<sup>31</sup> He also failed in his attempts to win commissions for the new Palace of Westminster and for the national monument to Admiral Nelson.

Nicholl was better known for his architectural sculpture. The decorative carvings he made for the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge in 1837, under the direction of architect George Basevi were among his best known works. In 1845 he

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<sup>27</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 December 1850, p.2.

<sup>28</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1851, p.3.

<sup>29</sup> Emma Hardy, "A biographical dictionary of sculptors in Britain, 1660-185: William Grinsell Nicholl," <http://217.204.55.158/henrymoore/sculptor/browserecord.php?-action=browse&-recid=1950>. Accessed June 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Passavant quoted by *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

undertook an extensive decorative programme of sculptural decoration for Cockerell's Taylorian Institute and University Galleries (now the Ashmolean Museum) at Oxford.<sup>32</sup> His best-known work, however, was for the pediment of St George's Hall, Liverpool. Hardy describes the work as "an extraordinarily elaborate work consisting of 18 figures, a leopard and four horses, most of them carved fully in the round".<sup>33</sup> The figure of Britannia stood at its centre, with personifications of the four quarters of the globe to her left and images representing agriculture, industry, the sciences and domesticity on her right.<sup>34</sup> Despite his success in decorative schemes such as this, Nicholl continued efforts and failures to obtain more significant commissions may have motivated him to try his luck in the colony.

Nicholl's Sydney sojourn has not been the subject of scholarly attention. It was not recorded in Hardy's biography. He arrived with his family in 1851, and lived in the colony for four years. His arrival was celebrated in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

Most heartily do we congratulate the public, but more especially the artists of New South Wales, on such an acquisition, and we feel not a little proud that a sculptor of high celebrity in England should have thought it worth while to venture on the hazardous experiment of transferring his talents from a field where they had been called into action on so large and prominent a scale, to one so untried and offering so little promise as that of our colony.<sup>35</sup>

In Australia, Nicholl was transformed into a "celebrity", offering him a fresh start for his career as a sculptor.

It was not just Nicholl arrival that received acclaim in the press, but his collection of plaster casts that he planned to install as a museum in Dowling st,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Hardy, "A biographical dictionary of sculptors in Britain, 1660-185: William Grinsell Nicholls".

<sup>35</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1851, p.3.



Woolloomooloo.<sup>36</sup> Reports promote it as a great opportunity to advance “public taste” and foster the fine arts.<sup>37</sup> Nicholl’s cast collection appears to have been the first acquisition of such a display. The report gushes: “We confess, however, that our most sanguine hopes did not extend to the anticipation that, for many years to come, this colony would possess a collection of artistic treasures of the nature and extent [as Mr Nicholl’s]”.<sup>38</sup> This appears to have been the first time a collection of ‘sculpture’ was on permanent display in the colony and made accessible to the public. However, its significance as such has not yet been the subject of research.

In England, workingmen’s publications responded to the need for educational aids for the public galleries by publishing informative articles about the collections. These often also included some advice on how to behave in the Gallery space, helping the uninitiated visitor to feel at ease in these unfamiliar surrounds. In 1832 in England, *The Penny Magazine* ran a series of articles entitled ‘The British Museum’ that sought

to point out many unexpensive (sic) pleasures, of the very highest order, which all those who reside in London have within their reach; and how the education of themselves and of their children may be advanced by using their opportunities of enjoying some of the purest gratifications which an instructed mind is capable of receiving.<sup>39</sup>

The series encouraged their readers to visit the collections and a guide to proper behaviour at the museum. Feeling comfortable in the museum was as much about understanding rules of propriety as providing information about the art on view. Instruction included warning not to touch the works of art; to talk quietly; to avoid being obtuse; as well advice on how to dress. The series also offered information about the history of the work and some explanation of the signs and symbols.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Bennett, *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics*, p.72 .

The newspaper coverage of Nicholl's gallery offered a helpful guide to the collection, acting as an educational resource for visitors. Like the Penny Press had done for the public collections in England,<sup>40</sup> Australian newspapers offered information for the uninitiated visitor, offering explanation and background for the works of art on display. The initial article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* was sympathetic to their less artistically knowledgeable readership: "we candidly confess that we find the subject to be one both of delicacy and difficulty."<sup>41</sup> This tone may have resonated with a readership uninitiated in the world of high art and a community for whom high art was not seen as a strong priority.

It is worth noting the language used to describe plaster casts. They are most frequently referred to as "sculptures". This frames them as objects of high art. For example, in 1857, the press reports described Charles Nicholson's casts in the Australian Museum as 'sculptures'.<sup>42</sup> Discussion in the press of similar casts purchased a decade later for Melbourne's Cremorne Gardens also refers to them exclusively as 'sculptures'. This terminology is seen again when Redmond Barry's cast collection went on show at Melbourne's National Gallery of Victoria in 1863.<sup>43</sup> Rarely, in the discourse surrounding these objects, do we see reference to the fact that they were actually copies, fabricated from plaster, and not original works of art. It is as though the geographical distance of the copies allowed them to stand in on behalf of the originals. And yet a contradiction exists between their status as 'sculptures' and their dependence on the originals for legitimacy.

The only exception to this terminology is when the reports make much of the quality of casting, complementing the likeness between copy and original. The *Herald* article states: "We may premise that in regard to the execution of the casts, they are mostly of a superior description; some of them indeed such as we

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<sup>40</sup> Siegel, *The emergence of the modern museum: an anthology of nineteenth-century sources*, p.82.

<sup>41</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1851, p.3.

<sup>42</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 June 1857, p.5.

<sup>43</sup> Ann Galbally, "The lost museum: Redmond Barry and Melbourne's musee des copies," *Australian Journal of Art* 7(1988), pp 29-49.

have rarely seen equalled.”<sup>44</sup> It is the only acknowledgement in all the coverage of Nicholl’s collection that these were not originals.

A month later, once Nicholl’s gallery was open, a second article offered a much more detailed study of the works on show. The guide to the collection is addressed to two types of readers: those familiar with the museums of Europe for whom

... the present collection will afford a renewal of old remembrances and past delights, whose taste has been formed and cultivated amid the advantages of European capitals and academics, and who require no further guidance to the perception of the beautiful. But the larger class here have been debarred from such favourable opportunities. Those who left the mother country at an early age, and those educated in the colony, have as yet had few objects of high art placed within their reach, and although by no means inferior in natural taste and feeling, cannot be expected to comprehend at once the pure and abstract beauties of form, character, and expression, belonging so peculiarly to sculpture, and the full relish for which is only the result of habit and study. For the latter class, and particularly for the younger part of our readers, our remarks on the present occasion will be principally intended.<sup>45</sup>

The article goes on to encourage readers to approach the collection with an open mind. They explain that in some cases, the beauty of the sculptures might not be immediately evident. Further knowledge, and study is necessary to understand and appreciate the work.

The guide that follows begins by casting the reader back to imagine ancient times; highlighting the age of these antique sculptures. There is an attempt to draw the reader into the collection by reflecting on images with which they might already be familiar, such as: “the rude attempts at outline, traced on the rocks about the South Head of our harbour by the aborigines are curious

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<sup>44</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1851, p.3.

<sup>45</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 November 1851, p.3

specimens of what, perhaps, was everywhere the first stage of art....”<sup>46</sup> These indigenous rock carvings are placed within a timeline of art history and compared with the western canon. The report continues:

Bare imitation of form is the first attempt of uninstructed nature, whether of the child or the savage; imitation of colour is the second; but many years or many ages appear to have rolled over before such attempts produced aught but barbarous deformities, even when the advanced state of civilization had superadded skilful workmanship, costly material, and untiring labour.<sup>47</sup>

The evolution of art is placed in parallel with the development of civilization, and likened to the individual development of skill possessed by children. This notion relates to the Recapitulation theory, which suggests that the individual artistic development of the child can be likened to the artistic development seen in the western canon of art.<sup>48</sup> Following this theory, the study of art is the mark of the most civilized society: great art is not just allied with good morals, but with an “advanced state of civilization”.<sup>49</sup> In this brief history of art, *The Herald* suggests that teaching taste, through access to a collection such as Nicholl’s, had the capacity to civilize and improve colonial society.

Greek and Roman culture was held up as ideal, linked to “the sense of individual beauty, to expression, style, composition to the highest pitch of perfection.”<sup>50</sup> Here again, the author makes a link between ancient Greece and contemporary Sydney by explaining that great art was not only established in the “parent state, but in the colonies spreading over the shores of the bright and blue Mediterranean”.<sup>51</sup> New South Wales as a colony within the British Empire is brought into the readers mind, linking their situation with that of the ancient world. The article goes to great lengths to show the value of the sculptures from

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Recapitulation Theory is an idea first conceived by Biologist Ernst Haeckel who suggested that as embryos develop, they resemble the evolutionary developments of the species. This notion was adopted by education theorists in the late nineteenth century who suggested that children’s cognitive development resembled the cognitive development of humanity. For more on Recapitulation theory see Herbert Spencer, *Education: intellectual, moral and physical* (1891).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

which the casts were made. The author stresses the fact that these sculptures have been much admired throughout history. So much so, that the Romans plundered and reappropriated the Greek sculptures when they rose to power.

Many of the better-known casts were then described in greater detail. Venus de Medici is described as the epitome of female beauty and perfection of form; the Torso Belvedere, described by Joshua Reynolds as “unequaled genius”; fragments of the Theseus and the River God Ulysses from the Parthenon are described as needing the mind and eye of an artist for a full comprehension of their beauty; the Venus de Milo, whose fleshy roundness of the surface lines are commended for being fully realised in this cast reproduction; the Apollo Belvedere described by Flaxman as “sublime in his beauty and terrible in his anger”; The Laocoon Group, illustrating the poetry of Virgil, transferred to marble with anatomical delineation that is accurate beyond belief; Cupid and Psyche; The Achilles Borghese; and more. *The Herald* offers its readers a comprehensive introduction to the works on view. There is also a note about a catalogue raisonné, which Nicholl had printed, offering further instruction on the casts.<sup>52</sup>

The newspaper coverage was also important for assigning the casts a high status. Reports framed the collection as an opportunity to teach taste. This was achieved in part, by explaining the significance of the works, and by repeatedly reiterating their quality. Comparisons between Nicholl’s casts and great collections in Europe reinforced their status: “excellent casts of the finest statuary fragments in the British Museum”.<sup>53</sup> The importance of the collection was also suggested by the importance attached to Nicholl as an artist. Reports make much of his success in England working with Smirke and Cockerell as an architectural sculptor. His skill was on show in architectural sculptures he had made to embellish the façade of his gallery. One report remarked: “No further proof need be asked of his skill, and the time and labour he has lavished on this external decoration are sufficient”.<sup>54</sup> They acted like a billboard, advertising the beauty and artistry within.

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<sup>52</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 November 1851, p.3.

<sup>53</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1851, p.3.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

Students were encouraged to attend Nicholl's museum, "for that most essential branch of study, drawing from statuary."<sup>55</sup> The collection was not just recommended for art appreciation, but for practical training. There was no school of art in Sydney at this time. Nicholl's collection provided access to casts like those used by the Academies of Art in Europe, where students would draw from the antique. Drawing copies from Nicholl's casts would have been the nearest thing to academic training that a budding artist could have found in the colony.

Several of the casts Nicholl's brought with him were the same as those presented by Charles Nicholson to the Australian museum a few years before.<sup>56</sup> Those same casts, such as the Venus de Medici, Cupid and Psyche and the Apollo Belvidere were also present in Melbourne collections in the 1860s, and in the Auckland Museum's collection. The craze for collecting casts grew throughout the latter part of the nineteenth-century. Casts made great works of sculpture accessible to those without access to the originals. It is likely they were made by Brucciani, a prominent London formatore who made the casts for Cremorne Gardens in the 1858,<sup>57</sup> the casts for Redmond Barry in 1859,<sup>58</sup> and later in the century, a set of casts for instruction in schools, purchased by F. W. Woodhouse.<sup>59</sup> Brucciani operated one of the most productive studios of its kind in London, feeding the seemingly insatiable appetite for copies of art works in the British Isles, Europe and beyond.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the enthusiastic press coverage at its opening, Nicholl's collection did not enjoy the success that has been anticipated. Within two years Nicholl had sold his collection to the trustees of the Australian Museum "for a trifle".<sup>61</sup> His large

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 February 1850, p.2.

<sup>57</sup> Coppin's trip to purchase the casts for Cremorne Gardens was detailed in a Letter: Brooke to his Wife, 9 June 1858, in Gustavus Vaughan Brooke Papers, 1861-1892, AB 128, Michell Library, Sydney; William John Lawrence, *The Life of Gustavus Vaughan Brooke, Tragedian* (Belfast: W. & G. Baird, 1892).

<sup>58</sup> Galbally, "The lost museum: Redmond Barry and Melbourne's musee des copies", pp 29-49.

<sup>59</sup> A Receipt from the studio of Brucciani is included in the files for Superintendent of Drawing, 1889-99, New South Wales State Records.

<sup>60</sup> Rune Frederiksen and Eckart Marchand, eds., *Plaster casts: making, collecting, and displaying from classical antiquity to the present* (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2010), pp 465-485.

<sup>61</sup> *Colonial Times*, 3 December 1853, p.3.

house, however, proved a better investment, as quickly rising land value in the area allowed him to sell it to the Exchange Company for a profit at £800.<sup>62</sup> The *Herald* suggested that colonial audiences lacked the education needed to appreciate Nicholl's collection: "...the unschooled eye wanders idly over the cold marble, not perceiving the qualities, not comprehending the language, of those exquisite embodiments of ideal beauty."<sup>63</sup> Nicholl reiterated the sentiment, suggesting that Sydney was not ready to patronise a collection such as his. He believed that the colonial interests were more keenly focused on commercial interests:

...that if a man comes to Australia with commercial views, he may do very well; but if with any higher notions, poor fellow, it's all up with him!<sup>64</sup>

The reasons for Nicholl's failure to attract a colonial audience are difficult to ascertain. Little evidence of Nicholl's collection remains beyond the newspaper reports. Many factors would have affected the accessibility of his collection including the cost of entry and opening hours. These may have held greater sway on the success of the gallery than the educational standards of colonial audiences. The physical and intellectual accessibility of the collection would have been particularly important for audiences unused to visiting the gallery space. Beyond the guides published in the press and by Nicholl, it is unclear what measures were taken to make the collection welcoming and engaging for first-time visitors.

## **Sydney International Exhibition, 1879**

The Sydney International Exhibition opened in September 1879 and ran until April 1880. Like the Great Exhibition of 1851, held at the Crystal Palace, London, it brought together displays of fine art and industry. The Sydney exhibition was seen as an opportunity for the colony of Sydney to be showcased to the world,

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<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 January 1852, p.4.

<sup>64</sup> *Colonial Times*, 3 December 1853, p.3.

and in turn, allowed Sydney-siders to view art, design and new technology from across the globe.

The exhibition was housed in the purpose-built 'Garden Palace', a grand neo-classical building inspired by the Crystal Palace of London's Great Exhibition. It was erected in haste in the parkland beside government house, and looked out to the harbour. After the gallery space within the Garden Palace was deemed inadequate for an art display, a separate building to house the art gallery was erected.<sup>65</sup> It displayed the largest exhibition of art shown in the colony ever before.<sup>66</sup> Displays were arranged with the intention of giving artisans and workingmen a broad education in mechanical technology, design and aesthetics from around the world.

When the exhibition was first proposed, the discourse surrounding it was focused on its educational benefit. In a letter to the editor, one Sydney-sider summarised the educational opportunity they believed the exhibition would offer:

There are few things in which this colony is so backward as Art education. This may arise in great museums from the few opportunities afforded of looking at what may be really styled works of Art. No doubt there is plenty of latent talent in our midst which only requires developing and there is nothing that will so help to develop it as giving its possessors the opportunity of studying works of acknowledged merit, and placing before them a standard to work up to. Something has been done in this direction, but let us not miss the chance now offered of doing more. To wealthy colonists who are enabled to visit the great galleries of Europe, the acceptance of the proposed offered may be of little moment, but I am satisfied that it would confer a very great boon on the great bulk of the art-

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<sup>65</sup> Noel Hutchinson, "The establishment of the Art Gallery of New South Wales: politics and taste" (Honours thesis, The University of Sydney, 1968) held in the Art Gallery of New South Wales Archives, pp 56-70.

<sup>66</sup> Proudfoot, Maguire, and Freestone, *Colonial city, global city: Sydney's international exhibition 1879*, pp.169-89.



loving portion of the community. From all time the progress of a nation in the scale of civilization has been measured by its advancement in Art, although nations pre-eminent in art-culture have passed away, the memorial of their art skill remain as imperishable monuments of their fame. Aspiring as we do, to become a great nation, we should lose no opportunity of encouraging and improving the aesthetic tastes of the people. It is well known that the first International Exhibition inaugurated by Albert the Good (exercised an immense influence on the Art tastes of the mother country.) Let us hope that our forthcoming Exhibition may play a no less important part in the same direction to our infant colony.<sup>67</sup>

This letter highlights the lack of art education on offer in the colony throughout the majority of the nineteenth-century, but also suggests the broader benefit many believed the exhibition would have on standards of taste. The claims made for the power of art education are great: fine art is the work of great civilizations; it was essential for becoming a great nation.

The exhibition proved to be incredibly popular. By the 20th of April, shortly before the exhibition closed the total attendance had reached one million visitors. This was, as the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported, “equal to one-sixth of the attendance at the two London Exhibitions... and, relative to population [of Sydney], is seven times as large as the London ones.”<sup>68</sup> These incredible numbers indicate the Victorian fascination with spectacle, but also indicate a local interest in viewing art, design and technology from around the world. They may also indicate the keenly felt absence of a permanent art and industrial collections in the colony.

The audiences at the exhibition were diverse. Efforts were made to ensure that the exhibition was accessible to all members of society. In campaigning for low-price entry in a letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, ‘Vigil’ reminded the committee of their educational aims:

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<sup>67</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 January 1879, p.5.

<sup>68</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 1880, p.4.

... this Exhibition is essentially a public undertaking, carried out at the public expense, and specially advocated by its promoters as a means of affording instruction and education to mechanics, artizans, and others, to whom any higher charge than one shilling for frequent attendance would prove restrictive, and, indeed, prohibitory (sic).<sup>69</sup>

Prices for admission varied. The prices for admission were quoted by the *Illustrated Sydney News* as 5s., 2s. 6d., 1s. 3d., 1s. 6d.<sup>70</sup> One newspaper report listed average daily attendance at 6011; made up of a variety of different forms of paid admissions including: standard paid admissions, exhibitors and attendants, workmen, students, and miscellaneous.<sup>71</sup>

Before the exhibition opened, a proposal was put forward to offer free admission to schoolchildren. The Colonial Secretary agreed, stating that he would be very happy to support the free admission of the children.<sup>72</sup> This opportunity was taken up with gusto. Reports continued through to the end of April, stating that “the attendance at the Garden Palace on Saturday was rather large, and a considerable number of children belonging to schools were admitted free.”<sup>73</sup> The desire to make the exhibition accessible to schoolchildren further reinforces the belief in the educational benefit of viewing the displays.

Of all the exhibits, the art gallery was particularly well attended. The press made frequent references to its popularity. In January, it was reported that “the Art Gallery continues to be as strong an attraction as ever.”<sup>74</sup> During the four days preceding the close of the Exhibition attendance at the gallery alone had been 23,697, or an average of about 6000 daily.<sup>75</sup>

Efforts were made to ensure the images were accessible to visitors, in order to attain the highest educational benefit. Although paintings were arranged in a salon hang - placed closely together and reaching up the wall - they were just

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<sup>69</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1879, p.6.

<sup>70</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 15 May 1880, p.6.

<sup>71</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 April 1880, p.3.

<sup>72</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 July 1879, p.7.

<sup>73</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 April 1880, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 January 1880, p.5.

<sup>75</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 April 1880, p.3.

three paintings high, to a height that could still be seen. They did not stretch up to the ceiling as in a traditional salon hang. Key works were assigned a number that could be traced to corresponding entry in the 'descriptive catalogue', available to purchase for sixpence.<sup>76</sup> The guide lists the title and artist of each work and offered the reader insight into the subjects depicted.

The paintings and sculptures chosen for display included history paintings, sentimental historical genre scenes, picturesque landscapes, pastoral scenes, and portraits of royalty and noted individuals from Sydney Society. A great number of biblical subjects were included, as were subjects drawn from ancient and canonical literature. These subjects fit within the educative aims of the exhibition and further the belief that art could have a morally uplifting effect on its audience. The desire to show works of art that would inform and improve all who viewed them was highlighted in an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald*: "The value of such pictures in forming and elevating artistic perception among the people is very great, and the trustees in their selection of them have proved their possession of keen and cultivated judgment."<sup>77</sup>

The French display included a number of nudes. These were each painted within the academic conventions that idealised and sanitised the female form. Each was 'clothed' in the guise of a muse or historical figure, ensuring they conformed to rules of propriety. However, the text accompanying each of these paintings in the catalogue was different to the other descriptions. Rather than praising the works for their uplifting themes, the tone is notably disparaging. The *Neoera* by J. Aviat, was described as "a finely modelled figure... but the flesh tints too much inclining to the hue of ivory."<sup>78</sup> The reader's attention is refocused on the illusionistic quality of the painting, rather than on the body depicted. The subject of *Leda*, a popular mythological scene, painted by A. Jourdan is given concession as "a more unobjectionable treatment of the mythological story than one is ordinarily

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<sup>76</sup> "Descriptive catalogue of pictures, &c., in the art gallery of the international exhibition, Sydney, 1879-80," (Sydney: P. E. Reynolds, Fine Art Dealer, 1879).

<sup>77</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 January 1879, p.5.

<sup>78</sup> "Descriptive catalogue of pictures, &c., in the art gallery of the international exhibition, Sydney, 1879-80", pp.44-45.

accustomed to meet with on canvas.”<sup>79</sup> One exception is found in *Jezebel Devoured by Dogs* by L. F. Comerre, which is perhaps salvaged by its moral message, and described as “A most repulsive subject treated with magistral ability.”<sup>80</sup> The guide offers readers a moral as well as artistic interpretation of the works on show.

*The Daily Telegraph* was far less delicate, declaring the nudes to be “indecent” and “disgusting”. They demanded the works be removed, suggesting that the commissioners should be punished for the circulation of indecent pictures:

... they should have erected a separate court called the Gallery of Obscenities... As it is, it is unfair to visitors of both sexes, who may not have a taste for looking at the full sized picture of a naked strumpet painted from life, and several equally indecent paintings, that they cannot go to look at the decent works of art without having to encounter the artistic abominations.<sup>81</sup>

A line was drawn between ‘decent works of art’, and nudes. When art was promoted for having the potential to be a morally uplifting influence, nudes were particularly problematic. Without a clear moral allegory, what message did these images convey? And what was their role in an educative display?

In some entries, the guide offers a few words on the subject of the painting, but for others, viewers were given hints on ‘how to look’ and instruction for art appreciation. For example, in the entry on W. P. Frith’s, *Marriage of the Prince of Wales*, the viewer is directed to notice the “brilliance of colour, mastery of arrangement, and skilful drawing... the exquisite texture of robes, the beauty of architectural details, and the luminous atmosphere”.<sup>82</sup> The guide gives the

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p.52.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p.48.

<sup>81</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 November, 1879, p.5.

<sup>82</sup> "Descriptive catalogue of pictures, &c., in the art gallery of the international exhibition, Sydney, 1879-80", p.8.

uninitiated viewer some guidance in identifying each element of the work: a short lesson on connoisseurship.

The exhibition was also seen as an opportunity to improve standards of taste in colonial society. The economic benefit of good design was highlighted in a report describing the French Court:

A mere cursory inspection of the principal articles shown will suffice to explain the secret of French industrial success. It consists in the happy combination of taste with utility.<sup>83</sup>

While the French nudes were met with distain, French decorative design was put forward as an excellent example of refined taste. Their success was attributed to their superior system of technical education.<sup>84</sup> This was clearly an argument for establishing a better-organised and more comprehensive system of technical education in Sydney.

From the planning to the execution, the international exhibition was intended to be an education display. Efforts were made to ensure to was accessible to all sections of society. The exhibition left an enduring legacy for art in Sydney. When the exhibition closed in April, the art gallery remained. Many acquisitions were made from the collections on show at the exhibition. Design and technological display were acquired for a new technological museum. Paintings, sculptures and drawings were brought together with work belonging to the Academy of Art and kept on display in the Garden Palace Annex. Their collection had previously been shown in a “house-room... and [could not] be seen to due advantage”.<sup>85</sup> The new gallery space provided a welcome display space. When fire engulfed the garden palace in 1882, the gallery survived, owing to its location in a separate building. Plans were already afoot to rehouse the collection in a more permanent, purpose-built structure.

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<sup>83</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 29 November, 1879, p. 6.

<sup>84</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 29 November, 1879, p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 January 1879, p.5.

## The National Art Gallery of New South Wales

In 1871 the New South Wales Academy of Art formed, eager to improve the position of fine arts in the colony. Art education was one of their main priorities. The first statement of their constitution made this clear, stating “The Academy of Art is a Society formed for promoting the study of various Departments of the Fine Arts...”<sup>86</sup> At the first meeting, the aims of the society were focused on making art education accessible to the Sydney public:

... to give judicious aid in the developing of a practical study of art amongst the young persons of this colony. The delivery of instructive lectures on subjects connected with art [also] forms part of this project.<sup>87</sup>

However, not all were in favour of establishing a gallery. Objections to the idea of opening a gallery were voiced by a Mr. Mort (of Mort’s Dock and Engineering Firm), who, in an effort to promote art, had opened his own collection of art to the public in the 1860s. Like Nicholl, he had been disappointed with the underwhelming attendance he received. He was even more disheartened when, “for several months past, his only care had been to put someone in charge of pictures to keep little children from poking their sticks through the glasses...”<sup>88</sup> Mort’s scepticism on the success of a new public gallery voiced a broader concern as to whether wider society could appreciate such a collection.

Nevertheless, votes of support and encouragement for the educational value of a gallery were clearly heard. Edward Reeve, who had been the first curator of the Nicholson Museum stated: “...nothing can possibly exercise a more powerful educational agency than art, in all its manifold developments.”<sup>89</sup> Reeve made clear his intentions to follow the example lead by the colony of Victoria in establishing a national gallery and art school. In 1871 the National Gallery of

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<sup>86</sup> Art Gallery of New South Wales Archives, 1871 press clippings and ephemera.

<sup>87</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 April 1871, p.1.

<sup>88</sup> Art Gallery of New South Wales Archives, 1871 press clippings and ephemera, pp 3-4. Article from *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April, 1871, p.5.

<sup>89</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1871, p.5.

Victoria had celebrated a decade since its establishment. A fact that those in attendance at the meeting were no doubt well aware.

In 1873 at the second annual general meeting of the Academy of Arts, Edward Combes MP proposed the formation of a picture gallery. He was then instrumental in assuring a sum of £500 be put towards the purchase of work for the gallery by the government.<sup>90</sup> Debates around how the £500 should be spent reveal much about the society's ambitions. The grant was too small to buy first-rate oil paintings. Initially, the council discussed buying copies of works by old masters. Copies were seen as an ideal collection for the purpose of education, as they introduced colonial audiences to great works of the Western canon. However, E. L. Montefiore successfully argued against this proposal, suggesting instead that they purchase good quality original watercolours. He valued the original work of the artist. The decision to buy original works of art would also set a precedent for commissioning and supporting local artists.<sup>91</sup> This decision was crucial, as it helped support Sydney artists, not just in providing them good examples of work on the gallery walls, but purchasing and supporting their work. Through this decision to collect original work, the trustees asserted their power – as they did with every new work they purchased – as arbiters of taste.

After the International Exhibition of 1879, the Academy of Arts received a grant to purchase work of art. Their collection was kept on display in the Garden Palace Annex after the exhibition closed. However, it quickly became clear that this accommodation was not suitable for the proper preservation of works of art. The wooden structure was damp, causing mould to grow on many paintings. In summer it was unbearably hot. In 1885 a site in the outer Domain, the same as the present-day gallery was put aside for a new permanent building. A simple temporary building was built and opened at the end of December that year.<sup>92</sup>

In the decade that followed, plans were made for a grand permanent structure to be built. Several proposals were submitted by the colonial architect H. Hunt, but

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<sup>90</sup> Hutchinson, "The establishment of the Art Gallery of New South Wales: politics and taste," p.42.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, pp.45-47.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

rejected by the committee who disliked the neo-gothic style he suggested. Eventually, in 1895, a classical ionic structure designed by W. L. Vernon was accepted and building began.<sup>93</sup> The first finished portion of the completed gallery was opened in May 1897. The grand ionic columns and imposing portico would become a great temple of art and civilization, echoing the style of the near-by state library.

Throughout this period, the gallery was popular. Visitors continued to flock through its doors even after the International Exhibition ended. Budding artists used the gallery as a space for study. Students were allowed to set up and copy from the collection between 9am and 12pm daily, providing they applied for, and were granted permission. The logbooks of student visitors show up to twenty individuals regularly visiting the gallery.<sup>94</sup> The gallery remained an educational space for aspiring artists and the general public.

### **Hunt's Light of the world**

One particularly popular exhibition was held at the National Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1906. *The Light of the World* by Pre Raphaelite artist William Holman Hunt came to New South Wales for three weeks after touring Canada, New Zealand and several other Australian towns.

The painting's subject was drawn from the bible, making it the perfect example of an image that might further efforts of self-improvement and self-education. Hunt took as his subject, the little known bible verse from Revelations 3:20, 'behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice; and open the door, I will come to him and will sup with him, and he with me.' Choosing a subject that was not yet familiar in the canon of Christian art was part of Hunt's plan to establish a new Christian art for British Protestants. He shows Christ approaching a door, offering those within love and redemption. But the doorway

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p.63.

<sup>94</sup> Numbers logged and names recorded in record books held in the Art Gallery of New South Wales Archives.



is overgrown and the bolts rusted fast. Characteristically, Hunt's work is full of symbolism. The work might also be read as a metaphor for the 'knocking' of new educational opportunities. Its religious message was clearly morally uplifting and being the work of a respected British artist provided that important link to England.

Hunt's work embodies the Pre-Raphaelite doctrine of truth to nature, exemplifying the new emphasis on drawing for nature that was enjoying popularity in schools at this time. Hunt was so dedicated to studying directly from nature that he is said to have altered his sleeping patterns while working on this painting, so that he could paint through the night out in the garden, and study the effects of the moon light on his scene.<sup>95</sup>

*The Light of the World* almost did not make it onto the walls of the gallery in Sydney. At the meeting where its loan and exhibition were discussed, the proposal was rejected by the trustees. Their complaint was that the work was a copy, not the original.<sup>96</sup> The work was in fact the third of three versions made of this subject, all attributed to Hunt (although there is some suggestion that the later two were largely painted by an assistant and only finished by Hunt himself).<sup>97</sup> It seems that after further discussion and being made aware that it was a copy made by Hunt himself, that the earlier decision was overturned.<sup>98</sup> However, this initial rejection is significant.

At the time the gallery was first established, the trustees had decided not to collect copies. They had since been embroiled in a scandal when one of the members of the Society of Arts, W. Wallis had attempted to sell a portion of his private collection for the government collection. In doing so he attempted to pass

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<sup>95</sup> Maas, *Holman hunt and the light of the world*, pp.15-16.

<sup>96</sup> "Offered on loan: 'The light of the World' by Holman Hunt. As this work was not known to be the original work of Mr. Holman Hunt, it was decided to decline the offer." (original emphasis) Minutes from the Meeting of February 23, 1906, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archives, p.288.

<sup>97</sup> Jeremy Maas suggests that the third version was the best known, but least satisfactory version of the work. Maas, *Holman hunt and the light of the world*.

<sup>98</sup> Evidenced by a tiny pencilled note in the margins of the meeting minutes that reads: "Note, after further inquiring, the work was accepted". Minutes from the Meeting of February 23, 1906, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archives, p.288.

off a number of paintings as originals, that were in actual fact, good copies.<sup>99</sup> When the exhibition of Hunt's work was discussed, the trustees were understandably weary of misrepresenting a copy as an original work of art. This emphasis of the trustees on the importance of showing original works of art is significant for art education. Unlike other Australian galleries, the Art Gallery in Sydney consciously chose to exhibit original work. Their collection supported the work of local artists, but also allowed students of art to see work being produced in their own city.

When *The Light of The World* was put on display at the National Art Gallery of New South Wales, contemporary newspaper reports convey the surprise and delight at this overwhelming reception. Headlines such as "Record Gallery Attendances" were followed by reports of over 15,000 visitors to The National Gallery of Victoria in just three hours.<sup>100</sup> As many as 80,000 in three days and 323,000 in three weeks were reported to have come through the doors of the National Gallery of New South Wales while the work was on show.<sup>101</sup> Journalists likened the crowd to the "first-night crush at the gallery doors of a popular theatre. There was the same closely-packed, slowly moving mass of people, the same semi-hysterical women, the same class of youth cracking the same time worn jokes".<sup>102</sup> A photograph of the interior of the Gallery in Melbourne shows this crushed mass of people, piling into a room that was never intended to house such large numbers. For, as *The Brisbane Courier* noted, these crowds were totally unexpected, "No picture in Australia, for many years, has drawn such crowds as those which every afternoon stand silent before Holman Hunt's great picture...".<sup>103</sup> The gallery buildings were not built for the task of coping with such a crowd, forcing emergency entrances and exits to be erected to allow the flow of people.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Hutchinson, "The establishment of the Art Gallery of New South Wales: politics and taste", pp 56-70.

<sup>100</sup> Numbers quoted in *The Argus*, 5 March 1906 p.4.

<sup>101</sup> The numbers recorded in New South Wales were far more accurate as all visitors moved through turnstiles at the gallery entrance. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 March 1906, p.11.

<sup>102</sup> *The Argus*, 5 March 1906, p.4.

<sup>103</sup> *The Brisbane Courier*, 5 April 1906, p.6.

<sup>104</sup> Anderson, *On teaching to think: an address to teachers* .

In Sydney, photographs document the crowds lining up outside the gallery's grand facade. The lines of eager visitors stretch out into the Domain (figure 4). A photograph taken inside the gallery shows an enormous crowd, pushing and shoving their way in to view the painting (figure 5). Throughout the nineteenth-century, it had been widely asserted that fine arts were an unnecessary indulgence that a society in its infancy could do without. To see the Domain awash with people, all eager to view a work of fine art, suggests the Australian public were in fact interested in high art, in good taste and in the moral and religious message Hunt's work promoted.

### **Accessibility**

Making the gallery physically accessible to the public was essential for it to fulfil its educative role in the colony. In 1882 when the gallery was still housed in the Garden Palace Annex, a motion was put forward in parliament to open the gallery on Sundays. Sunday opening times were suggested as a way to make the collection easily available to working people. Those in favour of Sunday openings saw them as an opportunity for working people to engage in self-education.<sup>105</sup>

Sunday opening was fiercely debated. Scores of letters sent to local newspapers weighed in on whether the gallery should be open on Sundays. Those against the proposal voiced two major concerns: first, that opening the gallery on a Sunday would require the gallery attendants to work on the Sabbath, which was particularly concerning to church groups.<sup>106</sup> Second was suggestion that it would take a great number of police on duty to respond to threats that working class families were believed to pose on public safety by loitering in the Domain on a Sunday.

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<sup>105</sup> Maltz, *British aestheticism and the urban working classes, 1870-1900: beauty for the people*, p.7.

<sup>106</sup> Newspaper report on the presentation of the Sydney Presbytery to the Legislative assembly, clipping marked 11/9/82, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archive, Collected Press Clipping 1880s, p.85.

Other galleries around the world had begun opening on Sundays. They were put forward as examples, both good and bad, for how Sunday openings might affect the community. The Birmingham Museum in England was held up by one letter-writer as a great example of the success of Sunday openings. Opening on Sunday made the collection accessible to workingmen and their families. They quoted Mr Jesse Collins, a member of the Birmingham Town Council, who described the success of Sunday opening in Birmingham:

It is pleasing to see the working men taking their wives and children to look at the pictures, and hear the remarks and expressions of pleasure so frequently made, showing that their visit is likely to become a subject of interest and conversation when they return to their homes. Although we have but one attendant, at the Art Gallery, not a single case of damage to the pictures or works of art has been discovered... bigotry should [not] be allowed any longer to prevent the inhabitants of other towns enjoying similar advantages.<sup>107</sup>

This example undid the suggestion that Sunday visitors to the gallery would be an unruly bunch; an encouraging precedent for the advantage of Sunday opening.

While many protested the gallery opening on Sundays, several prominent members of the community sent letters of support. Andrew Ross M. D. wrote:

...how absurd to say that the opening of the Gallery for an hour or two on Sunday would have a demoralising influence on the public. In seeking to open such institutions, I am sure a higher and nobler aim is sought to be accomplish by its advocates... God has endowed us with reasoning faculties so see, observe, reflect, deduce and discover – genius to develop, discernment to discriminate and, by his universal aid, judgement to know and appreciate the relative value of good and evil, benevolence to communicate to our fellow mortals a knowledge of morals, art, science... All truths come from but one fountain source, and that source is God. Why

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<sup>107</sup> 1880 press clippings, archives of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, p.12.

then should 1000 or 10,000 people be censored from visiting the Art Gallery on Sunday if they think it proper to do so?<sup>108</sup>

For Ross, the question of Sunday opening was a matter of equity. Why should some portion of the population be barred from enjoying the benefit of a public art collection?

The other major concern of the trustees concerning the physical accessibility of the Gallery, was whether the site on the outer Domain was safe for visitors to walk through after dark. The isolation of the gallery building was frequently quoted as a factor that rendered the space unsuitable for an art school, as student's safety might be an issue in the evenings. The installation of lights was proposed, but took over a decade to become a reality.<sup>109</sup> Requests were also made for a policeman to be stationed close to the gallery to improve security. The safety and the concern for making the gallery accessible to the public was seen to be particularly important for welcoming female patrons.<sup>110</sup>

The intellectual accessibility of the gallery was important for extending its educative influence to all sections of society. For many Sydney-siders, the gallery was not a space they were familiar with. For some, the imposing structure may have been physically daunting. For others, the unfamiliar practice of viewing and assessing works of art may have made the gallery a strange, possibly even alienating space. Tony Bennett has argued that the art gallery demands its visitors come with some knowledge or skills to understand and decode meaning from the work on display.<sup>111</sup> Older museum displays typically offered little information to assist the uninformed visitor to decode the work on show. The artist's name and date the work was painted were sometimes all the insight offered. They did little to help the uninitiated visitor any insight into the art on show.

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<sup>108</sup> Andrew Ross M. D. Letter to the newspaper (publication not recorded), Press clippings 1880, archives of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, p.90

<sup>109</sup> 1884-89 Minute book, archives of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Bennett, *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics*, pp.99-102.

Efforts were made to ensure the exhibition of Hunt's work was accessible to a wide audience. Entry to see the exhibition was free, and the gallery was open everyday of the week. It was accompanied with countless newspaper articles that offered information about the artist and the subject of the work.<sup>112</sup> Others reported the popularity it had enjoyed in England.<sup>113</sup> One also explained the popularity of the painting and the reason Hunt was commissioned to make the copy.<sup>114</sup> A *conversazione* was held at the art gallery provided further information about the work and was reproduced in a pamphlet that was widely circulated.<sup>115</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that those involved in mounting exhibitions of art did so with education as one of their major motivations. The exhibitions examined here were used to extend art education to Sydney-siders. When his cast collection opened, Nicholl published a catalogue that offered his uninitiated audiences an introduction to the cast sculptures. The organisers of the 1878 international exhibition worked to ensure their displays were accessible and appealing to visitors of all demographics. From their very first meeting, the trustees of the Art Gallery placed education among their principle concerns. Through these case studies, this chapter has demonstrated the importance of education in the minds of those organising exhibitions of art during this foundational period.

This chapter has examined discourse surrounding exhibitions and the Art Gallery. Newspaper coverage of these exhibitions espoused their educational benefit. Nicholl's casts were celebrated by *The Sydney Morning Herald* for their capacity to teach taste to colonial audiences; reports on the International

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<sup>112</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 March 1906, p.10; *The Evening News*, 15 March 1906, p.5; *The Evening News*, 17 March 1906, p.11; *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 21 March 1906, p.19; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 April 1906, p.13.

<sup>113</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 March 1906, p.10; *The Evening News*, 15 March 1906, p.5; *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 21 March 1906, p.19.

<sup>114</sup> *The Evening News*, 15 March 1906, p.5.

<sup>115</sup> Frederick Eccleston Du Faur, "'The light of the world' by W. Holman Hunt: temporarily on view at National Art Gallery of N.S.W.: paper read by the President, Tuesday, 4th Sept., 1906.," (Sydney: National Art Gallery of N.S.W., 1906).

exhibition of 1878 suggested that audiences would learn about art and design from the choice examples on display; and articles on the establishment of the Art Gallery and its exhibitions continued to promote it as a space for refining one's taste. In the discourse surrounding exhibitions of art, the importance of teaching taste was a key concern.

It has been difficult to ascertain whether audiences considered their experiences at exhibitions as educational opportunities. However, the strong interest in education by those organising exhibitions, and in the discourse surrounding these displays, suggests it was likely. Exhibitions offered art instruction in an informal and entertaining way. The fact that visiting these displays was seen as a form of entertainment ensured their popularity. This chapter has also shown the incredible and increasing popularity of exhibitions of art throughout this foundational period. The staggering proportion of the Sydney population that attended the international exhibition in 1878, or who pushed through the turnstiles to see *The Light of the World* in 1906 would be a joy for any present-day gallery director. Perhaps we can view these numbers as people voting with their feet, and showing their interest in art and design through attendance at these educational events.

## PART II: PEOPLE

This section seeks to answer *who* was involved in art education? It examines the professional biographies of four individuals who contributed to art education in Sydney between 1850 and 1915. Their contributions differ from one another, demonstrating a range of experiences, including: teaching art, training teachers and designing drawing syllabus; to bringing their own artistic practice into the classroom and introducing students to the life of a professional artist; to helping to establish educational institutions for teaching art. These figures have been chosen to show a broad range of experiences of art education. Where *Part I* sought to map the landscape of art education, *Part II* attempted to develop greater depth of analysis. These professional biographies allow us to learn more about individual experiences of art education.

This foundational period was an era during which an individual teacher, or advocate for the arts could make a significant impact on the provision of art education. Sydney offered a limited number of opportunities for art education. This meant that one individual might work across a number of different institutions carrying their ideas about art across institutional boundaries. Examining the professional biographies of these figures reveals the ways their personalities and particular interests influenced the character of art education.

*Chapter Four* examines the professional biographies of the Superintendents for Drawing in the public school from 1891 to 1915. F. W. Woodhouse and J. Branch have both been discussed in *Chapter One* in relation to their role in overseeing drawing instruction in Sydney schools. They wrote the art curriculum, they examined students and they trained teachers. Here I consider how their English training influenced the way they taught art in Sydney. Their different approaches to the role of Superintendent reveals the way in which individual personalities could influence the character of art education in Sydney. The turn of the twentieth century was a time of change and reform in Sydney schools. Examining



the role of the Superintendent for Drawing during this time of change allows us to examine shifts in the attitudes towards art education.

Though the individuals chosen for further study in this section were among the most influential figures for Sydney's art education in this era, there were others who have not been examined here. This has been due to a number of reasons. First, in order to build case studies with depth of analysis within the limits of this thesis, it has been necessary to select just a few individuals. Second, and perhaps more significantly, the ability to piece together these biographical accounts depends on the preservation of material in the archive. There were several art educators whose professional biographies might have offered an interesting addition to this section, but without the archival evidence, it has been impossible to develop any substantial analysis. For example, official files for the Superintendents are held by New South Wales State Records. However, little is preserved to tell us more about their assistants, many of whom were women. Jesse Douglass, a female art teacher who worked closely alongside both Superintendents and occupied a senior role as a drawing instructor, is all but absent from the archive. Her name appears time and again. She taught art and trained teachers, yet no substantial records have been preserved to tell us more about her professional contribution to art education. The case studies in this section were chosen to show the breadth of experience in art education, but there is space for further research.

The professional biography of Ethel Stephens forms the focus of *Chapter Five*. Piecing together an account of Stephens' professional biography has only been possible with access to her album of press clippings and ephemera held by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, together with the material held by the Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School (SCEGGS) archive. These sources offer a rare insight into Stephens' life as both an artist and teacher. She was a successful professional artist. She also taught at the SCEGGS at the turn of the twentieth century. Examining her professional biography allows us to examine the art instruction in girls' schools and reveals the way in which practising artists brought the influence of their artistic philosophies into the classroom.

*Chapter Six* examines the professional biography of Edward Combes. Combes was not an art teacher, but an engineer, politician, farmer, brewer and artist. He was involved in the establishment and organisation of a number institutions and exhibitions that made art education more publically accessible in Sydney. He used his knowledge as an engineer and influence as a politician to support art education in Sydney. His interest in both high and useful art allows us to interrogate the connections between these two branches of art. Examining Combes' professional biography allows us to consider the way he pursued a range of professional interests and to analyse the way he brought these together in his contributions to art education in Sydney.

*Part II: People* includes the professional biographies of those involved in establishing art education in Sydney. In examining who taught art, we explore how and why they taught, allowing further insight into the pedagogies of the past. Exploring their motivations for teaching art helps us to build an understanding of the character of art education in Sydney in this foundational period.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE SUPERINTENDENTS WOODHOUSE AND BRANCH**

This chapter examines the professional biographies of the two superintendents who worked for the New South Wales Department of Public Instruction: Frederic William Woodhouse and John Edwin Branch. Both men came from London, bringing with them knowledge of and training in English methods of art instruction. Both Woodhouse and Branch appealed to the department for the English qualifications. Examining their training and work as superintendents offers further insight into the character of Sydney's art education in schools. They played important roles in bringing English modes of art education to Sydney. However, the way in which they did so differed significantly from one another, showing the way that individual personalities could dramatically shift the character of art education. As superintendents for drawing, they wrote the curriculum, produced teaching aids, offered demonstration lessons, examined students, over-saw teacher training and also participated in art education beyond the schools through the art societies and public lectures. Examining the work of the superintendents of drawing between 1890 and 1915 also allows us to explore changing interests in art instruction.

### **F. W. WOODHOUSE**

In 1899 children in Sydney schoolrooms found themselves drawing a series of straight lines that came together to form a geometric ornament, described in its caption as a 'Greek Fret' (figure 6). They copied the from *The Australian Drawing Book*, a new copybook put out by the Superintendent of Drawing in New South Wales, Frederic William Woodhouse.<sup>1</sup> In scraping white stubs of chalk across their slates, repeatedly copying the form, these children were not just following their teacher's instructions, or submitting to the demands of the public school

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<sup>1</sup> F. W. Woodhouse, *The Australian drawing book* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1899).

syllabus. They were repeating a figure drawn by children in London's Board schools,<sup>2</sup> a decorative ornament that graced the facades of Victorian buildings and featured in contemporary design (figure 7). They were copying a form that had first become popular nearly two thousand years earlier in Greek and Roman pottery design (figure 8). These children were drawing a chain that would link them to the aesthetic history of Britain and a Greco-Roman heritage. This was not simply a drawing lesson; but an exercise that put children in touch with a long-standing artistic tradition.

This simple exercise encapsulated Woodhouse's own training. He had studied, first as assistant to an architect and became a skilled draftsman, before undertaking his certificates with the South Kensington Department of Science and Art in the early 1880s.<sup>3</sup> There he had learned a vocabulary of ornamental design, drawn from the western canon and fashionable in contemporary English design. By 1885, Woodhouse was appointed as a lecturer to the Royal School of Architecture. The same year he was selected for a special assignment in Rome, making casts of the decorative scheme in the Vatican's Borgia apartments (discussed in further detail in *Part Three: Tools*).<sup>4</sup> This trip serves to consolidate his training and develop his knowledge of that great empire of the past, long idealised by artists: Rome.

Woodhouse undertook his training at a moment when skills-based instruction was at its height. Despite the criticisms of John Ruskin and his followers Ablett and Cooke in the 1890s,<sup>5</sup> South Kensington remained fixed, teaching children to draw ornamental figures in outline, copying from two-dimensional reproductions. The Greek Fret is typical of the symmetrical figures prescribed; composed of straight lines drawn neatly in repeating patterns without the aid of rulers. It is a figure familiar from ancient art; a key design motif, part of a basic

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<sup>2</sup> The design was a part of 'Standard III' in the drawing course for elementary school students. See Sutton, *Artisan or artist?: a history of the teaching of art and crafts in English schools* p.143.

<sup>3</sup> "Superintendent of Drawing – Applications for the position of.", 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1889. NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>4</sup> Précis of minutes from meetings 1885-87, Archives of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

<sup>5</sup> Sutton, *Artisan or artist?: a history of the teaching of art and crafts in English schools*, pp.140-145.

vocabulary of ornamental design, that put students in an aesthetic continuum that linked them with the visual traditions of the great empires of history.

Examining Woodhouse's training indicates the sort of skills the Department of Public Instruction hoped to bring to New South Wales' public schools and reveals his philosophy on the role of art education. Their choice in hiring an Englishman familiar with the South Kensington syllabus also indicated a desire to teach children British design in a British manner. Art education was pressed into the service of the colonial project.

### **Search for a Superintendent**

In the final decades of the nineteenth-century, art education had begun to attract greater attention in New South Wales. In 1888 The New South Wales Department of Public Instruction acknowledged the importance of Drawing in a child's education, stating that it was a "very important educational subjects for primary schools" and set about hiring a specialist teacher to act as the first superintendent for drawing.<sup>6</sup>

The New South Wales Board of Education first looked for local applicants before taking their search abroad. Thirty-two applications were received from men in the colonies (Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Wellington, NZ).<sup>7</sup> Of these, the Board found that no "applicant among the number possesses all the qualifications required; nor does it now seem likely that a gentleman altogether suitable to fill the position can be obtained in the Colonies."<sup>8</sup> In his assessment of the best applications, Frederick Bridges rejected each individually:

Mr Riley is delicate and is wanting energy and continuous application. He prefers directing others to working himself.

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<sup>6</sup> The Under Secretary recorded this proposal for the appointment of a Superintendent of Drawing in a Memo dated October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1888, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>7</sup> NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>8</sup> Memo dated 24.1.89, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

Mr Plummer is rather too old for the position, he suffers from partial deafness and is a weak disciplinarian.

Mr Anderson is a young man of much ability, and teaches Drawing with very fair success. He has but little experience, and from want of proper training cannot have sufficient knowledge of the various branches of such to discharge effectively the duties of Superintendent of Drawing.<sup>9</sup>

Bridges personal knowledge of the candidates allowed him to deem them inappropriate for the position. Unhappy with the local candidates, the Board looked to London.

The Department of Public Instruction in New South Wales was not the first to look abroad for a suitable person to direct drawing instruction. In 1880, the South Australian Inspector General of Schools, John Anderson Hartley, appealed to London's Department of Science and Art at South Kensington for a director of their School of Design. It was the utilitarian nature of South Kensington course that attracted him, as he hoped to furnish children in South Australia with the design skills the course was intended to teach.<sup>10</sup> Harry Penning Gill was hired and arrived in Adelaide in 1882. He not only took charge of the school of design, but also wrote school drawing courses and curated the collection of the National Art Gallery. Men trained at South Kensington had also been hired in America,<sup>11</sup> Canada and New Zealand,<sup>12</sup> spreading this British mode of teaching throughout the English-speaking world.

There was no recorded consideration of suitable applicants from anywhere aside from London. Perhaps word of H. P. Gill's success in Adelaide inspired the New South Wales Board to follow suit and write to the Agent General in London, to appeal for applicants recommended by the South Kensington Department of

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<sup>9</sup> Letter from F. Bridges dated 11, March, 1889. NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>10</sup> Aland, "The Influence of the South Kensington School on the teaching of Drawing in South Australian schools from the 1880s in to the 20th century."

<sup>11</sup> Walter Smith was hired by the Massachusetts school Board to establish a drawing course for public schools. For more on Smith in America see Soucy and Stankiewicz, *Framing the past: essays on art education*.

<sup>12</sup> Chalmers in *ibid*, Chapter 5.

Science and Art. In his letter, the Under Secretary emphasized the importance placed on Drawing by The Board stating they were looking for “a gentleman who after obtaining from that institution the highest certificates in all branches of the subject has since had experience” (original emphasis).<sup>13</sup> This, despite the fact many of the local applicants who were rejected possessed South Kensington’s teaching certificates and subsequent experience.

The proposed salary was raised from £400 to £500 when The Board began to look abroad. This was a salary well above the superintendents of other subjects who received £400 p.a.; it was also a higher salary than the £450 p.a. that the Principal of the training college received.<sup>14</sup> The reason for this is not entirely clear from the records. Mention of this higher salary had been made by a local applicant, Mr Arthur D. Riley, who stated in his application that he “could not accept appointment... at a less salary than £500 per annum.”<sup>15</sup> The fact that The Board held to this higher salary suggests the seriousness of the appointment and their commitment to improving the standard of art education. They may have also felt that they needed to make the position attractive for good English applicants.

In 1889, the name ‘F. W. Woodhouse’ was sent back to The Board as the recommended candidate. His application had come with a commendation from the principal of South Kensington’s Drawing school and his portfolio had impressed the Agent General.<sup>16</sup> Woodhouse left England just three days later, but was granted one month’s leave ahead of his voyage. On his way to Sydney, Woodhouse undertook a tour to further his knowledge of art education, visiting Birmingham; Sheffield; Paris; and then Naples, examining their methods of art instruction.<sup>17</sup> This trip suggests he was eager to learn more about different methods of art instruction to prepare for his new role as superintendent.

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<sup>13</sup> NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>14</sup> Salaries recorded in the Blue Book. Mitchell Library.

<sup>15</sup> “Superintendent of Drawing – Applications for the position of.”, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1889. NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>16</sup> Saul Samuels. Letter dated 10th January, 1890. NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

## Woodhouse in New South Wales

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1890 Woodhouse arrived in Sydney and set about his work as superintendent.<sup>18</sup> After just two years, he had contributed a series of eleven articles to the newly established New South Wales Educational Gazette; He had joined the Sydney Arts Society, the teachers' association, the Sydney Architectural Association and the Technical College Association;<sup>19</sup> and became an honorary drawing tutor for the Boys Brigade;<sup>20</sup> all above and beyond beginning his duties as Superintendent for Drawing. In this role he inspected 81 schools, 181 separate departments and 979 classes, as well as giving sample lessons in many of these schools in the hope that it would help furnish teachers with better skills in teaching drawing.<sup>21</sup> He was committed to improving the provision of art education in the colony, writing "I have striven to make each inspection as useful as possible to the teachers by giving numerous model lessons – between 400 and 500 in all".<sup>22</sup>

Just as Woodhouse arrived in Sydney in 1890, the maritime strike and related social unrest, compounded with drought and increasing foreign debt, launched the country into depression. From 1891 to 1895 the New South Wales economy shrunk by 30 per cent.<sup>23</sup> In education, the great enthusiasm for improvement, spurred on by the 1880 Public Instruction Act, was beginning to wane. Expenditure on education dropped and salaries were cut.<sup>24</sup> This was not the ideal atmosphere for an idealistic young teacher to transform New South Wales art education.

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<sup>18</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 1890, p.6.

<sup>19</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 September 1891, page 5; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 June 1900, p.3; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 November 1892, p.6.

<sup>20</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 November 1891, p5.

<sup>21</sup> F. W. Woodhouse, 'Report on Drawing' in "Report of the minister for Public Instruction for the year 1891."

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Stuart Macintyre, *A concise history of Australia*, 3rd ed. (Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 121- 55.

<sup>24</sup> Campbell and Proctor, *A history of Australian schooling*.



Nevertheless, Woodhouse went about instituting measures to improve art education in the colony. His primary goal, in his role as superintendent, was to raise the standard of teaching drawing in schools,<sup>25</sup> but he was also interested in extending art education to the public at large. He carried with him the intention not just to improve children's drawing, but improve taste.

## Teaching Taste

Woodhouse was interested in educating the public more broadly in aesthetics and hoped to improve the standards of taste at large. His passion for art and its educative power was made clear in 1891, in a letter written to the trustees of the National Art Gallery of New South Wales. The Gallery had acquired a plaster copy of the Renaissance sculptor Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* (figure 9).<sup>26</sup> Like the South Kensington Museum in London, Sydney's public gallery had begun collecting casts, many of which were purchased directly from the cast maker for the South Kensington Museum. Collecting cast examples of great sculpture was seen to help the gallery become an institution for public art education, offering tools for self-instruction.

Woodhouse recognized the use of casts for educational purposes, as he wrote: "nothing could better conduce to the cultivation of an improved taste among art producers and patrons in New South Wales. The value of such works to the students of history and to the cause of general culture is no less great..."<sup>27</sup> He offered to deliver a lecture on Ghiberti "taking as a text the 'Gates of Paradise' and dealing not only with the history but also with the technicalities of the

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<sup>25</sup> F. W. Woodhouse 'Report on Drawing' in Robinson, "Skillful hands and seeing eyes: drawing and drawing masters in the government subsidised school system of colonial Victoria," p. 160. "Report of the minister for Public Instruction for the year 1891."

<sup>26</sup> Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* were the winning entry in 1401 for the design of the doors of the Florence Baptistery. For more on the history of Ghiberti's Baptistery doors see Gary M Radke and Andrew Butterfield, eds., *The gates of paradise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's Renaissance masterpiece* (Atlanta, Ga; Florence; New Haven: High Museum of Art; Yale University Press, in association with Opera di S. Maria del Fiore, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> F. W. Woodhouse Registered letters, 1891, letter no. 80, p. 2. Art Gallery of New South Wales archives.

design”.<sup>28</sup> He asked for no payment for this service, another indication of his enthusiasm for art education. He suggested he would be repaid by any success “in promoting an intelligent interest in the history and teachings of Art.”<sup>29</sup> He was eager to extend his teaching beyond the schoolrooms.

Woodhouse hoped to provide some insight into western art history and help his colonial audience to feel they shared an aesthetic heritage with England. He proposed a lecture that would draw on more recent examples of British design, to show that contemporary English design was part of a continuum “in a national evolution”.<sup>30</sup> For Sydney-siders, who may have felt geographically (and culturally) remote from the great cannon of Western art, Woodhouse drew a link between art in New South Wales’ schools and collections with great art of Europe. He suggests that by learning more about the history of western art, Australians could contribute to the next step in that evolution of great art and design.

Woodhouse was eager to reach a working audience. In his letter to the gallery, proposing the lecture, he acknowledges that showing the casts themselves as part of his lecture would be the best illustration to his words. However, “delivery of a lecture with the gates before one would necessitate its being given in the afternoon and would thereby preclude the attendance of many whom it would be most desirable to reach.”<sup>31</sup> Woodhouse hoped to address a diverse audience, and was aware that working artisans would be able to attend during working hours.

Lectures such as the one Woodhouse proposed were not uncommon. The gallery held ‘Conversazione’ that became a regular feature by the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> These lectures were most likely attended by the middle and upper classes. When the gallery was first established, art education was set among its major goals. It was a popular trope of those pushing for the

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<sup>28</sup> F. W. Woodhouse. AGNSW archives. Registered letters, 1891, letter no. 80, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Public lectures and Conversazione advertisements can be found at the AGNSW archives, Press Clippings 1900- 1906.

establishment of the public art gallery, that such an institution would provide a place for the working classes to visit in their leisure hours, “how superior this to the odious practice of besotting themselves in Ale houses...”<sup>33</sup> As discussed in the introduction, the gallery was part of this effort to teach taste, and act as a civilizing force. In offering to give a lecture on the Ghiberti sculpture, Woodhouse no doubt believed he was furthering the work he had begun in the public schools. This lecture would extend his reach and teach ‘taste’ to adults.

## **Drawing in Schools**

Woodhouse held the position of Superintendent for twelve years. In his attempts to improve the quality of drawing instruction in schools, he identified two major problems that needed to be addressed. The first was to give teachers proper training in drawing instruction, which would allow them to teach the subject with confidence and competence. The second was to undo long-held beliefs about the triviality of art education and its perceived lack of relevance to Australians.

Woodhouse instituted several initiatives to assist teachers. He wrote several articles for the *Educational Gazette*.<sup>34</sup> Here he explained the motivation that informed the South Kensington method. This was followed with a practical guide to teaching drawing, describing the techniques he learned in London.

Woodhouse also tried to give teachers some understanding of how art could be useful and relevant to students, criticizing the notion that drawing instruction was only relevant to budding artists:

The view that has done most to lower its position as a factor in education is, strangely enough, that which would regard it only in its relation to its highest function as the servant of Art – but in a narrow and perverted sense of that much abused term.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Colquhoun quoted in Bennett, *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics*: p.19.

<sup>34</sup> Woodhouse, *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, Vol 1, no. 2-6; Vol 3, no.1-7.

<sup>35</sup> Woodhouse, *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, Vol 1, no.2, pp.7-9.

Woodhouse wanted both teachers and students, to realize the relevance of drawing outside of high art. The series of articles continued over five issues of the magazine, and was addressed to at teachers with little or no experience teaching Drawing. Each article built upon lessons from the previous article. The lessons tended to be quite mathematical, as the geometry of basic shapes was explained, and later, notions of perspective introduced. Each of the major methods of drawing included in the South Kensington system was addressed (freehand, geometric, perspectival and model drawing), with illustrations and lesson plans included. Woodhouse's flowery language is at times difficult to follow. However, the intent to help teachers understand his methods of art instruction is evident.

Over his twelve years as Superintendent, the annual reports he submitted to the Minister for Public Instruction reveal much of the struggle and frustration he encountered. He felt pupil teachers were not applying themselves to the subject.<sup>36</sup> He also tried to counter the belief that success in drawing was the result of a 'natural gift' "largely independent of the powers of reason and observation possessed by all... this delusion being fostered by many teachers (as well as the outside public) tends to discourage effort".<sup>37</sup> Another key problem he identified in the work carried out in many schools, was the preoccupation with *product* over *process*. Woodhouse was frustrated with teachers who believed that the finished drawing produced was "the important thing – that something pretty to be exhibited at home should have been made, not the mental and moral training the child has received from the exercise."<sup>38</sup> Woodhouse wanted teachers to focus on teaching design skills. This required teachers to focus on good technique and strong foundations, rather than rushing to create showy work.

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<sup>36</sup> "Report of the minister for Public Instruction for the year 1891", p.161.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> F. W. Woodhouse 'Report on Drawing' in "Report of the minister for Public Instruction for the year 1893", p.121.

Woodhouse's reports show a commitment to improving the quality and quantity of art education in the colony. Yet each year, he seemed to encounter the same problems again and again, despite his best efforts to effect change. Woodhouse's concluding comments in each report make it clear, that the culture of art instruction in schools needed to change, and he alone was not able to affect such change.

### **Pushing for progress**

Woodhouse's complaints were made clear in his address at the 1902 Conference of Inspectors and Departmental officers of the New South Wales Department of Public instruction. He restated the problems with pupil-teacher training, and the standard of drawing knowledge held by practicing teachers. He highlighted the need for the Department to commit to the process of teacher training, acknowledging that fact that the benefits would take several years to have a positive impact.<sup>39</sup> In his conclusion, he summarized his most recent report and proposals, noting that "ten years ago [he] made the same proposals",<sup>40</sup> a fact that was, no doubt rather frustrating.

The conference had been called in response to mounting concerns with the state of education in New South Wales. As discussed in *Part One*, Professor Francis Anderson, of the University of Sydney had delivered an address at the Public School Teachers' Association in 1901, highlighting many of the deficiencies of the education system.<sup>41</sup> His criticisms of the pupil-teacher system and the annual examination pre-empt Woodhouse's complaints at the 1902 conference. Anderson suggested that the system of a single annual examination moved teachers to teach to the test to ensure their student's good results. Anderson suggested that the examination methods used in other systems of education around the world should be examined and considered as possible alternatives.

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<sup>39</sup> New South Wales Department of Public Instruction, "Conference of inspectors and departmental officers held Tuesday, 21 Jan. 1902 and following days", p.92.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> *Australian keepsake 1855*, p.7.

He then moved on to criticize the pupil-teacher system, which took only “partially educated” students to work as teacher’s aids with little more than an hour’s training per day. To improve the state of education, he suggested, teacher education must first be improved.<sup>42</sup> A sentiment Woodhouse voiced in relation to drawing instruction.

In response to criticisms voiced at the 1901 conference, two public meetings were called to discuss reforms to the education system.<sup>43</sup> It was at the second meeting that Woodhouse made his proposals. Woodhouses’ proposals were all focused on teaching the English South Kensington syllabus more effectively. However, the Board had begun to look further afield for how best to teach in New South Wales’ schools. It was also at this second meeting that the New South Wales Minister for Public Instruction; John Perry announced the Knibbs and Turner Commission.<sup>44</sup> This commission saw G. H. Knibbs (lecturer in surveying) and J. W. Turner (Principal of the Fort Street Model School) sent around the world to report on the systems and methods of education abroad. The first years of the twentieth century marked a point of change for the department of Public Instruction. It was no longer a department in its infancy, but had established itself and now needed to improve the quality of state education. The appointment of the Knibbs and Turner commission showed the new interest in educational systems and methods being used around the globe, and a desire to bring the best of them back to Australia. New South Wales educators were beginning to look beyond England.

The new interest in innovations in art education overseas can also be seen, by an article printed in the *New South Wales Educational Gazette* in September 1901. The article outlined the work of Ebenezer Cooke’s *Alternative Syllabus* being taught in London Board Schools: “Brushwork in colours, simple designs, modelling, outline drawing from casts, drawing and painting from nature, stencil

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<sup>42</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 June 1901, p.7.

<sup>43</sup> A Barcan, *A history of Australian education* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.201.

<sup>44</sup> This was published in the report: Knibbs and Turner, *Report of the Commissioners, mainly on primary, secondary and technical education: containing the summarized reports, recommendations, and extended reports of the Commissioners.*

work in colours, etc. are all shown as ordinary school work.”<sup>45</sup> The absence of brushwork, and working from nature in the New South Wales syllabus may have suggested that Australia was falling behind.

In his proposal at the conference, Woodhouse discussed, the work being done by the London Board Schools and some systems of the French, demonstrating his up-to-date knowledge of the educational happenings “at Home” in England.<sup>46</sup> He showed greater interest in developing the creativity of the child, signalling his interest in South Kensington’s *Alternative Syllabus*. However, his frustration with the poor quality of art teachers and the lack of proper training for new teachers in drawing remained the focus of his complaints. Woodhouse recommended three basic actions for the improvement of art education: More time be devoted to the subject; better provision of teacher training; and that more of his time be devoted to teaching rather than examining students. Woodhouse believed these three steps would help raise the quality of basic art education in the states schools.

The response of the inspectors barely addressed Woodhouse’s recommendations at all. Instead they asked whether Woodhouse could tell them “anything of the ambidextrous style which is now in vogue...”, showing their preoccupation with new modes of teaching from overseas.<sup>47</sup> This interest in ambidextrous drawing may have been sparked by an article published in the New South Wales *Educational Gazette* just a few months before the conference. The article was reprinted from the *Journal of American Education* and written by M. Louise Hutchinson, of Los Angeles, California. It praised this new method of art education for its hand-eye training and use in improving posture (although nothing is said of artistic or aesthetic merit).<sup>48</sup> The inspectors’ response aligned with the new interest in methods of instruction being developed in America and continental Europe.

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<sup>45</sup> *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, Vol 1, no.2, pp.7-9.

<sup>46</sup> New South Wales Department of Public Instruction, "Conference of inspectors and departmental officers held Tuesday, 21 Jan. 1902 and following days", p.92.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, 1901, Vol 11, no.5, pp.90-92.

Woodhouse responded to the inspector's question about ambidextrous drawing, but reminded them his intention was to first institute the most basic South Kensington method successfully before moving on to more complicated lessons.<sup>49</sup> He also outlined a few of the practical problems with instituting the method in Australian schools. Ambidextrous drawing required pupils to draw in large motions with both hands simultaneously on a blackboard (see figure 1). The limited number of blackboards in many schools and high cost of large sheets of paper, Woodhouse pointed out, would be a great limitation on the teaching of ambidextrous drawing. He also referred to the fact that the similar methods of free-arm drawing were already a part of the Drawing syllabus, but not taught as often as might be beneficial, again highlighting insufficient teaching and a lack of resources.<sup>50</sup>

The proposals that were carried only acknowledged *one* of the concerns voiced by Woodhouse. He was granted more time to teach drawing and employ additional inspectors to examine schools in both Sydney and Regional centers. The other proposal carried by the Board was as follows:

That steps be taken to introduce a teacher of Ambidexter (sic) Drawing in this State as soon as practicable. The success of this system has been so marked as to attract the attention of the civilized world. It will never do for us to lag behind. It is of great importance for the mental and physical training of our children that they should be taught to use both hands. I feel certain the State will derive great advantage by importing one of these teachers from America.<sup>51</sup>

This great interest in educational developments overseas again reflects the growing interest of the New South Wales Department of Public Instruction in this

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Fowles, *Sydney in 1848: illustrated by copper-plate engravings of its principal streets, public buildings, churches, chapels, etc.*

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.92.



era. The South Kensington syllabus that had been taught since 1854 was beginning to be seen as outmoded. The system of education in the colony was largely indebted to the British system, but toward the end of the nineteenth-century, Sydney educationists began to look further afield for examples of good education.

## JOHN E. BRANCH

In September 1902, nine months after Woodhouse appeared at the Conference of inspectors and departmental officers, an enthusiastic young English art teacher wrote to the Department of Public Instruction, applying for a position teaching drawing. His name was John E Branch. He had moved to Australia for his health,<sup>52</sup> and found temporary work teaching at Sydney Grammar School. In his letter to the Department, he comes across as bright, innovative and self-assured. He included several references from previous employers: one describes him as “an earnest, enthusiastic, original and very able teacher”;<sup>53</sup> another states: “Mr Branch has won the esteem of his students, and ensured a steadily increasing attendance.”<sup>54</sup> He concluded his letter with a description of himself: “I am 31 years of age, married and have one infant, and am six feet, one inch in height” and a photograph (figure 10) completing the picture of a young charismatic art teacher.

In 1902, Branch’s work had been commended by commissioners Knibbs and Turner in their interim report on Primary schools. They wrote:

A very praise-worthy exhibition of drawing was conducted by Mr J. E. Branch, Department of Public Instruction at the recent Public School Teachers’ conference in this State. The section of work represented were

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<sup>52</sup> Letter from J. E. Branch dated 10.9.1902, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

ambidextrous and free-arm drawing, brush work, and clay-modelling. The results shown by the children who gave practical demonstrations were very good...<sup>55</sup>

In their report, commissioners Knibbs and Turner highlighted the advances made in European drawing classes. They were critical of the prevalence of “mindless” copying taking place in Sydney, advocating drawing from nature instead. They quoted a Belgium drawing curriculum: “In suppressing direct observation, and the analysis of the outlines of the object, *one suppresses the intelligent part of the work, from which, above everything, drawing derives its educative and practical value* (original emphasis).”<sup>56</sup> They highlighted the importance of observational drawing for engaging a child’s deductive reasoning.

In February 1903, Branch was hired as an assistant to Woodhouse. The undersecretary commented that; “Mr Branch is exactly the kind of man we require and I think it would be a pity if his services were not secured.”<sup>57</sup> Soon after this Woodhouse resigned his position and Branch was hired as Superintendent of Drawing. However, Branch’s salary was just £300 p.a, two hundred pounds less than Woodhouse’s.<sup>58</sup> This may be attributed to the different circumstances under which he was hired. The Department did not need to offer any further encouragement to bring him over from England. It also reflects the overall decrease in salaries across the department that occurred through the 1890s.<sup>59</sup>

As superintendent, Branch represented new innovations in art teaching that had taken place in England in the previous decade. Many of the criticisms levelled at Woodhouse at the 1902 Conference of Inspectors and Departmental Officers,

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<sup>55</sup> George Handley Knibbs and John William Turner, "Interim report of the commissioners on certain parts of primary education. Containing the summarised reports, recommendations, conclusions, and extended report of the commissioners with illustrations, etc.," (Sydney W.A. Gullick, Government Printer 1903).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p.31.

<sup>57</sup> Undersecretary memo dated 18.9.1902. NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>58</sup> Memo dated 30.10.1902, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>59</sup> Salaries recorded in the Blue Book. Mitchell Library.

echoed those presented by Ablett and Cooke at the 1884 International Health Conference in England about the importance of teaching art to improve hand-eye coordination and instruct in a way that responded to children's interests and curiosity (discussed previously in *Part I: Schools*). The Board was interested in ambidextrous drawing and art education that focused on hand-eye coordination all included in the new syllabus in use in London Board schools. Branch's experience in teaching this syllabus for the years before he moved to Australia clearly appealed to the board. However, their interest in these new methods seems somewhat superficial; an effort to keep up with global progress without really understanding the new methods they endorsed. In his memo endorsing Branch's appointment, the undersecretary wrote: "it is very desirable that Free Hand Drawing and Brush Work be introduced into our schools without delay"(my emphasis).<sup>60</sup> He confused the outmoded 'free-hand drawing' (already being used in department schools) with the new 'free-arm drawing' that was part of the new *Alternative Syllabus*.

In his initial letter to the Department, Branch outlined his training in brushwork, modelling, free-arm and ambidextrous drawing.<sup>61</sup> These were all elements of the *Alternative Syllabus* published by South Kensington in 1895. Having taught in London Board Schools for 10 years before moving to Australia, Branch had experience in the schools in which Ablett had first introduced the *Alternative Syllabus*. Branch also showed his own innovation in suggesting a scheme of his own. He wrote that the syllabus was devised, "...judging by the results, combined all the advantages of other schemes and rejected all the useless portions."<sup>62</sup> His scheme used observational drawing and included free-arm drawing and brushwork led by the teacher. Where Woodhouse tried to institute the basic South Kensington system, Branch was more flexible, eager to find the best course of instruction for Sydney schools.

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<sup>60</sup> Undersecretary memo dated 18.9.1902, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>61</sup> Letter from Branch to the Department of Public Instruction dated 10 September 1902, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

Branch also wrote of the benefits of ambidextrous drawing, but noted that his own scheme had excluded the practice, “as it would have needed more space than I had at my disposal, but am quite willing to add it to my Scheme if sufficient floor space could be obtained.”<sup>63</sup> Branch’s comments suggest that Woodhouse’s reluctance to introduce ambidextrous drawing to department schools that were already struggling to teach the basic course effectively, were probably well founded. Nevertheless, Branch’s knowledge and experience teaching ambidextrous drawing were no doubt attractive to the inspectors who were already interested in this new technique.

At the Board’s insistence, Branch incorporated ambidextrous drawing in his new syllabus for New South Wales. He gave an address and demonstration of the method, as well as brushwork and modelling at the Public school teacher’s conference of June 1903. After being appointed superintendent in at the end of 1903, Branch undertook a tour of regional New South Wales. Regional newspapers were littered with accounts of Branch’s demonstrations, describing his “distinguished career in England”, and his status as an “acknowledged expert”.<sup>64</sup> His lecture attracted a buzz.

Isabel Mackenzie, who would go on to become one of the first specialist art teachers in New South Wales, recalled taking lessons in ambidextrous drawing. She was a student in Dubbo at this time and remembers the lessons in drawing were taught by the school’s principal. Mackenzie wrote: “I can recall... an awful phase called ‘Ambidextrous drawing’. This was carried out on a small black rectangle of thick cardboard, which stood upright in a groove at the back of the desk. Standing, white chalk in either hand, we made more or less symmetrical drawings from plaster casts of acanthus or such. These exercises being wholly aimed at developing skill were hateful...”<sup>65</sup> Mackenzie’s memories offer a unique insight into the student experience.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> *Northern Star*, 2 December, 1903, p.7.

<sup>65</sup> Isabel Walker MacKenzie, “Isabel Walker MacKenzie papers, 1923-1972,” in *MLMSS 2996* (Sydney: Mitchell Library, 1923-1972).

Mackenzie's recollection of ambidextrous drawing allows further insight to how this branch of art was instructed. The fact that the class was set to copy plaster casts of "acanthus or such", suggests these lessons may have been much different to the other types of drawing being taught. Apart from the use of both hands, students were still copying in outline from ornamental figures deemed appropriate by the governing bodies. Mackenzie's memories show that as a child, she had no understanding of why they should be asked to draw with two hands simultaneously. The rationale was not made clear to students. The exercises, even for a child passionate about art, appeared pointless.

Branch outlined the benefits of Ambidextrous Drawing in his first report as Superintendent of 1903. He suggested its usefulness in teaching "the ability to use both or either hand and arm... [it] benefits the physical and mental development of the scholar."<sup>66</sup> He provided a link between ambidextrous drawing, and the new interest in developing hand-eye training, stating that this mode of drawing should help in the development of a child's coordination. He went on:

The musician, typist, and many more manual workers use either arm and hand, and in some cases where dexterity is the habit now, it would be a physical and commercial advantage to the employee and a commercial advantage to the employer, if the former were ambidextrous. In all our domestic and personal operations we use both hand, although, as a rule, we cannot use either hand. Writing and Drawing are the operations in which dexterity is most prevalent.<sup>67</sup>

Branch points to the vocational and practical use of art education. He shows the broader relevance of drawing and appeals to the ever-present desire for progress in industry.

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<sup>66</sup> Report on the Public School Teachers' Association Annual Conference printed in the *New South Wales Educational Gazette*, 1 June 1903, Vol 13, no.1, p.1.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p.1.

Throughout the report that follows, Branch focused on the key differences in the spirit of this new syllabus. His report offered practical advice for teachers. While he outlined the changes in the techniques for teaching art – ambidextrous and free-arm drawing, brushwork and modelling – he showed how these techniques could be used in art and design; and how the exercises should be approached. Branch highlighted the desire to have students “express their own mental impressions,” placing an emphasis on “the formation of self expression, originality and the formation of correct and accurate mental impressions...”<sup>68</sup> Drill and accuracy were no longer the only focus. The notion of expressing ideas through art and design had become a new interest.

Branch’s report gives insight into his philosophy of art education, and makes clear the links between Cooke’s *Alternative Syllabus* and his own. In his discussion of teaching modelling, Branch suggests that innovation in design is desirable: “When modelling from objects, the reason for constructions are understood, and at times the scholars suggest either a different or better form. Already we have an improved egg-cup.”<sup>69</sup> The emphasis on working from models and ensuring students have a full understanding of the purpose of their design shows Branch’s desire to have students engage with their learning. He wanted to move away from mindless copying and to have art be seen as a form of visual communication.

In June 1903, just months after joining the department as an art teacher, Branch’s lessons were reported to be “warmly appreciated by our younger teachers, who attend the classes in very large numbers. Mr. Branch has a pleasing manner before a class, and his practical demonstrations, accompanied by a vivid exposition of principles, prove him a thorough master of his work.”<sup>70</sup> His lectures were described as

novel and attractive... [so much so that he] secured the sympathy and co-operation of teachers, who are unanimous in acknowledging the benefit

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> *New South Wales Educational Gazette*, 1 June 1903, Vol 13, no.1, p.1.

derived from his instruction and willingly gave up their leisure for several months in order that they might master the elements of the new system.<sup>71</sup>

Quite a feat in light of Woodhouse's many years of frustration in convincing teachers of the value of Drawing instruction. Perhaps his 6 feet, 1 inch stature and bushy moustache made all the difference?

In December 1903 Branch visited Golburn, Bowral, Lismore, Robertson, and other towns in the Illawara region to give guidance to teachers on teaching drawing. The newspaper coverage showed a particular interest in ambidextrous drawing, describing the demonstrations in some detail:

illustrating his subject by deftly executed designs on the black-board, the lecturer showed the surprising precision and facility of execution which the left hand could be trained to acquire, specially in the formation of circles, ellipses and curves. Simple figures based on the circle and the ellipses such as a bunch of cherries, a cluster of grapes and an egg and egg-cup were sketched off with surprising rapidity.<sup>72</sup>

Branch's presentations were both impressive and accessible.

Branch appears to have been more successful than his predecessor in rallying support for art education. The Chief Inspector for Public Instruction, Frederick Bridges commended Branch, stating that in the short time he had worked for the department, "he has proved himself eminently successful as a teacher, and has awakened a great amount of interest and enthusiasm amongst both the teachers and pupils."<sup>73</sup> Branch's enthusiasm for art education appears to have been infectious.

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<sup>71</sup> *Northern Star*, 2 December 1903, p.7.

<sup>72</sup> *Bowral Free Press*, 9 December, 1903, p.2 and reprinted in the *Robertson Advocate*, 11 December 1903, p.2 and *The Southern Mail*, 11 December 1903, p.2.

<sup>73</sup> Memo from F. Bridges dated 5.9.1903, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

Branch made a clear effort to outline his new course of art instruction in a way that would be manageable and achievable by teachers. In his presentation of the new system of instruction, he made clear the value of the old mode of teaching art, but highlighted the key features of his method as they differ. He listed these, beginning with: “The scholars must think for themselves more so than in any other lesson.”<sup>74</sup> In this he immediately distanced his art course from a habit of mindless copying. He went on to outline other key elements seen in South Kensington’s *Alternative Syllabus*, including modelling and brushwork with an emphasis on inventiveness and observation from nature.

In March 1904, Branch took another tour of regional New South Wales, this time to the Singleton area, giving demonstrations of his new scheme for art education. His visits appear to have been much anticipated, with teachers reported to have travelled as many as “30 miles solely for the purpose of attending the instructive and interesting lectures”.<sup>75</sup> Another report written in advance of Branch’s visit, highlighted the importance of his lecture and demonstration; stating that “teachers from surrounding districts have been authorized to close their schools in order to be present and take full advantage of Mr. Branch’s visit.”<sup>76</sup> The department had begun to take art seriously enough to authorise temporary school closures to facilitate teacher attendance.

Branch utilized newspaper coverage effectively to spread his message about art education. Many of his lectures were advertised in articles in the days preceding his arrival, with details of the educational scheme. These reports convey some of Branch’s key objectives:

...drawing as a mode of thought expression, will be made to play a much more important and effective part in the training of our boys and girls. One of the primary objects of Mr. Branch’s visit will be to show how drawing is, and ought to be, one of the natural aids to reality in teaching all subjects with

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<sup>74</sup> Report on the Public School Teachers’ Association Annual Conference printed in the New South Wales Educational Gazette, 1 June 1903, Vol 13, no.1.

<sup>75</sup> *Maitland Weekly Mercury*, 19 March 1904, p.7.

<sup>76</sup> *The Maitland Daily Mercury*, 15 March 1904, p.6.



which it can be correlated. Parents who are interested in educational matters are invited to be present...<sup>77</sup>

This newspaper coverage brought Branch's presentations on art instruction to a wider audience. It allowed parents of students to learn and understand why art was an important part of the curriculum and change long-held perceptions of art as an 'extra' or a 'frill' to the core curriculum.

The craze for ambidextrous drawing was short-lived. Doubt was cast on the practice at the 1904 annual Conference of Inspectors, teachers, departmental officers and Prominent Educationists. A teacher from the Superior Public School at Goulburn criticized ambidextrous drawing, claiming that his poorest students showed the most promise in the subject, while his best and brightest struggled. The matter was conveyed to the Supervisor of Technical Education, Mr. Cooper, who referred to an American report from Mr. Sudley, Director of the Department of Child Study at the University of Chicago who found that: "At any given age of school life bright or advanced pupils tend towards accentuated unidexterity; slow or backwards pupils tend toward ambidexterity."<sup>78</sup> The matter was settled and ambidextrous drawing faded from the syllabus.

## **Textbooks**

During his time as superintendent, Branch published two books for teachers and students of art. Examining these books gives further insight to his teaching philosophy he outlines his motivations in the book's introduction. What is immediately evident in all of Branch's writing is his clarity. Where Woodhouse was often difficult to follow, meandering from one idea to the next, Branch presented his ideas clearly. Each of his articles included a point-form summary of his key ideas. He also offered practical advice to teachers on how to implement

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Sudley quoted by Hilson, "Art Education in New South Wales. 1850s to 1930s with particular reference to the contribution of Joseph Fowles, Fredrich W. Woodhouse, and John E. Branch.", p.106.

these ideas in the classroom. Though his ideas were not altogether different from Woodhouse's, Branch was far better at communicating them.

In 1906, Branch Published *Brushwork from nature with design*.<sup>79</sup> The book introduced teachers to some of the new methods of art instruction introduced by Branch into the Public Schools. It also offers insight into Branch's education philosophy. He explains some of the "best methods of drawing with the brush",<sup>80</sup> and offers teachers some practical guidelines for teaching these methods. His instructions show his ability to empathise with teachers inexperienced in art instruction. They also explain his motivations for teaching in this way, allowing teachers to understand both why and how they should teach art.

From the opening paragraphs of his book, Branch distanced himself from the mindless copy-exercises that had found their way into many classrooms. He writes: "The copying of drawing is discountenanced on account of the narrow and stunted value of such work."<sup>81</sup> Instead, he explains, the value in learning to draw is found in the close observation of the subject and the ability to render it truthfully. Like a scientist, the student of drawing must consider their subject as if it was a specimen. For this reason, it was vital to teach students to draw from nature from their very first lesson, rather than copy from copybooks. This, Branch warns, requires a far more skilful teacher than the teacher supplying copy-exercises: "In fact, the teacher must be an educator rather than an instructor if he intends to be of value to his pupils."<sup>82</sup> In this warning, Branch reminds teachers that there is skill and hard work required to teach art.

Branch urged teachers to ensure every lesson includes use of "mental activity".<sup>83</sup> He suggested that drawing from nature could be one task that could promote greater student engagement. If the task is to draw a plant, he suggests that each part of the anatomy should be labelled and a few lines about its habits included

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<sup>79</sup> John E. Branch, *Brushwork with nature from design* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1906).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p.v.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p.vi.

at the foot of the page. Drawing, in this way, could be included in any number of lessons. It also distanced the tasks from simply becoming 'pretty pictures', as they serve a function. Branch suggested that teachers should explain to parents that art was not an 'accomplishment' or an 'extra', but essential aesthetic training for the "future workman".

Branch also highlights the creative capacity of the students. He suggests that students should be allowed to develop their inherent desire to express themselves. He goes further, explaining, "Each child has a very distinct individuality. Originally in this work, if properly guided, will develop that character to the individual's advantage."<sup>84</sup> By engaging and thinking about the drawings they were making, Branch believed that children would learn to express their ideas through their art.

The book is a practical guide for teachers. The exercises are explained clearly and illustrated with examples at each stage of the drawing process. Careful consideration has been paid to the choice of subjects. Plants are principally chosen, because, as Branch explains, they "supply the major portion of the world's ornament".<sup>85</sup> He also reminds readers that, with the exception of the first drill exercises, the illustrations were not intended to be used as a copy. Instead, drawings should be a product of the child's interpretation of reality.

Branch devoted one chapter to an explanation of 'line'. He acknowledged the fact that linear structures rarely appear in nature. Leaves and flowers might be better described as planes of light and dark, or coloured masses. Often, the edge of an object is not a rigid boundary that can be described accurately in line. This was one of Cooke and Ablett's criticisms of South Kensington's emphasis on drawing in line. Branch suggests that this is where using coloured crayon or chalk, or a brush with paint may provide a more suitable medium, as children could more easily describe light and dark in these medium. However, regardless of the

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p.1.

medium, the object of the lesson remains the same: careful observation and visual interpretation.

Branch's second book, *Picture Study for High School*, published in 1916 offered a manual in art appreciation to secondary school students.<sup>86</sup> The book introduced art history, theory and appreciation to school students for the first time. Branch writes for high school teachers, beginning with a series of basic questions, such as "what is art?" suggesting it is "the soul of a human expression which is capable of appealing to other aesthetically, emotionally, imaginatively, and intellectually with an ennobling influence."<sup>87</sup> He also suggests a practical activity for teaching art appreciation where students compare and contrast two works of art, a technique still common in art history courses today. He stresses the importance of high-quality reproductions for students to build an accurate understanding of the images.

Branch's education philosophy is made clear. He suggests that beauty is nature that has not been distorted. In this he takes a dig at the tendency of academic artists to stylise their sitters and "to supply heads with mouths too small to be used for eating, grown-up young ladies with babies' hands, and so on."<sup>88</sup> In this he distinguishes great art from fashion and highlights the importance of an artist's careful study of nature.

Branch also offers guidance to visiting the gallery. In doing so he acknowledges the importance of viewing original works of art. He also encourages students to take advantage of the free public gallery. Branch suggests that on a first visit, students should view all the works on show. After a broad survey, they may then return to consider fewer pictures in greater detail. For a teacher leading a class, they are instructed to lead the class back only to the paintings that received the most intelligent comments.

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<sup>86</sup> ———, *Picture study for high schools* (Sydney: New South Wales, Dept. of Public Instruction, 1916).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p.1.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p.4.

## Salary

Throughout his time as superintendent, Branch repeatedly applied for salary increases. His salary appears to have been an ongoing source of frustration. In April 1904, Branch applied for a salary increase from £300 to £350.<sup>89</sup> He wrote again on June 10<sup>th</sup> and was awarded the higher salary.<sup>90</sup> In July 1905, he wrote again. He explained that he was undertaking an increased load in order to institute the improvements to the syllabus.<sup>91</sup> In 1910 he wrote once more, explaining that he is not on a salary 'scale' and had been in service to the Department for seven years.

Even after his rise to £350, Branch was still earning £150 p.a less than Woodhouse, his predecessor. He was aware that from 1891, his predecessor had been earning £500 p.a. and was clearly frustrated, that despite his hard work and success, he earned significantly less than Woodhouse. Branch cites his increased load and great success in administering art education to justify earning the higher salary. He claimed that the work being undertaken in New South Wales schools was in advance of many other nations, and that; "Our work held it own in the great International Art Congress in London 1908, when 41 nations contributed."<sup>92</sup> The Undersecretary advised a raise to £400 per annum,<sup>93</sup> but he was only granted £375.<sup>94</sup> In 1918, Branch was still petitioning for a raise.<sup>95</sup>

Branch's ongoing struggle to earn a higher wage indicated the broader feelings about art instruction. The educational climate was very different in the first decades of the twentieth century. In the lead up to Woodhouse's appointment in 1891, Sydney's educational community were rallying to improve the quality of technical instruction. The Combes report of 1887 recommended that drawing be taught from the very earliest stages, teaching basic skills that could be built on

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<sup>89</sup> Letter dated 1 April 1904, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>90</sup> Letter dated 10 June 1904, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>91</sup> Letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1905, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>92</sup> Letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> April 1910, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>93</sup> Letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> April 1910, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>94</sup> Letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> May 1910, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>95</sup> Letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> July 1918, NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

later through technical education. Woodhouse's salary was set high in order to attract a competent candidate from England. Though drawing was still considered important in the twentieth century, there was no panic around finding a suitable appointment.

## **Conclusion**

Examining the professional biographies of Woodhouse and Branch shows us how the character of art education both changed and remained the same in schools from 1891 to 1915. During his time as superintendent, Woodhouse focused on bringing the key principles of the South Kensington curriculum into Sydney's schools. While Branch tried to develop a new curriculum based on the South Kensington system, he also incorporated some of the new teaching techniques from America and Europe.

Studying the experience of the Superintendents for Drawing allows us to gain further insight to the instruction offered in a large portion of Sydney schools. Close analysis of the way they were hired and the activities they carried out as superintendent allows us to interrogate the interests and intentions of the Board of Education. I have shown how decisions made at the top filtered down, through the actions and decisions of the superintendents, into the classroom.

This chapter has shown the ways that the different personalities of the two men also played a major role in how they taught and style of art instruction. Woodhouse appears to have been focused on teaching the British system. He was not flexible, and continued to be frustrated by colonial attitudes to art. Branch's charisma endeared him to previously disinterested teachers and allowed him to implement more challenging lesson plans. Close analysis of these professional biographies allows us to see how a personality could shape the character of art instruction.

## CHAPTER FIVE: ETHEL A. STEPHENS<sup>1</sup>

It was September 1<sup>st</sup> 1903, the first day of spring, when the girls left Barham after their lessons.<sup>2</sup> The fresh sweet scent of dewy grass met them as they passed the hedge at the front of the school, new pink camellia flowers peering out through glossy green.<sup>3</sup> Rays of sunlight pierced the dreary clouds and dried the rain-soaked footpath.<sup>4</sup> Music floated down the street,<sup>5</sup> as women dressed smartly in white cloth dresses, trimmed with gold braid, walked past, drawing them towards their destination.<sup>6</sup>

The girls were on their way to Eaglesfield Darlinghurst, to attend the exhibition of their teacher and well-renowned Sydney painter, Miss Ethel A Stephens.<sup>7</sup> The place had originally been the site of The New School, a grammar school established by William John Stephens, Ethel's father. He built the school after his unhappy separation from Sydney Grammar School in 1866. The Grammar School's trustees had disapproved of Stephens' reluctance to institute corporal punishment and Stephens had broken away with his own educational endeavor.<sup>8</sup> The New School had lead a rocky existence and eventually closed, but Stephens and his family had stayed on at Eaglesfield.<sup>9</sup> After William's death in 1890, Ethel, who by this time was a promising artist, built herself a studio on the property.<sup>10</sup> By all accounts it was a wonderful space; full of natural light and set within an

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<sup>1</sup> An abridged version of this chapter has been accepted for publication by *History of Education Review*.

<sup>2</sup> SCEGGS moved to Barham in Darlinghurst in 1900, for more on the history of SCEGGS see Cameron, *S.C.E.G.G.S.: a centenary history of Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School*.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen's described the school's flowerbeds in her recollection of Miss Badham at the time of her death in 1940. She writes of the Daphne, Camellias and occasionally Sweet Pea that had been planted and maintained since the school had moved to Barham in 1901. Camellias typically bloom from winter to spring and would likely have been in flower in September 1903. *Lux*, February 1940, pp. 30-31.

<sup>4</sup> There had been heavy rain over night that had cleared throughout the day. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'The Weather', 2 September 1903, p.10.

<sup>5</sup> Reports of Stephens' "at homes" frequently commented on the presence of a band, such as the Truda Brothers band at her show in 1896, reported in *The Bulletin*, September 1886, Ethel Stephens Album. AGNSW archives, MS 2000.8.

<sup>6</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 4 March 1901, Stephens Album.

<sup>7</sup> The girls' frequently attended Stephens' art exhibitions. In June 1901, the SCEGGS magazine *Lux* reported on one of Stephens' 'at homes'. *Lux*, June 1<sup>st</sup> 1901, vol 1, no.5, p.3.

<sup>8</sup> Turney, *Grammar: a history of the Sydney Grammar School 1819-1988*, p.49.

<sup>9</sup> Stephens Album.

<sup>10</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 November 1890, p. 5.

exquisite flower garden. Some suggested that it was no wonder Miss Stephens had established herself as such an excellent flower painter with such inspiration on her doorstep.<sup>11</sup>

As the girls entered Stephens' studio they met a buzzing throng. Some of Sydney's most prominent people populated the crowd, from Lady Barton, the wife of the Prime Minister, to Sir Norman MacLaurin, Chancellor of the University of Sydney.<sup>12</sup> The room they knew as their weekly classroom, normally cluttered with girls and painting easels, had been transformed.<sup>13</sup> Instead they encountered impressive and unfamiliar faces examining the paintings that made the difference, Stephens' pictures - tastefully hung, and pretty vases of flowers that had been carefully placed about the room, all of which came together to stunning effect.

By all accounts, the guests were impressed by what they saw.<sup>14</sup> Several reporters noted that the purple waterlilies – a native variety from Queensland – were particularly impressive. One commented that; “A lake or a creek bespecked [sic] with these great purple beauties must look something like fairy land”.<sup>15</sup> The clink of teacups and tea plates punctuated the sound of lively conversation and gave the atmosphere of a well-hosted tea party more than an exhibition of paintings.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1890s, many Sydney artists began staging solo shows in the London style, known as ‘at homes’.<sup>17</sup> For several days before the major annual exhibition,

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<sup>11</sup> Press accounts of the studio comment on it favourably: An Article in ‘Town and Country’, on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1900 reported on the newly built studio, commenting that “[Stephens has] succeeded in designing an almost ideal studio for herself and her numerous pupils. The lighting in excellent... the whole effect is artistic and pleasing to the eye of the most exacting visitor; The ‘Young Australian’ of September 9<sup>th</sup> 1903 commented on the “...beautiful studio, built from her own design.”; A review of her “At Home” exhibition of 1901 commented that “the studio, which is situated at the end of the garden, is an ideal atelier, so that it is small wonder with such skill and appointment there were nothing but compliments heard on all sides.” *The Daily Telegraph*, April 27 1901; *Sydney Mail* noted, “Her new studio opens on to a pretty garden, where a band played attractive selections...” *Sydney Mail*, March 4<sup>th</sup> 1907. Press clipping from Stephens Album, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archive.

<sup>12</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 September 1903, Stephens Album.

<sup>13</sup> Description of art classes being held at Stephens' studio can be found in *Lux*, September 1900, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 September 1903; *Australian*, 9 September 1903; Stephens Album.

<sup>15</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 September 1903.

<sup>16</sup> Newspaper clipping, Stephens Album.

<sup>17</sup> *Boudoir Gossip*, 23 August 1893, Stephens Album.



artists would throw open the doors to their studio and invite friends, family, and colleagues to view their work.<sup>18</sup> This style of presentation was particularly popular among female artists. It offered them an opportunity to show many more paintings than were accepted by the all-male selection committees of the New South Wales Society for Artists. It also allowed them to show their work on their own terms, within their own space, and to a select audience of their choosing. It was a way for female artists to negotiate between their public roles as artist in a domestic setting. It maintained respectability as a social event within the home, attended by invitation only (unlike the exhibitions of the Art Society) and gave the artist total curatorial control over the setting and display, as well as a commercial opportunity to sell the work. For Stephens it also offered a chance to introduce her students to the Sydney art scene; to show them her paintings as well as some aspects of the life of an artist.

This chapter examines Ethel A. Stephen's professional biography - her career as an artist and teacher - and considers her contribution to women's art education in Sydney at the turn of the twentieth century (pictured in figure 11). This was a foundational era for art in New South Wales. The international exhibition of 1879 had fostered an interest in art and design, leading to the establishment of the National Gallery within a dedicated exhibition building in 1885. Proposals to open a school for training artists were put forward several times throughout the latter part of the century, but amounted to little beyond additional classes at the Technical College. Women were in attendance at many of these classes, often outnumbering aspiring male artists. Many of these women had successfully sold their work, but were rarely taken seriously as artists.<sup>19</sup> Their male colleagues continued to dominate the annual exhibitions.<sup>20</sup>

Stephen's professional life as an artist and teacher reveals some of the possibilities for female artists and art students in Sydney in this period. She provides an example of the little explored relationship between art history and education history, and between professional artists and school art teaching.

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<sup>18</sup> Stephens Album.

<sup>19</sup> Philp, "From wallflowers to tall poppies? The Sydney Society of Women Painters, 1910-1934."

<sup>20</sup> Caroline Ambrus, *The ladies picture show* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger Pty Ltd., 1984).

While aspects of the accomplishments curriculum in Australia have been examined by Theobald and Chambers,<sup>21</sup> little attention has been paid to art pedagogy. This chapter offers a glimpse into the classroom and the ways in which girls at Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School (SCEGGS) studied art under Stephens' tutelage.

The teaching undertaken by artists is rarely considered to be important. This chapter places Stephen's teaching at the centre and examines how her career as an artist was intertwined with her teaching practice. A special focus on her 'at home' exhibitions shows some of the tensions that existed as she negotiated her career and her status as a respectable middle class woman. These 'at homes' were particularly significant for female artists who found few other exhibiting opportunities. They have not yet been the subject of scholarly attention. The second part of this chapter then focuses on her work at SCEGGS with close attention to her method of teaching art. Finally, the subjects of her paintings are examined and the reception of her work is considered in order to reflect on the place of female artists in Sydney at the turn of the century and the career opportunities for her students.

### **Ethel A. Stephens**

Stephens was Born in 1864, the daughter of William John Stephens, headmaster of Sydney Grammar School and later Professor of Natural History at Sydney University. She grew up in a family that was deeply committed to education.<sup>22</sup> Stephens was one of those few women who chose to pursue painting as a profession, and one of an even smaller number who did so with great success.

For a woman who enjoyed success as an artist in her day, very little is remembered of her today. No substantial biography has been written, nor does she appear in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Her life and work are

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<sup>21</sup> Theobald, *Knowing women: origins of women's education in nineteenth-century Australia*; Marjorie Theobald, "The PLC mystique: reflections on the reform of female education in nineteenth-century Australia.," *Australian Historical Studies* 23, no. 92 (1989); Coral Chambers, *Lessons for ladies: a social history of girls' education in Australiasia 1870 - 1900* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1986).

<sup>22</sup> Clifford Turney, "William John Stephens," <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/stephens-william-john-4645>.

summarized in a brief paragraph by Philp and Kerr in *Heritage: The National Women's Art Book*.<sup>23</sup> She receives just a few lines in William Moore's great treatise on Australian artists of 1934 and nothing is said of her teaching.<sup>24</sup> Ambrus' account of Australian women artists offers more, outlining her role in the Sydney art societies and details her attempts to foster education and exhibition opportunities for female artists, but does not write of Stephens' teaching either.<sup>25</sup> Stephens' efforts to support and encourage the work of women artists through her involvement in the art societies at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth-century is discussed by Angela Philp in her work on the Society of Women Artists.<sup>26</sup> In this role, Stephens was an advocate for art education, as she strove to find more exhibiting opportunities for females artists. Yet no scholarly attention has been paid to the work she did as a teacher at Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School (SCEGGS). Little is known of her personal life, as is typical of women in this era, only a fragmented record survives.

Stephens' art is largely forgotten today. The great body of her prolific output has been lost. Only a handful of portraits; two prints; and just a few of the flower paintings (for which she was so well known in her day) survive today. This chapter uses Stephen's album of press clippings held in the archive of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the archive of SCEGGS Darlinghurst and contemporary newspaper coverage of her exhibitions to build an understanding of her career as a teacher and artist.

Stephens was involved in a great number of groups, working to encourage art education. In 1886 she was among the first pupils at The Sydney Art School (later known as the Julian Ashton School).<sup>27</sup> In 1883 she joined the Art Society of New South Wales, and in 1892 she became its first female committee member.<sup>28</sup> In

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<sup>23</sup> Kerr, *Heritage: the national women's art book*.

<sup>24</sup> William Moore, *The story of Australian art: from the earliest known art of the continent to the art of to-day* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1934).

<sup>25</sup> Ambrus, *The ladies picture show*.

<sup>26</sup> Philp, "From wallflowers to tall poppies? The Sydney Society of Women Painters, 1910-1934."

<sup>27</sup> Kerr, *Heritage: the national women's art book*.

<sup>28</sup> Ambrus, *The ladies picture show*.

1895 she joined the Society of Artists, a group exclusively made up of practising artist who were frustrated by the many members of the Art Society who were not themselves, artists.<sup>29</sup> In 1906 she became the founding vice-president of the New South Wales Society of Arts and Crafts and in 1910, a founding member of the Society of Women Artists.<sup>30</sup> She taught painting and drawing at SCEGGS from 1895, while exhibiting annually with the art societies and staging solo exhibitions in her studio. She also had one painting and two prints acquired by the National Gallery of New South Wales.<sup>31</sup> Stephens was a prolific artist, producing scores of paintings, watercolours and - later in her career - prints, each year. By the time of her death in 1944, she had built a successful career as an artist.

### **Exhibitions and “at homes”**

Throughout her career, Stephens’ represented female artists in numerous art societies in attempt to allow women some of the same exhibiting opportunities as their male counterparts. Yet she remained a traditionalist, both in her conservative painting style and in her understanding of the art world. She subscribed to modes of representation that privileged the work of male artists. The Academy placed figurative work - history painting – as the pinnacle of artistic achievement and the top of the hierarchy of genres. This was followed by portraiture and landscape, then finally still life painting. Stephens valued this academic hierarchy of genres, believing good figurative work was the mark of an exceptional artist, despite being predominantly a still life painter herself. She did not consider women’s crafts to be an art form, as evidenced by her reluctance to continue her association with the Society of Arts and Crafts when ladies craft began to dominate their exhibitions.<sup>32</sup> Yet these traditional values did not keep her from working to make more opportunities for female artists.

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<sup>29</sup> Stephens Album.

<sup>30</sup> Philp, "From wallflowers to tall poppies? The Sydney Society of Women Painters, 1910-1934."

<sup>31</sup> *Lux*, Jun 1900, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Kerr, *Heritage: the national women's art book*, p.40.

As the upper middle-class daughter of an educated man, Stephens was born into a privileged position. Her interest in art was certainly fostered as she was sent to study with the well-renowned English artist, Julian Ashton in 1886.<sup>33</sup> Ashton, known as a conservative art teacher who championed traditional modes of artistic production during times of great change in the art world.<sup>34</sup> He was dedicated to the academic mode of art training, insisting his students study traditional perspective and copy from plaster casts of antique statuary. Like Ashton, Stephens did not think much of the Modernist work coming out of Europe and dismissed it when she travelled abroad in the 1920s. A report in the press covering her European sojourn was titled, “Art Abroad: Miss Ethel Stephens, Not Impressed”, setting the tone from the outset, went on to state that the artist expressed “disgust at the new weird trend of modern art”.<sup>35</sup> Stephens brought the lessons she had learned under the tutelage of Julian Ashton to her own teaching practice. Ashton became a key art educator in Sydney, training some of the best-known Australian Artists including Elioth Gruner, George Lambert and Sydney Long. His influence was extended through the work of his students like Stephens.<sup>36</sup>

There was huge public interest in art exhibitions in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century.<sup>37</sup> As the movement for the establishment of public museums gathered strength in the early part of the nineteenth-century, speakers claimed that increased public access to art might raise the quality of design and become an economic benefit through the improvement of manufactured goods. Many also claimed that society would benefit broadly from the teaching of taste.<sup>38</sup> Museums and exhibitions also offered middle-class women the opportunity for a respectable public outing. When the pub and the restaurant were largely the domain of men, the exhibition space gave women an acceptable public space in which to gather. Like their French and British counterparts, Australian women took to the gallery in droves, enjoying the opportunity to meet friends, but also

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Julian Ashton, *Julian Ashton book* (Sydney: Art in Australia, 1920).

<sup>35</sup> *The Sunday Herald*, 7 January 1922, Stephens Album.

<sup>36</sup> Ashton, *Julian Ashton book*.

<sup>37</sup> Bennett, *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics*.

<sup>38</sup> Siegel, *The emergence of the modern museum: an anthology of nineteenth-century sources*.

the chance to improve their taste and knowledge of art. For a middle-class woman, a good art education and refined aesthetic could be used as currency to improve one's social standing.

Stephens championed the rights of female artists to exhibit their work. Sydney was awash with women who took up painting enthusiastically in the latter parts of the nineteenth-century. They swelled the numbers in art classes offered at East Sydney Technical College, and private art schools such as Julian Ashton's. Many classes relied on women's fees to continue running. Yet most were seen as mere amateurs, and were not taken seriously as artists. For fledgling artists, exhibitions were essential to the promotion of a professional identity and allowed an opportunity for the sale of work. For much of the nineteenth-century, the only regular exhibition opportunities were through the Society of Artists. From its beginnings men had dominated the group, with a committee made up entirely of men, despite a healthy number of female members. Women made up approximately twenty per cent of the society's membership between 1880 and 1890.<sup>39</sup> This committee was responsible for selecting work for exhibition. Their choices show a clear preference for work by male artists.<sup>40</sup> Caroline Ambrus tabulated the number of male and female artists who belonged to the Art Society of New South Wales Society, comparing the number of paintings accepted for exhibition. Male artists are consistently over-represented over the 6 years she covers, frequently showing twice as many paintings as their female counterparts.<sup>41</sup> The subjects deemed most appropriate for female artists; the still life and landscapes were often dismissed by male selection committees who were looking for 'serious art' that aspired to the highest in the hierarchy of genres.

In 1892, the women of the Royal Art Society rallied together to discuss their unfair treatment. They were aware of the importance of exhibitions for professional artists wanting to sell their work and decided they needed a female representative on the committee. They chose Ethel Stephens for the role, then

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<sup>39</sup> Ambrus, *The ladies picture show*.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, *Documents on art and taste in Australia: the colonial period 1770-1914*.

<sup>41</sup> Ambrus, *The ladies picture show*, pp.17-19.

stacked the next meeting of the society and voted Stephens in. The committee was quite shocked, as were the reporters who covered the story. One article collected in Stephen's album of press clippings referred to her as "Mr. Ethel Stephens", continuing on to suggest she "occupies a somewhat irksome position", showing the concern at Stephens' appointment to the committee.<sup>42</sup> Another reporter looked upon the events more reasonably stating:

The only objection raised by a few distrustful male individuals in the main ranks was that women would want all the privileges of sex as well as the rights of ordinary Art Society members. Well I prefer to look at the thing dispassionately, and weight as fairly as possible the arguments on the other side, but when there are reduced and fast declaration of what a woman 'would do', 'if' etc., etc., I think one may justly give a general verdict of 'not proven'.<sup>43</sup>

For female artists, Stephens' election to the committee suggested the opportunity for fairer representation in matters concerning the artistic community, including exhibition of work.

In 1883 Stephens exhibited with the Royal Art Society of New South Wales and in 1886 at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London.<sup>44</sup> In 1890 the National Art Gallery of New South Wales held a students' competition. Stephens won a first and second prize for her life-size studies of heads.<sup>45</sup> However, in 1907, still discontent with their place in the royal society of artists, several women walked out and formed the 'Society of Women Artists', an exclusive society for women. Stephens was also instrumental in helping to establish the Society for Arts and Crafts, which was made up almost entirely by women. Yet she was not entirely happy with her association with the 'useful' arts. She placed little value on handicrafts, believing these craftswomen were those who "dabble in watercolours and

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<sup>42</sup> Stephens Album.

<sup>43</sup> Stephens Album.

<sup>44</sup> Ambrus, *The ladies picture show*.

<sup>45</sup> Stephens Album.

oils who haven't the remotest idea of painting" yet could become useful members of society since a trade "is so much easier learned".<sup>46</sup>

Stephens also frequently exhibited outside the Royal Society of Artists and formal galleries in 'at homes' held at her studio. These allowed her to exhibit her work as she chose in her own space. Exhibitions were an important commercial opportunity, as they allowed Stephens to show many more paintings than would have been possible in a show with the Society of Artists. We get a sense of the scale of her output from the catalogue entries of her small group shows and the accounts of her 'at homes'. Her work lent itself to sale. In an article published in *The Commonwealth Home* in 1928, the writer suggests, after commenting favorably on Stephen's work, "it is possible to get very beautiful pictures for home walls and for presents for £5/5 – and £10/10. Pictures are always more acceptable than silver plate and cut glass which are 'done to death' in wedding presents at least".<sup>47</sup> Flowers were the ideal subject for a home drawing room. There is a tension here, between her own commercial success and her belief in the importance of high art and figurative subjects.

These 'at home' exhibitions also invited the opportunity for art education for Stephens' students, friends, and family. The exhibitions were popular. Newspaper reports list the great number of prominent members of the Sydney society who attended her shows each year. The invitation of select guests and the general organisation of the event to include refreshments and musical entertainments mark Stephen's shows out from other art exhibitions at this time. These 'at homes' placed Stephens as a distinctly female artist, in a feminine space.

For many artists, 'at homes' were held in their working studios, which were set up to resemble gallery space, rather than a domestic interior. Stephens' first 'at home' in 1893 was held in her studio space on Pitt street.<sup>48</sup> From the time she built a studio at Eaglesfield, her 'at homes' incorporated her home, as guests

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<sup>46</sup> *Australasian Star*, 11 April 1908, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Article dated 1 May, 1928, SCEGGS archives, teacher files.

<sup>48</sup> *The Star*, 15 September 1895, p. 5.



were invited to take refreshments in the family drawing room, assisted by her mother. Most successful artists had a separate studio, many situated in the centre of the city. Stephen's space within her private dwelling lent an air of domesticity to her exhibitions at home, welcoming guests into a private social space.

The division between what was public and what was private were blurred through Stephens' 'at homes'. They were praised in the press as evoking the atmosphere of a 'tea party', further illustrating the public perception of these events as private, intimate, female affairs. Stephens' careful arrangement of her space and her dual role as artist and hostess, show her very deliberate cultivation of this space as both public and private and a tactful downplaying of the commercial purpose of her showing.

The fact these shows took place within her home and working space calls up that great wealth of scholarship examining the divide between the Victorian woman's experience of domestic and public space.<sup>49</sup> While upper middle class women of this era were encouraged to pursue an education and develop an accomplishment, they were not expected to go on to become professionals or earn a living on their own merit. As Marjorie Theobald notes, women of a certain class were expected to be dependent on their husbands and were educated on this assumption, prepared for roles as matrons.<sup>50</sup> By staging her shows in a familiar domestic setting, Stephens appears to negotiate the division between her public life as an artist and the comfort offered by the private sphere.

Both female teachers and female artists were forced to negotiate the division between public and private spheres. An artist's professional success often depended on public exhibitions of their work. The artistic community was so small in Sydney in this era that women wishing to become professional artists

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<sup>49</sup> L Davidoff and C Hall, *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780 - 1850* (London: Routledge, 1987); Theobald, "The PLC mystique: reflections on the reform of female education in nineteenth-century Australia."

<sup>50</sup> Theobald, *Knowing women: origins of women's education in nineteenth-century Australia*; R. J. W. Selleck and Marjorie R. Theobald, *Family, school & state in Australian history* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

needed to join forces with their male colleagues for education and opportunities to display their work. In 1910 the Society for Women Painters was established, providing an exclusively female space for education and exhibition. However, the more successful women artists who did not want to remain under the label of 'amateur' limited their association with the society and strove to exhibit with more mainstream groups.<sup>51</sup> Theobald and Selleck discuss the tensions felt by some women teachers negotiating roles in their private and professional lives. In doing so, they question the traditional characterization of the respectable nineteenth-century woman as being solely confined to the private sphere of the house and family.<sup>52</sup> Like the women they examine, Stephens found a space somewhere in between the public and private spheres in which to locate her identity as an artist. It was in this liminal space that she introduced her students to the life of the artist, demonstrating one way they might one day negotiate their positions as upper-middle class professional women.

Scholarship examining the subjects chosen by female artists working in Europe at this time suggests that although female artists negotiated the public sphere, their work tended to take as its subjects, elements from the domestic setting. Griselda Pollock analyses the work of several preeminent female artists working in France in the latter half of the nineteenth-century. She argues that women, both being viewed as the subjects of a painting, and as viewers themselves, were positioned differently to their male counterparts. Not only do women artists typically choose domestic scenes as the subject of their paintings. Even in their depictions set in public, boundaries are set up between the women depicted, and the public space they inhabit: a fence or obstacle keeps the subject from entering the public world. She claims that this "establishes the viewer as both absent from and indeed independent of the scene while being its mastering eye/I".<sup>53</sup> Throughout the history of art, women have been depicted by men and marked out as objects of the gaze. In studying and teaching art, women needed to

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<sup>51</sup> More on the Society for Women painters can be found in Heather Johnson, *The Sydney art patronage system 1890 - 1940* (Grays Point, NSW: Bungoona Technologies, 1997).

<sup>52</sup> Selleck and Theobald, *Family, school & state in Australian history*, p.xi.

<sup>53</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Vision and difference: femininity, feminism, and histories of art* (London: Routledge, 1987), p.251.

reposition themselves, either by the subjects they chose, or the way in which they were represented to be creators and controllers of the artistic eye.

Stephens' figurative work further exemplifies Pollock's theory. A substantial part of her output features 'observed scenes', whether they are floral still-lives, landscapes, or her figurative work such as *Stannard's Wharf* (figure 12), in which a boy is pictured in profile, sitting at the edge of a wharf, looking out away from the viewer. There is a space, punctuated by a mass of fabric, draped in a pile, separating the viewer from the figure, creating a boundary between artist and subject; viewer and viewed. We are not a part of the scene, but just invited to observe from a distance, separated from the public world. The viewer is only allowed unrestricted access to her more domestic scenes; flower paintings and intimate portraits.

Stephens' 'at homes' offered the female spectator a space in which to encounter art without the codes of conduct expected in the public exhibition space. A satirical newspaper article of 1894 criticizes the many "Portly dames with pretty daughters" in attendance at an 'at home' exhibition (figure 13).<sup>54</sup> They poke fun at the Sydney audiences suggesting they know little about art. Here a woman is caricatured commenting "what a love-ly frame", her view labelled as a "genuine and uncultivated opinion".<sup>55</sup> The article belittles the 'at home' exhibitions. In ridiculing the audience, they suggest these events did not hold the same importance as the annual exhibitions of the Art Society.

Stephens' also opened her studio for her students to exhibit their work. The shows were frequently covered by the press. In March 1901, a reporter for the Sydney Mail noted that "... Miss Stephens' pictures were much admired, and the exceptionally clever method she has of teaching was shown by the admirable work of her students".<sup>56</sup> These shows would have offered her students a platform for showing their work and the chance to learn how to work towards building an exhibition. This was real experience as a professional artist.

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<sup>54</sup> Three illustrations from a newspaper article dated September 15 1894, Stephens album.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *The Sydney Mail*, 7 March 1901. Stephens Album.

## Teaching at SCEGGS

The teaching undertaken by artists is rarely subject to serious scholarly attention. Artists taught in schools and gave private lessons to supplement their income. This offered essential support for those working within the volatile Sydney art market. For many artists, teaching may not have been their main passion, but helped fund their artistic endeavours. Art historians and biographers tend to dismiss this teaching work as a means to this end. Yet their teaching had an impact and influence on the next generation, and shaped their understanding and relationship with the arts.

As the daughter of a professor, Stephens was immersed in a world of people passionate about education. The majority of portraits she painted were of people with links to education, including the chancellor of the University of Sydney, Henry Norman MacClaurin. Many of these people would have been family friends and known to Stephens from a young age. It was, no doubt a logical step for her to take on some teaching through the course of her artistic career.

The Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School (SCEGGS) was established in July 1895, after several years of petitioning and planning for an Anglican secondary school for girls. It was a counterpart to the two Anglican boys schools already established in Sydney.<sup>57</sup> The first headmistress, Edith Badham set out to establish a school that would equip students with the capacity to think for themselves. She had inherited an education philosophy from her father, the professor of Classics and later principal of the University of Sydney, Charles Badham (who had spent his formative years under the tutelage of Pestalozzi).<sup>58</sup> Edith Badham believed in the intrinsic value of education, wanting to give girls the very best education in both the classical and the accomplishments. The curriculum at SCEGGS was broad from the outset, allowing girls to choose a range of extra subjects beyond reading, writing, arithmetic, religious studies, and

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<sup>57</sup> The Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore) had been established in 1845, and St Andrews Cathedral school in 1885.

<sup>58</sup> Charles Badham, *Primary education* (Sydney: Gibbs, Shallard, and Co., 1876).

Latin that included modern languages, music, drawing, painting, botany, astronomy, geology, cookery, dressmaking, and swimming. The school would prepare students for matriculation. However, this was not the only aim, as Badham believed that women were the “nations chapters of morality”,<sup>59</sup> and that a comprehensive education was important for good wives and mothers.<sup>60</sup>

Stephens began teaching at SCEGGS shortly after the school was established in 1895.<sup>61</sup> The school celebrated her career as an artist. Notes about her artistic achievements appeared regularly in the school magazine throughout her time at the school; the girls wishing her luck for an upcoming exhibition, or conveying their congratulations on the sale of her work to the National Gallery, going on to state: “We are all interested in Miss Stephens and wish her every success”.<sup>62</sup> Stephen’s success as an artist legitimized her as a teacher and lent some cachet to the school.

It is notoriously difficult to gain insight into pedagogies of the past, as the inner workings of the classroom are rarely documented. In an article Stephens wrote for the school magazine *Lux* in 1901, we gain a rare insight into her method of teaching.<sup>63</sup> Titled; ‘Some hints for a first out-door sketch’, Stephen’s walks her readers through the process of finding a scene, and discusses how to frame it. She then instructs her pupils to sketch the scene in outline using charcoal; making it clear this must be done correctly; “rocks, tree trunks and branches want special care”, but the foliage can be drawn in large masses. This mixture between close observation of nature, and generalised rendering of foliage, reveals a combination of influences. The close observation of nature may have been familiar to the girls through their classes in natural science and nature study. She encourages the students to consider the natural phenomena they encounter; much like a survey or topographical drawing; modes of landscape

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<sup>59</sup> W. Radford, "Charles Badham and his work for education in New South Wales" (The University of Sydney, 1969).

<sup>60</sup> Theobald, "The PLC mystique: reflections on the reform of female education in nineteenth-century Australia.."

<sup>61</sup> Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School, *Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School 1895-1955*, p.102.

<sup>62</sup> *Lux*, June 1900, vol.1 no.1, p.1.

<sup>63</sup> *Lux*, April 1901, vol 1, no.4, p.6.

representation that were already familiar in the description of Australian land through natural history illustrations.

Stephens also encourages artistic flourish. Here she introduces her students to the picturesque landscape tradition. The picturesque tradition was fashionable in 18<sup>th</sup> century, made popular by French painter Claude Lorrain, who developed the 'picturesque landscape' that was typically framed by foliage and articulated with a serpentine pathway, leading the eye through foreground, middle-ground and background which were often punctuated with classical architectural ruins, animals and figures. However, Stephens does not encourage students to dispense with reality entirely. She also instructs students to pay attention to the scene they observe. They should paint what they saw and not to invent a scene, or alter it purely for the picturesque effect.<sup>64</sup>

She goes on to discuss the use of colour, offering some simple suggestions for beginners. This concentration on colour- which to choose, how to mix and apply pigment - were lessons most children never encountered.<sup>65</sup> Public and denominational schools in Sydney at this time taught only drawing. They followed the South Kensington mode of art instruction, focused study on basic design skills in black and white, rather than painting and high art. Unlike most teachers, Stephens offers her students some instructions on using colour and encourages them to go on and experiment.

As discussed in *Part One*, England's South Kensington system had been introduced to a majority of schools in New South Wales. The curriculum focused on drawing basic shapes in outline, moving towards more complicated groups of objects and perspectival drawing. This had little to do with the art found on the walls of galleries, and more to do with ornamental design. Several of Sydney's Private boy's schools, such as Sydney Grammar School and Newington College also took up the South Kensington scheme, engaging the services John Fowles, who was overseeing Drawing in the National Schools.

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<sup>64</sup> *Lux*, April 1901, vol 1, no.4, p.6.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

Stephens' classes were completely different to the South Kensington approach. She was responsible for teaching fine art. She gave lessons in painting and drawing that concentrated on observational representations. Her instructions for landscape painting show her pedagogical concerns, revealing an emphasis on drawing from nature. This approach is markedly different from the lessons conducted in many other schools. There, according to the South Kensington syllabus, students were given black and white ornaments, printed in books or on cards, to copy. They were limited to drawing, either in chalk or pencil. Their lessons concentrated heavily on design, emphasising skills of drawing in symmetry and proportion. Stephen's classes focused on art as it was seen in the gallery.

She taught art according to the accomplishments tradition. Her students would paint pretty flowers and sweet landscapes; subjects deemed appropriate to their gender and an activity considered worthy of their time. Yet, Stephens' lessons were not merely 'frills' on her student's education. The school sought to provide an education for woman who might wish to pursue tertiary study, or go on to a profession. As an active professional artist, Stephens herself was an example as one such career path.

In 1907, SCEGGS also began offering lessons in ornamental design. These lessons focused on copying ornamental figures in outline, and closely resembled the lessons outlined by the Superintendent for Drawing in the Public Schools. New Zealander and South Kensington trained Albert Collins was engaged to teach these classes, drawing a link to the London Board Schools' Drawing programme established by South Kensington. These classes ran twice weekly and relied on graphic copying. However, Collins went one step further, showing the girls how these classes might be put into practice. In 1908 he assisted in making the props and costumes for the school production of 'Trachinaie' (figure 14). These costumes feature bands of Greek frets and other ornamental figures used in the South Kensington syllabus.<sup>66</sup> Incidentally, Collins was well known as an artist in

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<sup>66</sup> Carline, *Draw they must: a history of the teaching and examining of art*.

oils and watercolours.<sup>67</sup> The fact the school took on a specialized design teacher who taught a curriculum similar to that being offered in the National and Denominational schools reinforces the divide between that curriculum and what Stephens was teaching.

Stephens' classes were extremely popular. In 1913, Edith Badham requested that art and music be included in the syllabus for the Leaving and Intermediate Certificates. She wanted to ensure that they were taught seriously and to a proper standard, not just as 'extras', as they were typically considered within the accomplishments curriculum.<sup>68</sup> As Theobald argues in her exploration of Melbourne's lost ladies academies of the nineteenth-century, girls education had begun to offer comprehensive and rigorous education that equipped young ladies with the skills and knowledge that might have been offered to their male counterparts.<sup>69</sup> Badham aimed to create a modern ladies' school, and a serious treatment of art was an essential element of the modernisation of the old accomplishments curriculum.

## Subjects

Although Stephens found her early success in portraiture, for much of her career she tended to choose flowers and landscapes as her subjects.<sup>70</sup> These were the subjects deemed appropriate for the 'gentler' sex. These subjects were also considered to be of lesser value than figurative compositions. In her work on Sydney's art patronage, Heather Johnston notes that as late as 1889 the hierarchy of subjects of paintings was alive and well in Sydney.<sup>71</sup> A newspaper article on the annual exhibition of the Art Society of New South Wales divided the paintings under headings 'in order of relative importance,' placing figure subjects at the top, and decorative paintings (under which Stephens' flowers were included) at the very end. It should come as no surprise that the hierarchy

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<sup>67</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 July, 1951, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Cameron, *S.C.E.G.G.S.: a centenary history of Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School*.

<sup>69</sup> Theobald, *Knowing women: origins of women's education in nineteenth-century Australia*.

<sup>70</sup> Badham, "Principal's report."

<sup>71</sup> Johnson, *The Sydney art patronage system 1890 - 1940*.



of genres was clearly divided along gender lines, with all the works of 'higher importance' largely contributed by male artists.<sup>72</sup>

Stephens was known for her flower painting. In 1927 the Daily Telegraph reported, "Miss Stephens finds that her watercolours sell better than her oils, and her flower pictures better than any".<sup>73</sup> She was prolific, painting scores of canvases each year totalling several hundred images throughout her long career. News articles and catalogues refer to an average of 20 new works each year from the mid 1890s to the late 1920s.<sup>74</sup> And yet, only a few of her flower paintings can be traced today: one black and white copy of one of her many famous rose pictures can be found in the school archives at SCEGGS and two paintings from private collections are reproduced in Philp's account of the Society for Women Painters.<sup>75</sup> The still-life paintings acquired by the Art Gallery of New South Wales were sold on in the 1950s. There were two paintings by Ethel Stephens held in the Art Gallery of New South Wales' collection, one was purchased in 1900 and the other in 1914. *Spring's inheritance*, was purchased in 1900 and de-accessioned in 1946. The work was auctioned by James R. Lawson auction house in November 1946. *Black and gold*, 1914, was purchased in 1914 and de-accessioned in 1948. This work was also auctioned through James R. Lawson. Information provided through correspondence with Claire Eggleston at the Art Gallery of New South Wales Library. It is likely the majority of her painting went into private collections - adorning the walls of drawing rooms - commercial success being a great strength of the work. However, these were largely collected for their decorative effect. The identity of the artist was not important, remembered or revered.

Only Stephens' portraits are still readily accessible; kept for the prominent persons they depict rather than the artist who painted them. Portraits of Henry Norman MacClaurin, and her father, Professor Stephens held by the University of Sydney Art Gallery; of Rev Dr Kinross now in St Johns College, and Mary

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<sup>72</sup> Stephens Album.

<sup>73</sup> *Daily Telegraph Women's Supplement*, 3 September, 1927.

<sup>74</sup> Stephens Album.

<sup>75</sup> Philp, "From wallflowers to tall poppies? The Sydney Society of Women Painters, 1910-1934."

Windeyer now at the Women's College. Portraits of George Robinson (of Angus & Robinson) and of Dame Mary Gilmore are held in the collection of the State Library of New South Wales.

The subjects chosen by these female artists – still life and landscape – were also the subjects typically chosen for girls' art classes. In 1913, the *Herald Sun* wrote that Stephens "learnt drawing just as nearly every girls learns the piano; not with the idea of ever being able to play, but merely from force of habit, just as most boys play marbles and football at different stages of their growth".<sup>76</sup> These subjects were not taken seriously as "art", but were merely seen as pretty decorations.

This view is seen again in an article written by the advocate for the arts in Australia, William Moore, in a special supplement in *The New Idea* on "careers for Australian girls". Moore outlines what the artist's life might have to offer young women. From the outset, he makes it very clear that many years of conscientious study are required and that even after this she may find that the rewards for all this toil, "as far as the monetary side is concerned, are desperately small", but the article goes on: "If we put aside the financial view, it can be said at once that there is no more charming career for a woman than that associated with the studio".<sup>77</sup> Moore highlights the ladylike propriety of a career as an artist and assumes his reader would not be dissuaded by the small monetary gain.

A tension exists between Stephen's success as an artist in her day and her fall to obscurity in the present. Women artists' have not been taken seriously, or remembered in the same way as their male counterparts: as pioneers of the Australian art scene. Yet girls at schools such as SCEGGS had access to much more sophisticated art education than boys. Stephens' students gained experience in drawing and painting in colour. They also had opportunities to display their work in the manner of a professional artist, opportunities their

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<sup>76</sup> *The Herald Sun* in Stephens Album.

<sup>77</sup> W Moore, *Careers for Australian Girls: XI What the Artist's Life Offers*. *The New Idea*, 1907. Stephens Album.

male counterparts did not have in their classes following the South Kensington system. More than this, the girls at SCEGGS also had the opportunity to observe the lifestyle of a professional artist in Stephens. Yet few went on to careers in the arts that we remember today.

## **Conclusion**

Accounts of artists' lives typically focus on their art and achievements as artists, ignoring their other seemingly less important contributions. However, studying Stephens' artistic work through the subjects she chose to depict, together with her work teaching at SCEGGS and in displaying her work in 'at home' exhibitions, shows the way she created a space for herself as a professional woman across these different activities. There is certainly scope for further scholarship that explores the role of 'at home' exhibitions and the careers of female artists working in Sydney in this period.

Stephens maintained a conservative approach to her artistic practice with her subscription to the academic hierarchy of genres and her rejection of European modernism. Yet in her actions and efforts to improve opportunities for female artists, she was radical, pushing her way onto the executive of the Art Society and later leading breakaway societies. These contradictions exemplify limitations and negotiations made by a successful female artist in this era.

Stephens also did much to improve art education for young women in Sydney at the turn of the twentieth century. Her work at SCEGGS introduced girls to painting in a way many other school art classes at the time did not. Art education across the country was beginning to change with the influence of New Education, as the emphasis moved from the South Kensington skills-based approach, to the cultivation of creativity. For the girls at SCEGGS, Stephens opened up the possibility of a rigorous art education and demonstrated how they might negotiate the tensions of professional life and life as a respectable middle-class woman.

Stephen's 'at homes' connected her life as an artist and teacher in a feminine space located somewhere between public and private realms. As the girls wandered through Stephen's 'at home' in 1903, they might have seen a future for themselves in the arts. This enviable setting and the status of the invited guests no doubt made it an event that any young lady might aspire to host. Stephens' presented them with a balance between professional competence and propriety; balancing the uneasy tension between a woman's place in the private realm, and her professional identity in public. For those girls who had no intention of going on to pursue a life in the arts, she introduced them to art appreciation; a mode of art education they could take with them through their adult lives.

## CHAPTER SIX: EDWARD COMBES

In 1893 *The Illustrated Sydney News* ran a series of 'personal portraits', honouring those who made a contribution to the colony. Among them was a portrait of Edward Combes (pictured in figure 15). He was remembered for his many interests as "an engineer, an artist, a legislator and an agriculturist, an officer of the Legion of Honour and a member of the Savage Club."<sup>1</sup> In each of these roles, Combes had influenced in the development of art education in Sydney. He represented New South Wales at the International Exhibition in Paris of 1878, and Melbourne in 1880, and directed the art section of the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879; he was president of the artists' society and a trustee of the art gallery from 1882; he was commissioned to undertake international inquiries into school hygiene in 1878 and technical education 1887; he was also president of the Technical College from 1883-1889. *The Illustrated Sydney News* did not exaggerate in writing: "There are few colonists of New South Wales who can have crowded into a not very long life so many and such varied experiences, in several lands, as the Honourable Edward Combes."<sup>2</sup> His contribution to the establishment of art education allowed greater access to art in schools, technical colleges and exhibitions in Sydney

Further research could be (and should be) undertaken on Combes' political career and on his innovations as an engineer. This chapter focuses on Combes' involvement in art education and the way his other interests informed his approach to art education. Art was not the primary focus of Combes' professional life, but he used his career and his position as a politician to affect change in Sydney's art world. Examining Combes' contribution to art education reveals the way art; engineering and politics were interconnected and influenced one another. In an era when 'art for industry' was important, Combes' professional life exemplified the way in which art education could inform various other vocational interests.

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<sup>1</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 21 October 1893, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Combes' work across both the fine and useful arts reflected his interest in teaching taste. Combes was involved in promoting high art, but also the useful arts and design through his contributions to local and international exhibitions. Examining his efforts to make art and design accessible to the wider population allow us to interrogate the influences that shaped art education in Sydney.

This chapter focuses on five instances that exemplify Combes' involvement in art education. Before this, Combes' background and education will be considered in order to build an understanding of how his formative years may have influenced his later contributions to art education. One of Combes' first major roles in art education, as trustee of the Art Gallery will be examined. In this role, Combes was responsible for the acquisition of paintings. I consider the acquisition of Ford Maddox Brown's *Chaucer at the court of Edward III* and examine the ways this affected the gallery as an educational institution. I will examine Combes' involvement in the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1878, paying close attention to his discussion of art and design in his diary of that year. The third section will assess Combes' report on school hygiene, which includes an appendix on art education in England. This report on the National Art Training School in London shows his interest and knowledge in developments occurring in art education abroad. The fourth section will consider Combes' own practice as an artist. Visual analysis of his paintings is used to consider how his art might have related to his thoughts on art education. Finally, the fifth section examines the report Combes was commissioned to write on Technical Education in 1887, and assesses the place of art within his recommendations for Technical Education.

## **Background**

Combes was born in Fonthill-Gifford, Wiltshire, England on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1830.<sup>3</sup> He was educated at a private school, and later by a tutor.<sup>4</sup> From an early age, he recalled being interested in art. As a young boy he went to school with Bouverie Goddard, who later became a celebrated animal painter. The pair went on art

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<sup>3</sup> *Australian Town and Country*, 7 January 1882, p.17.

<sup>4</sup> *Sydney Evening News*, 28 October 1893, p.3s.

excursions together, exploring the nearby woodland and make sketches of the landscape and wildlife they encountered. These artistic adventures seemed to have a lasting impact on Combes, as he kept their sketches to the end of his life.<sup>5</sup> Combes' father William was a farmer and Civil Engineer. He gave his son some initial training in civil engineering. Combes continued his studies at the Ecole des Mines and the Conservatoire des Arts et Metiers, Paris.<sup>6</sup> Later, he worked in the renowned hydraulic workshop of the Messrs. Easton and Amos, in London.<sup>7</sup> Combes returned to Paris and completed his engineering studies under M. Tresca, then assistant to General Morin, and sub-director (afterwards director) of the Conservatoire des Arts and Metiers. He also studied physics and chemistry as applied to the arts under M. Bequerel, Payen and Barral.<sup>8</sup> From his childhood, Combes had pursued his interest in both art and engineering.

In September 1851 Combes arrived in Australia. He moved several months after the Great Exhibition in London, perhaps inspired to move by the Australian exhibits on view.<sup>9</sup> Combes landed in Melbourne, shortly after the first marketable goldfields were discovered. He found work in Ballarat and Bendigo as a miner, gold buyer and geologist during the early gold rushes.<sup>10</sup> His knowledge of engineering and his experience as a farmer's son would have served him well on the gold fields.

In 1854 Combes returned to Paris for two years training in scientific engineering. He also studied free-hand and watercolour drawing. While in Paris, in 1855, Combes was appointed commissioner to the Paris International Exhibition. He became attached to the agricultural and engineering juries at the exhibition and 'engineering aide' to Louis Napoleon.<sup>11</sup> The position with Prince Napoleon gave Combes entree to the entertainments of the day.<sup>12</sup> Combes was reported to

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<sup>5</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 21 October 1893, p.4.

<sup>6</sup> Bede Nairn, "Combes, Edward (1830–1895)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Australian National University, 1969).

<sup>7</sup> For more on the Easton and Amos Engineering firm see David Eaton, *Easton & Amos: a brief history of a Victorian engineering company* (S. I.: Holway Publications, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 21 October 1893, p.4.

<sup>9</sup> *Australian Town and Country*, 7 January 1882, p.17

<sup>10</sup> *Sydney Evening News*, 28 October 1893, p.3s.

<sup>11</sup> Nairn, "Combes, Edward (1830–1895)."

<sup>12</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 21 October 1893, p.4.

have explained the English machinery to the Emperor Napoleon III. He also explained to Queen Victoria and the Emperor, at the Palais d' Industrie, the construction of the Ramsden theodolite, used for the triangulation of India.<sup>13</sup> This experience allowed him to establish many notable connections in France and England. It also allowed him to keep abreast of developments in art and technology. While in Paris Combes worked as a consulting engineer. He also found time to devote to his passion for art. Later in his life, he would recall visiting the forest of Fontainebleau, which was the rendezvous of all painters of the Barbizon school known for landscape painting.<sup>14</sup> Combes' experience in both England and France in engineering and art put him in a unique position. Unlike Woodhouse, Branch and many other individuals involved in Art education in Sydney, Combes had gained a wide range of experience in both England and France.

On his return to Australia in 1857 Combes went on to manage a number of mines across Victoria and New South Wales. By 1862 Combes had settled near Bathurst and was appointed Government Mining Engineer. In 1872 he entered into politics, and was elected Member for Bathurst. At the general election of 1875 he was returned for Orange. He was Secretary for Public Works from August to December in 1877 and was reported to have "set the disorderly Department in order."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the Barbizon School of art see Steven Adams, *The Barbizon school and the origins of impressionism* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997).



Combes' background is significant. He had extensive training and experience as an engineer. He also worked as both a farmer and politician across several different Australian regions, allowing him to learn about the needs and interests of a range of rural communities. His background in engineering and knowledge of rural Australia shaped his later career and his contributions to art education.

### **Chaucer and the art society**

Combes was involved in Sydney's art scene, working to extend opportunities for art education to broader audiences. He was a member of the Academy of Art since its inauguration in 1871 and joined its council in 1873. He was instrumental in assuring Government assistance for the establishment of a public picture gallery. It was largely his efforts that secured a £500 grant from the Government in 1874 that was spent on the acquisition of pictures.<sup>16</sup> He was also appointed as one of the five initial trustees, advising on the selection of work for the collection. In 1877 Combes was selected as a member of the council of the New South Wales Academy of Art.<sup>17</sup>

In 1876, Combes played a significant role in the selecting one of the first major oil paintings acquired by the gallery. He recommended the full £500 grant be spent on a large oil painting by Ford Maddox Brown, titled *Chaucer at the court of Edward III* (Figure 16).<sup>18</sup> Brown began painting the picture in 1847. It was finished and exhibited in 1851. Brown decided to depict the great English poet, after being impressed by great art depicting Italian poets and philosophers while he was in Rome. He wanted to paint a large work that would glorify great English literature, like Italian artists had done for their poets.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Daniel Thomas, "The Art Gallery of New South Wales," *Art Gallery of New South Wales Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (1960), p.11.

<sup>17</sup> Letter dated 9.10.1877, Art Gallery of New South Wales archive.

<sup>18</sup> The full title is: *Geoffrey Chaucer reading the "Legend of Custance" to Edward III and his court, at the palace of Sheen, on the anniversary of the Black Prince's forty-fifth birthday*, from here on I will refer to it as *Chaucer*.

<sup>19</sup> For more on Ford Maddox Brown see Julian Treuherz, *Ford Maddox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite pioneer* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers in association with Manchester Art Gallery, 2011).

Brown's work appealed to Combes for a number of reasons. Its educational benefit was manifold. Not only did it illustrate a number of historical figures, thereby introducing audiences to an episode of English history, but it also celebrated a great English literary figure. The painting also exemplified the highest genre of art: history painting. Its monumental size stood in stark contrast to the small watercolours that populated the collection.

The technique Brown employed for this picture may also have appealed to Combes. Brown had become involved with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848, soon after beginning the work. He adopted their emphasis on 'truth to nature', a technique endorsed by Combes and aligned with broader interests in studying from nature expressed by art educators at this time. This ideal fought against the academic tendency to stylize and generalise form. Brown went to great lengths to depict the figures and costumes faithfully. He had costumes made from examples sourced from *The Pictorial History of England* for his models to wear.<sup>20</sup> Many of Brown's friends modelled for the work, including Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabrielle Rossetti as Chaucer, and Brown's wife Anna as the Princess.<sup>21</sup> Brown's effort to paint with truth to nature was encapsulated in his explanatory note written in 1865:

This picture is the first which I endeavoured to carry out the notion of treating the light and shade absolutely as it exists at any one moment, instead of approximately or in a generalised style. Sunlight, not too bright, such as is pleasant to sit in out-of-doors, is here depicted.<sup>22</sup>

Brown was also influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite interest in medieval art. His subject was chosen from this period in history. The composition shows the influence of images found in illuminated manuscripts, with figures piled up on top of one another. While Brown did not do away with illusionistic perspective entirely, the vertical composition undermines the sense of depth. The picture-

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<sup>20</sup> Leslie Parris, ed. *Pre-Raphaelite papers* (London: The Tate Gallery, 1984), p.154-55.

<sup>21</sup> *Pre-Raphaelite Art: Paintings, drawings, engravings, sculpture, tapestries, chintzes, wallpapers, An exhibition arranged by the State Art Galleries of Australia*, (1962).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p.4.

plane is flattened: the figures heads sit on top of the other, like a choir of angels flanking a medieval altarpiece. This technique reflects the medieval subject, allowing audiences further insight to this historical setting.

The painting had received positive reviews when it was exhibited in England. Combes might have been confident of its popularity in Australia. However, early press coverage criticised the acquisition of the work. The reviewer from the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote:

On a first inspection one fails to discover the merit of this picture, or to understand why such a large sum as £500 had been paid for it... The subject is not particularly interesting and the treatment by no means happy. There is a good deal of attempt at realistic, or pre-raphaelite (sic) treatment which is not very successful and it is even doubtful whether the drawing is correct. The gilding effectually kills any brilliancy which there may be, either in colouring or contrast. Altogether the spectator must be disappointed with the last purchase made on behalf of the Government.<sup>23</sup>

Combes wrote back in response, defending the acquisition of the work. He highlighted the very positive reception the work had enjoyed when it had been exhibited in England. He stated: It was “the picture of its year” in 1851 when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy, and was given the place of honour in the middle room. It also gained the £50 prize at Liverpool Academy’s Exhibition of 1859. Combes quoted passages from several newspapers: a review from *The Spectator* that commends Brown’s choice of subject and his success in rendering light and colour; another from the *Pall Mall Gazette* that stated “a deep and eminently dramatic conception of his subjects and extreme vigorous of expression”; *The Illustrated London News* described it as the “leading picture” at the Royal Academy that year; *The Standard* emphasised the honesty with which Brown depicts his subject and his observation from nature; *The Telegraph* described Brown as “a man of very unusual power, spirit and soundness in his art”; *The Art Journal* called it a “truly magnificent essay, [possessing]... an

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<sup>23</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 December 1876, p.5.

abundance of every quality necessary to constitute excellence in art”; and *The Athenaeum* and *The Saturday Review* also celebrated Brown’s *Chaucer*.<sup>24</sup> Combes presented these English reviews as the authority on taste, using them to counter the claims made by *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

In his letter to the editor, Combes also explained the subject of the work, instructing the audience on its significance. The original reviewer had not offered any guidance to viewers in this respect. Combes stepped in, detailing the subject, explaining the significance of each figure:

Chaucer is painted in the act of reading the “Legend of the Custance” before the Court of Edward III. Edward III is now old, Philippa being dead; and the Black Prince supposed to be in his last illness. John O’Gaunt who was Chaucer’s patron, is represented in full armour, to indicate that active measures now devolve upon him... Seated beneath are various personages suited to the time and place – a troubadour, from the south of France, half-jealous, half in heart-struck admiration: a cardinal priest on good terms with the ladies; a jester, forgetting his part in rapt attention to the poet; two *dilettante* courtiers learnedly criticising – the one in the hood is meant for the poet Gower; lastly, a youthful esquire, of the kind described by Chaucer as never sleeping at nights “more than doth the nightingale,” so much is he always in love.<sup>25</sup>

Combes offered audiences a guide to the painting, ensuring the work’s subject was understood and appreciated. He detailed the identity of each character and explained their historical significance. His description also helped readers to understand the clever choices Brown had made in his depiction and arrangement of the figures. Combes’ response attempted to educate readers intimating their ignorance had lead to their dislike of the painting.

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<sup>24</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 December 1876, p.8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

Further discussion of the work continued in the press.<sup>26</sup> One report confirmed Combes' opinion, suggesting that the dislike of the painting may be because "our art tastes are not sufficiently cultivated to understand and appreciate such a 'great and glorious picture.'"<sup>27</sup> They went on to suggest that without an understanding of art, Brown's painting was not accessible:

If we desire to create an interest in art, we must commence by placing before the community works which they can understand – works which appeal to the feelings and to that inherent sense of the beautiful which is possessed by all, from the highest to the lowest, for it must not be forgotten that a national gallery is for the benefit of the many, not of the few.<sup>28</sup>

This highlighted one of the problems faced by Combes and the selection committee: should they attempt to buy works that would challenge audiences and extend their understanding of art, or should they acquire work that would be pleasant to view?

Combes clearly wished to extend the educational benefit of art for the community. His belief in the value of a work such as Brown's *Chaucer* shows his belief in the importance of learning about British literature and history through art. He continued to advocate the educational benefit of the public art gallery. In 1881 he was appointed a trustee.<sup>29</sup> In 1882, during his time as president of the Art Society, Combes' was reported to be "...devoted to the cause of art...[and] been liberal in supporting every movement having art education for its object."<sup>30</sup> When debates rose over the opening of the gallery on Sundays, Combes came out in favour of the proposal. He said: "The pictures were purchased with the people's money, they belong to the people, and [is] it right to bar them from seeing these pictures?"<sup>31</sup> His actions and efforts with the art gallery suggest

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<sup>26</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 January 1877, p.3 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 January 1877, p.8; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 January 1877, p.6.

<sup>27</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 January 1877, p.3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> "Combes, Edward," <http://www.daa.org.au/bio/hon-edward-combes/biography/>?

<sup>30</sup> *Australian Town and Country*, 7 January 1882, p.17.

<sup>31</sup> *The Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 29 September 1882, p.3.

Combes' interest in establishing access to art for Sydney society and his belief in the educational benefit of accessible art.

### **Paris Exposition Universelle, 1878**

In February 1878, Combes was appointed executive commissioner New South Wales at the Paris Exposition Universelle.<sup>32</sup> The Exhibition served a political function, demonstrating the recovery of France after the 1870-1 Franco-Prussian war and confirmed the superiority of French art and design.<sup>33</sup> At the Paris Exhibition of 1867, Australia had been represented by an exhibit featuring the Victorian goldfields. For the 1878 exhibition, the premier of New South Wales wanted to show as well.<sup>34</sup> Macleod suggests that the choice of Combes for executive commissioner was political and logical. He had trained in Paris; he had experience in the Victorian goldfields and had worked as an engineer across rural New South Wales.<sup>35</sup> Combes knowledge of engineering, agriculture and art prepared him with the experience necessary to represent the wide range of objects featured in the New South Wales display.

Arrangement for the New South Wales display did not run smoothly. Many of the exhibits were seriously delayed and did not arrive until after the Exhibition officially opened. Combes was only been officially appointed executive commissioner in late February, just 3 months before the exhibition was due to open.<sup>36</sup> Combes set off soon after, but did not arrive in Paris until May, after the exhibition had opened.<sup>37</sup> Many of the New South Wales' exhibits were held up in the voyage to Paris. By the time they arrived, there was little space to show them and the New South Wales representatives had to negotiate to find space for them. When the exhibition opened on May 1<sup>st</sup>, the New South Wales court was

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<sup>32</sup> *Evening News*, 20 February 1878, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> Roy M. MacLeod, *Archibald Liversidge, FRS: imperial science under the Southern Cross* (Sydney: The Royal Society of New South Wales: Sydney University Press, 2009), p.174.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 February 1878, p.5.

<sup>37</sup> May 4<sup>th</sup> 1878, Combes Diary, Mitchell Library.

not complete. It was not till over a month later when the missing exhibits arrived that the display was completed.<sup>38</sup>

Combes diary of 1878 is held at the Mitchell Library. He details his daily activities at the exhibition. The size and scope of the exhibition impressed Combes. He made several comments about the size and varied exhibits on display. When he first arrived he wrote: "The Exhibition is truly wonderful – One could never conceive its vastness, unless he had seen it."<sup>39</sup> Later that month he commented again: "It seems impossible to even think of the magnitude of this Exhibition – One should assume a specialty and work it out – where one sees so many things we cannot recollect the details of any."<sup>40</sup> He frequently made notes on new or ingenious inventions he encountered, jotting down informative sketches. The diary also suggests he was equally interested in new machinery for milling grain as he was in the English watercolours on show at the exhibition. His varied interests no doubt made it even more overwhelming, as every exhibit had the potential to be one of particular interest.

Combes previous study and work in Paris meant he already knew people who were "of distinguished ability in art and science."<sup>41</sup> He was a member of the Institution of French Civil Engineers and an associate of the Institute of Civil Engineers in London. He was also created a C.M.G. in 1878.<sup>42</sup> Combes frequently met with Philip Cuncliff-Owen, as noted in his diary throughout his time at the exhibition.<sup>43</sup> Cuncliff-Owen became deputy general superintendent of the South Kensington Museum in 1857 and in 1860, he was promoted to be Assistant Director in 1860, second in command to Henry Cole. Combes also met with numerous dignitaries including the Duke of Manchester, who he showed around the New South Wales Court.<sup>44</sup> Combes had the opportunity to rub shoulders with

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> May 4<sup>th</sup> 1878, Combes Diary, Mitchell Library.

<sup>40</sup> May 12<sup>th</sup> 1878, Combes Diary, Mitchell Library.

<sup>41</sup> *Sydney Evening News*, 28 October 1893, p.3s.

<sup>42</sup> *Evening News*, 19 October 1895, p 5.

<sup>43</sup> May 4<sup>th</sup>, May 9<sup>th</sup>, May 10<sup>th</sup>, May 12<sup>th</sup>, May 17<sup>th</sup>, Combes Diary, Mitchell Library.

<sup>44</sup> June 10<sup>th</sup> 1878, Combes Diary, Mitchell Library.

men involved in the establishment and development of art education across Europe.

Soon after his arrival in Paris, Combes accepted the position of vice-president for the jury assessing the 59<sup>th</sup> section of the exhibition. In this role, he was responsible for examining machinery for the manufacture of material used in the construction of buildings, furniture, & c. When the president became ill, Combes stepped in and acted in his place.<sup>45</sup> This position allowed Combes to examine the machinery and manufactures on display in considerable detail.

Combes' diary offers insight into his many varied interests. On May 10<sup>th</sup> he noticed that there was a lot of innovative work being done in asphalt and cement, creating great effects for a low cost.<sup>46</sup> A couple of days later, on May 12<sup>th</sup>, he comments on some of the French paintings on show. He was particularly taken with a work by Bouguereau, calling it a "marvel of execution – the modeling is perfect... The limbs stand out in such high relief, as to almost deceive the senses."<sup>47</sup> He was equally interested in art as he is in engineering and used similar language in writing about both fine art and design. He was just as likely to describe a wood-cutting machine as "beautiful", as he was a painting. Combes seemingly approached high art and useful art on a separate, but equal footing.

Combes recorded his thoughts on the art courts within exhibition, allowing us to gain further insight to his artistic preferences. He wrote that the French section was "very fine", noting that there were "a very large proportion of nude subjects, some of a meritorious character...", but was disappointed that there were not many good landscapes.<sup>48</sup> Combes was likely to have been particularly critical of landscapes, as he was a landscape painter himself. He also wrote disparagingly of the German paintings on show, preferring the work of French and English

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<sup>45</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1879, p.5.

<sup>46</sup> May 10<sup>th</sup> 1878, Combes Diary, Mitchell Library.

<sup>47</sup> May 12<sup>th</sup> 1878, Combes Diary, Mitchell Library.

<sup>48</sup> May 12<sup>th</sup> 1878, Combes Diary, Mitchell Library.



artists.<sup>49</sup> This might also speak to his training in England and France and represent the Australian preference for a French and English aesthetic.

Combes was commended for his work as commissioner. The New South Wales exhibition won a number of medals and certificates. Combes was also thanked for his services at the exhibition by the Prince of Wales, president of the British section, and was made a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George. He was also recognised by the French government, thanked through the President of the Republic and made an officer of the Legion d'Honneur.<sup>50</sup> Combes' experience at the Paris Exposition Universelle brought him in contact with the latest art and design from around the world. The knowledge he gained on this trip gave him insight into systems of art education being instituted across the world that could be used to influence the establishment of educational institutions in Sydney.

### **Report on School Hygiene**

While in Paris for the exhibition, Combs was commissioned by the New South Wales government to make a report on School Hygiene.<sup>51</sup> He visited England, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Australia, Switzerland and America to investigate the condition and ventilation of school-buildings; to inquire into the organisational and management of technological museums and colleges. The government had become interested in improving hygiene in schools as it "has been deduced that the seeds of disease are too frequently disseminated in schools".<sup>52</sup> Combes was also encouraged to "further generally the interests of the Sydney International Exhibition".<sup>53</sup> His knowledge of engineering, together with his knowledge of art and "large experience as a colonist" equipped him with the skills to write this report.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> June 10<sup>th</sup> 1878, Combes Diary, Mitchell Library.

<sup>50</sup> *Sydney Evening News*, 28 October 1893, p.3s.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Sydney Evening News*, 28 October 1893, p.3s, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1879, p.5.

<sup>54</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1879, p.5.

Combes' report included several appendices that relate to art education. 'Appendix O' detailed the formation, arrangement and administration of the South Kensington Museum. The government's interest in the museum suggests they had serious intentions of using this model for the Technological Museum. Combes detailed each of the eight departments within the museum. He also included a comprehensive discussion of the regulations for art students wishing to make copies in the South Kensington Museum.<sup>55</sup> So long as students did not obstruct viewing by other visitors, they were permitted to make copies at any time. There were also special times put aside for students wishing to use easel and other equipment that might get in the way of regular visitors. Restrictions were placed on the copying of paintings in colour,<sup>56</sup> and no work from privately owned collections could be copied without permission. This information was relevant to the interests of the New South Wales academy of art who were interested in making their collection accessible to students. The Academy had been embroiled in the Wallis scandal (discussed in chapter 3), when one of the members had attempted sell his private collection, passing off a number of his copies as originals.<sup>57</sup> The regulations around copying set by South Kensington may have been of particular interest.

The report went on to detail the organisation of the National Art Training School in London. The report identified the principle purpose of the school as training art master and mistresses for the instruction of students in drawing, designing and modelling in applied art. The school building was situated adjoining the South Kensington museum, allowing students to study from the collection with ease. Much of the museum's decorative scheme was also undertaken or assisted by the students of the school. At this time, the New South Wales Academy hoped to establish an art training school in connection with the gallery, modelled after South Kensington.

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<sup>55</sup> Edward Combes, "Report on the lighting, heating and ventilation of school buildings in Great Britain, the continent of Europe, and America: with remarks on school discipline, normal colleges, and the "kindergarten" system ; also on the technical educational institutions of the above countries," (Sydney 1880), p.201.

<sup>56</sup> Copies were to be made in different dimensions to the original.

<sup>57</sup> Hutchinson, "The establishment of the Art Gallery of New South Wales: politics and taste."

Combes included a discussion of the typical trajectory of a student attending the National Art Training School. This student, he explains, was most likely the son of a tradesman who attended a national school and studied some drawing as part of his general education. Discovering he had an aptitude for the subject, after winning prizes for his work, he might continue his studies at evening classes that were available at reduced fees for “persons who support themselves by manual labour.”<sup>58</sup> From here he would win a scholarship to study at the National Art Training school, including a £1-2 stipend. After completing his studies he would be appointed to teach art in a country school.

The report also includes some discussion of the three different courses available through the training school:

1. For training art masters (offered at public expense)
2. For training art workmen (offered at public expense)
3. Fee-paying students studying fine art and design.<sup>59</sup>

Each of these three courses included studying object drawing, first in black and white, then in colour; painting natural objects; painting from life; architectural and mechanical drawing; etching objects from the museum collection, modelling, and painting from classical sculpture. Of the final course, painting from classical sculpture, it is noted that “not only does the hand become skilful but the mind is... educated into clear and just art-perceptions”.<sup>60</sup> It was believed that all students, regardless of their future careers should be taught taste. The three different courses were only distinguished by a greater weighting of subjects in their respective areas. Fee-paying students had the greatest flexibility in choosing their subjects.

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<sup>58</sup> Combes, "Report on the lighting, heating and ventilation of school buildings in Great Britain, the continent of Europe, and America: with remarks on school discipline, normal colleges, and the "kindergarten" system ; also on the technical educational institutions of the above countries", p.201.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

The subjects studied in each of these three courses were not strictly vocational, but important for a general art education. This, the author claimed, had been done in an effort to bring art down from a pedestal, reminding the reader: “when art was at its greatest, its highest practical purpose was held to be the decoration of buildings”.<sup>61</sup> He pointed to great artists such as Raphael and Michelangelo, whose most significant work was part of a decorative design. He suggested that the courses of the training school might help undo the distance created by the Academy and “draw art and artists down from the separate heaven they have been too fond of inhabiting”.<sup>62</sup> Combes understood the connection between high art and design, exemplifying it through his many professional interests. He may have chosen to emphasise this sentiment in his report in attempt to convey the importance of both high art and design training to educators and policy makers in Sydney.

There is an interesting discussion of social class and the school that was relevant to advocates for Australian art education. The report suggested that a few highly educated students at the training school attend; some students came from trades or apprenticeships, a number who were officers in the army. The bulk were drawn from the lower middle class. They use the training offered at the art school to improve their lot and find a new means of supporting themselves. For many, the author claims, these courses were appealing because they were free from religious and class difficulties that interfere with other instruction:

the spectacle of 400 or 500 students of various ranks in life and various religions studying and competing peacefully together, and all alike proud to achieve distinction and win the prizes which are offered alike to all, is one which cannot be paralleled in any other branch of education.<sup>63</sup>

The report also included a discussion of gender in the art school and its relationship with art for industry. The author noted that most of the female students were enrolled in fee-paying courses and went on to use their

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, pp. 206-207.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 206.

qualifications to secure work as governesses. There was further discussion of the government subsidies for male students and some explanation as to why they were not offered to female students. The report stated that the workforce was dominated by men. By supporting male students, the government was supporting the growth of industry. By contrast, subsidising women's art training "could never result in any great and permanent gain to the community".<sup>64</sup> The issue of subsidised education was also a topic of concern for New South Wales, as the technical college was running at a loss and suffering from increasing financial pressure. By viewing government subsidies as long-term investment in industry, Combes may have been trying to show the government of New South Wales the importance of investing in technical education.

### **International Exhibitions in Sydney and Melbourne 1879-1880**

Combes returned from Europe in 1879 impressed with the trade schools on the continent.<sup>65</sup> On his return, he became president of the Art Society of New South Wales.<sup>66</sup> The same year, Combes was invited by the Premier, Sir P. A. Jennings, to take charge of the art department of the Sydney International Exhibition.<sup>67</sup> The work selected for exhibition in the New South Wales court reflects Combes preference for traditional history and landscape paintings. Combes also held conversazione in the picture gallery offering further information about the work on show. These were very well attended. One report wrote that about 700 ladies and gentlemen attended his closing conversazione at the end of the exhibition.<sup>68</sup>

In 1880 he was a commissioner representing New South Wales at the Melbourne International Exhibition.<sup>69</sup> Combes was on the committee for Arrangement, Decoration and Art, working with chairman Mr. H. C. Dangar.<sup>70</sup> He was also on the committees overseeing 'Machinery and Manufactures', and 'Education and

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 207.

<sup>65</sup> Mandleson, "Norman Selfe," p.121.

<sup>66</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 December 1879, p.7.

<sup>67</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 December 1879, p.7.

<sup>68</sup> *Launceston Examiner*, 1 November 1881, p.15.

<sup>69</sup> Nairn, "Combes, Edward (1830-1895)."

<sup>70</sup> *Australian Town and Country*, 19 June 1880, p.7.

Science'.<sup>71</sup> The majority of the artwork Combes had arranged for the Sydney Exhibition made its way down to be displayed in Melbourne. This was another opportunity that allowed Combes to become better acquainted with innovative design and other systems of art instruction.

### **Combes the artist**

Combes was an accomplished artist in his own right. He worked in pencil and watercolour. The numerous works held in the collection of the National Library, Mitchell library and Art Gallery of New South Wales show he was prolific. In England, he was a member of the Langham Sketching Club, the Savage Club, the Art Club at Hanover Square, and in 1886 he was made a member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours.<sup>72</sup>

Combes does not appear to have been interested in exhibiting his work for colonial audiences. He was reported to have “exhibited works at almost every exhibition in Europe”.<sup>73</sup> He received the high honour of having his work hung “on the line” (at eye level) at the Paris Salon and British Royal Academy exhibitions.<sup>74</sup> In 1885 he wrote to Du Faur, trustee and acting secretary of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, announcing two of his drawings were to be hung on the line at the Royal Institute exhibition in London, and another at the English Royal Academy.<sup>75</sup> He exhibited at other exhibitions in Europe as well. In his diary of 1878, he noted that his work was being exhibited at the Crystal Palace in London.

In Sydney, Combes was remembered as a skilled amateur artist. *The Bulletin* described him as the “best amateur painter in Sydney and the wonder [is] ... that the prosy mechanical engineer can find time to indulge in the ‘seraph ecstasy’ of a pictorial ideal”.<sup>76</sup> Combes did not focus on exhibiting in Australia and gave only

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News* 21 October 1893, p.4.

<sup>73</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News* 21 October 1893, p.4.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Letter dated 15.5.1885, correspondence by name, AGNSW archive.

<sup>76</sup> *The Bulletin*, 23 April 1881.

one work to the Art Gallery of New South Wales: an etching after one of his paintings. After his death in 1895, his family gave the gallery a watercolour titled *La Perouse, Botany Bay*, of which a larger oil version had won honourable mention at the Paris Salon.<sup>77</sup> For all his efforts to establish art education in the colony, he did not contribute any of his own work.

In his work, Combes painted the landscape as he saw it. *The Evening News* suggested that “he also drew attention particularly to the importance of drawing accurately from nature.”<sup>78</sup> During his time in Paris in the late 1850s, he had become acquainted with artists of the Barbizon school, a group landscape painters who were interested in drawing inspiration from nature, rather than the tendency towards stylised invention that had become popular. Combes had taken artistic excursions to the Forest of Fontainebleau in Barbizon, the area in which many of the artists gathered, and for which they were named.<sup>79</sup>

The influence of the Barbizon school is evident in Combes’ work. *The Settler’s Hut* (1880) (Figure 17) features the characteristic tonal hues we might associate with an artist such as Theodore Rousseau. The work is dominated by browns and greys, with just a few hints of red and blue providing contrast. Like Rousseau, Combes’ brushwork is soft and generalised. The tree foliage on the left is indicated with feathered strokes. The cloudy sky that dominates the picture plane is depicted in a soft sfumato. Though the vastness of the landscape and the shape of the distant hills are recognisably Australian, the foreground of Combes’ work could be mistaken as European. His Parisian training may have tinted his interpretation of Australian scenery.

Combes’ interest in the European art and his own training in France can be seen in his desire to institute a similar system in Australia. In an address before the Society of Artists, Combes suggested that an institution based on the European model would allow young students to get proper instruction. He also hoped that they might follow the example of the Felton Bequest in Melbourne, and help one

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<sup>77</sup> Nairn, “Combes, Edward (1830–1895).”

<sup>78</sup> *The Evening News*, 8 August 1883, p.7.

<sup>79</sup> For more on the Barbizon school see Adams, *The Barbizon school and the origins of impressionism*.

student each year by sending them “to Europe in order that he might have the advantage of carrying on his studies in the best school.”<sup>80</sup> Combes believed that the best training for aspiring Australian artists was found in Europe, reflecting both the inadequacy of local art education and the belief in the superiority of European training.

Combes exercised considerable influence on Sydney’s artistic taste. As a trustee of the Art Gallery, he helped decide which pictures would be acquired and exhibited by Sydney’s only public gallery.<sup>81</sup> When he was president of the art society in 1883, Combes and Fairfax offered a prize of £10 10s for the best study in oil or watercolour.<sup>82</sup> The prize-winning pictures were exhibited in the March exhibition held by the society at the Town Hall. Through his decisions on the board of trustees and his sponsorship of art prizes, Combes became an arbiter of taste.

### **Report on Technical Education 1887**

Combes was on the honorary council for the Technical College when it was first established in 1879.<sup>83</sup> He was appointed President of the new Board of Technical Education in 1880. In 1881 Combes also assisted the College as examiner for the School of Design and noted the high quality of instruction.<sup>84</sup> In 1887 Combes was commissioned to report on technical education abroad. He arrived in England shortly after the British Royal Commission had presented its final report on technical education (1881-1884). The report highlighted the need for the establishment of technical colleges across England and particularly in manufacturing centres to improve the quality of British manufacturing. This report informed Combes ideas about technical education in Australia.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Letter from Sir Alfred Stephen, dated 13 April 1881, AGNSW archive.

<sup>82</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 January 1883, p.2.

<sup>83</sup> MacLeod, *Archibald Liversidge, FRS: imperial science under the Southern Cross*, p. 214.

<sup>84</sup> Committee of the Technical College, *Report from the Committee of the Technical College at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts*, pp.15-16.

<sup>85</sup> Mandleson, "Norman Selfe."



In August 1887, Combes submitted his *Report on Technical Education* to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly.<sup>86</sup> He included nine recommendations that summarised his findings. Among these was the recommendation for the opening of a Technical Museum in connection with the Technical College for use by students and teachers. He commended the current museum, but argued that its disconnection from the Technical College prevented it from serving the needs of students and teachers.<sup>87</sup>

Combes' report also emphasised the importance of teaching drawing from the very beginning of a child's education. He wrote:

...it has been made a branch of primary education in every system of public instruction throughout Europe, and is now considered as necessary to a child's education as writing.<sup>88</sup>

Included in his report, was a copy England's approved syllabus of drawing instruction. As both an engineer and artist, Combes was aware of the value of drawing. It was a skill that was essential for all branches of art and design.

In his conclusion Combes listed numerous areas in which he wished to undertake further investigation. Among these areas was study in Sloyd. Sloyd was a form of education brought into Scandinavian schools in the latter part of the nineteenth-century. It brought manual training into general education, allowing children to learn handicrafts. Combes interest in Sloyd was likely sparked by his desire to bring technical education to students from an early age.

## **Conclusion**

Combes continued his political career to the end of his life, as a member of the Legislative Council from 1891-1895. He was not an active legislator, but contributed significantly to the development of colonial public works and

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p.129.

<sup>87</sup> Edward Combes, "Report on technical education," (Sydney 1887), p.216.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p.3.

education policy. In October 1895, aged 65, Combes died at his residence, Glanmire Hall near Bathurst.<sup>89</sup>

This chapter examined Combes' professional life, focusing on his contributions to art education in Sydney. Examining Combes' professional interests offers another perspective. Unlike the superintendents for drawing examined in *Chapter Four* or Ethel Stephens in *Chapter Five*, Combes was not directly involved in teaching art. However, his influence as a politician and trustee for the Art Gallery allowed him to effect art education more broadly. His experience as an engineer allowed him to appreciate the practical application of art instruction and its importance for improving industry, which was particularly important in a growing industrial city such as Sydney.

Combes' work as commissioner for the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle and his experience writing reports on schools and technical education abroad allowed him to gather knowledge of art, design and education systems from around the world. Some of his recommendations were realised after his death. His report on the National Art Training School in 'Appendix O' of the Report on School Hygiene (1879-80) may have influenced the Education Department's decision to look to South Kensington's National Art School when they sought a new Superintendent for Drawing a decade later. Combes' recommendation (1887) for a better integrated Technological Museum that could be used by students of the Technical College was acted upon. In 1893, the museum was moved to a dedicated building next to the Technical College and the collection was more frequently used in classes.

Combes worked to extend access to art education. His efforts with the board of trustees for the Art Gallery reflected his interest in teaching taste, and bringing audiences into contact with quality examples of high art. His involvement in the acquisition of *Chaucer* eventually paid off. It has become one of the Art Gallery's most prized possessions, described by past director Edmund Capon as "one of

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<sup>89</sup> *Evening News*, 19 October 1895, p.5.

the most celebrated paintings in the gallery".<sup>90</sup> It takes pride of place in the Gallery's Old Courts and continues to engage audiences to think about British history, poetry and art to this day.

Examining Combes' professional life has allowed me to demonstrate the way an individual in Sydney during this period was able to work across institutions and disciplines. Closer study of certain elements of Combes' career has shown the way he effected art education across a wide range of places and spaces. Combes' various professional interests came together to give him a skill set that saw him advocate for art education that would improve industry and establish more accessible art education for all.

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<sup>90</sup> Edmund Capon, "Collection highlights tour," Art Gallery of New South Wales, <http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/discover-art/take-a-tour/online-tours/collection-highlights-tour/>. Accessed June 2014.

## PART THREE: TOOLS

This chapter focuses on *how* art was taught by examining the tools used for art education in Sydney, focusing on plaster casts and copybooks. Both plaster casts and copybooks were used as aids for art instruction in schools and technical colleges and casts also featured in early exhibitions. Copybooks and casts were not only aids for teaching art; but the images themselves became important in extending British aesthetic values to the colony: they became tools for teaching taste. They were used across a range of different places and spaces, existing as a physical link between various institutions that taught art. Examining the images and objects used as tools for teaching art offers further insight into the character of art education in Sydney.

No study has examined the history of copybooks and their impact on art education in Australia. Rafael Cardoso has examined English copybooks, presenting a chronology of their growing popularity through the nineteenth century. He highlights the development of the books as tools for art education and identifies a shift from the production of books only for elite audiences, to the wider publication of books intended for working class readers interested in design.<sup>1</sup> This type of analysis of copybook has not yet been undertaken in the Australian context.

Australian tools for art instruction relied on the precedent set by art schools in England. Our copybooks frequently followed the format of earlier English books. However, when examined closely, we see some important differences that reveal the unique character of Australian art education. This chapter will examine the collection of copybooks held at the National Art Library in London to assess the conventions that emerged in English copybooks made in the nineteenth century. I will then analyse images reproduced in Australian copybooks and consider the way they were adapted to an Australian audience.

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<sup>1</sup> Cardoso in Romans, *Histories of art and design education: collected essays*.

This chapter examines copybooks in attempt to gain insight into classrooms of the past. It is notoriously difficult to analyse past pedagogies. However, analysis of copy-exercises provides some knowledge of the tasks undertaken by students in the classroom. Ian Grosvenor has suggested that photographs of schools act as useful visual sources for the historian of the classroom.<sup>2</sup> I argue that the images used within the classroom are also valuable sources for learning about the classroom experience.

Copybooks included exercises that were intended to help children develop skills in design, responding to the interest in art for industry. They were developed for English schools in the mid-nineteenth-century to help teach the South Kensington syllabus. As we will see, many of these exercises were reproduced for Australian schools without alteration. This chapter examines the ways in which the idea of 'art for industry' was disseminated in Sydney through copybooks.

The images and sculptures that were reproduced and used for art education became tools for teaching 'taste' in Australia. These objects extended British aesthetics across the empire. Collections of plaster casts from Greco Roman antiquities were also an important part of early Australian art education, offering the broader community an opportunity to study these objects, and through them, the Western canon.

Andrew Montana considers the appropriation of British taste and design in Australia more broadly. He suggests that cast collections were put on display in Australia following the example set by the South Kensington Museum to help develop "a civilised and improved community".<sup>3</sup> He reminds us, that in Australia, the display of art and sculpture was not just about teaching taste, or about improving the community, but more specifically focused on adopting *British* taste and notions of propriety. Montana suggests that the 1870 inter-colonial exhibition was one example of this: a "celebration of the transplanting of

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<sup>2</sup> Lawn, Grosvenor, and Rousmaniere, *Silences & images: the social history of the classroom*, pp.83-105.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Montana, *The art movement in Australia: design, taste and society 1875-1900* (Carlton South, Vic.: Miegunyah Press, 2000).

European culture to the oldest British Australian colony".<sup>4</sup> Using casts of ancient sculptures as part of art instruction continued this 'celebration', repeating it in art galleries and classrooms on a regular basis.

British aesthetics held currency in Australian colonial society. British artistic traditions were adapted with a sense of nostalgia for England. They offered Australians a visual connection to the genteel cultural practices of the old-world.<sup>5</sup> When casts were acquired and put on show in colonial collections, they brought with them an association with the original sculpture and through this, a connection to Europe.

As Old World aesthetics took up residence in a new land, they did not stand unaltered. Social, economic and political factors had an impact.<sup>6</sup> Ian Cooke considered the way that plaster casts from the antique, installed in the Auckland Museum in 1878 had their meaning shift in this new context.<sup>7</sup> In Australia, as in Auckland, the casts derived their status from the original sculptures they represented. They were embodiments of the greatest achievements in art. However, Cooke suggests that their placement in the Auckland museum, geographically and temporally distant from the Greek and Roman originals changed their meaning. When placed beside Maori artefacts, in a museum that included exhibits of natural history, the casts became symbols of a societal ideal.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter explores the arguments presented by copybook authors to justify the importance of art instruction. Though we have seen arguments about the importance of 'art for industry' and 'teaching taste', in copybooks, we see a greater emphasis placed on the broader educational benefit of art instruction. Some authors argued for the importance of art education for improving hand-eye coordination, or for the importance of visual communication and the child's

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.17.

<sup>5</sup> Darian-Smith, Gimshaw, and Macintyre, *Britishness abroad: transnational movements and imperial cultures*.

<sup>6</sup> Rosilyn Baxter, "Reeve, Edward (1822-1889)," <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/reeve-edward-4462>. Accessed August 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Ian Cooke in Rune Frederiksen and Eckart Marchand, eds., *Plaster casts: making, collecting, and displaying from classical antiquity to the present* (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2010), p.577-597.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.578.

natural exploration of visual forms. Both British and Australia copybook introductions will be examined to consider the intention behind the provision of these tools for art instruction.

One children's book that was not explicitly intended for art instruction has also been included in this chapter. *Cole's Funny Picture Book* intended for children's entertainment includes a chapter on drawing.<sup>9</sup> The way Cole wrote about art education and the images he includes provide a new perspective on the copybooks used in schools. His book also causes us to ask questions about the relationship between education and entertainment, and demonstrates the importance of engaging children's interest.

## Copybooks

By the time copybooks were introduced as tools for teaching art in Australian schools, the practice of copying had long been employed as a mode for training artists in Europe. When artists' training was institutionalized in the Academy, copying became a key exercise for learning. The history of copying in its use as a pedagogical exercise has been well documented. Both Nikolas Pevsner and Carl Goldstein consider the task of copying and its role in an artist's development.<sup>10</sup> They trace the task back to the Renaissance and detail the way in which students learned to represent form. An artist's training included many hours of copying, first from copybooks and plates, then from plaster casts of body parts, then later full figures, life models and full compositions. Prestigious artists training schools saw the practice of copying prescribed in the curriculum. Students would repeatedly copy from antique models until their forms became part of an artistic vocabulary; a visual grammar that could be used to construct new compositions inspired by and indebted to the masters of the past.

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<sup>9</sup> E. W. Cole, *Cole's funny picture book* (Melbourne: E. W. Cole, 1879).

<sup>10</sup> Carl. Goldstein, *Teaching art: academies and schools from Vasari to Albers* (Cambridge [England]; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of art, past and present* (1940).

Copybooks gained popularity in the eighteenth century. Cardoso considers the way they offered copy-exercises to amateurs interested in art. He suggests that initially, they were produced exclusively for an elite market. In the eighteenth century, copybooks provided instruction to those wishing to add a flourish to their education with an accomplishment such as drawing. These books followed an academic mode of teaching art, written for readers familiar with high art.<sup>11</sup>

*Bowles Complete Drawing-Book* is one such book aimed at an elite audience familiar with Academic art. It claimed to be the first book of its kind in England “suited to facilitate the attainment of this Art”.<sup>12</sup> A short introduction outlines the materials needed and the method by which one should approach their first attempts at Drawing. The book goes on with a series of drawings to be copied by the pupil, progressing in much the same manner as the academic curriculum. First, parts of human anatomy are copied before moving on to busts and full figures after the antique. The latter part of the book includes landscape scenes. Both figure drawing and landscape scenes would have appealed to the gentlemen traveller who wanted to record their experiences abroad. The author appeals to a young learned reader, arguing that art forms an integral part of education, “since nothing informs or corrects our ideas so soon as a true knowledge of Symmetry and Proportion”.<sup>13</sup> Other drawing books published at this time followed a similar format.<sup>14</sup> It is unlikely that these books would have replaced the drawing tutor. For many of their readers, they would have acted as supplementary or introductory material to the student of drawing.

### **Copybooks: Democratizing art education?**

The nineteenth-century saw the growth in the British market for copybooks that might be attributed to a number of factors. Cardoso suggests that technological

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<sup>11</sup> Romans, *Histories of art and design education: collected essays*.

<sup>12</sup> Bowles and Carver, *Bowles's Complete Drawing-Book, containing an extensive collection of examples, on a great variety of subjects, for the improvement of youth, in the pleasant and useful art of drawing; elegantly engraved, on one hundred copper-plates* (London: Bowles and Carver, No, 69, St Pauls Church Yard, N. D.).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p.1.

<sup>14</sup> *Drawing book: Paris*, (n.p, n.d).



developments including the invention of the steam printing press and the increased use of wood pulp for paper production saw the expansion of production of affordable copybooks.<sup>15</sup> These manuals were often produced by artists' supply companies, offering instruction and guidance for using their products. New books aimed at middle and working class audiences began to emerge. They offered instruction and exercises in geometrical and mechanical drawing and drawing for particular trades.<sup>16</sup>

The cheap production of copybooks also coincided with campaigns for the improvement and provision of art education in Britain. From its establishment, the South Kensington Department of Science and Art produced and disseminated copybooks illustrating their scheme of instruction. Their publishers, Chapman and Hall published numerous drawing manuals that were issued for use by the increasing number of students and teachers using the scheme.<sup>17</sup>

The expansion of the market for copybooks in the 1820s and 30s saw a greater range of manuals being produced.<sup>18</sup> One particularly popular book was J. D. Harding's *Lessons on Art*. At 21 shillings, the book would have been too expensive for most working class, and many middle class audiences. Yet, despite this it was incredibly successful, going into ten editions in the three decades that followed.<sup>19</sup> Harding illustrated the 'progressive method' of teaching art, the model that was adopted by South Kensington. The initial lessons focused on drawing straight lines, simple geometric shapes and curves. These are then used to construct familiar household objects before moving on to more complex objects and object-groups. This method helped to establish a clear relationship between the two-dimensional surface of the page and the three-dimensional space being represented.

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<sup>15</sup> Cardoso in Romans, *Histories of art and design education: collected essays*, pp22-25.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.19.

<sup>17</sup> Macdonald, *The history and philosophy of art education*, Chapter 8.

<sup>18</sup> Cardoso in Romans, *Histories of art and design education: collected essays*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*.

Many more affordable copybooks aimed at a working class audience were soon produced. In their introductions, the authors frequently wrote of the importance of learning drawing, for all sections of society. In his introduction to *The British Book of Pen and Ink Drawing*, Wittcock notes this change in the audience for art education:

The great utility of the Art of Drawing to every class of society, is now generally acknowledged, but it is only a few years back that it was considered as an art only required by painters, draughtsman, or drawing masters, and by the latter class of artists taught to ladies and gentlemen as an elegant accomplishment connected with genteel (sic) education. As the commerce and manufactures of England increased, the immense variety of articles produced by the mechanic and artisan, required new and elegant forms, ornaments, and patterns, and many persons engaged in the potteries, cotton, and silk manufactories, paper strainers, and numerous other trades requiring embellishment found the great necessity of obtaining a knowledge of the art of drawing...<sup>20</sup>

Affordable copybooks made art instruction available to a wider audience. Publishers began producing books that catered to the interest of the middle and working classes.

In 1825 several books emerged that claimed to offer a full course of instruction that could be followed without the aid of a teacher.<sup>21</sup> This notion of learning from a book alone opened up possibilities. With a single purchase and some scholarly perseverance, the student could develop their artistic skill without further expense. In some respects, this allowed for the democratisation of art education, placing instruction in the hands of anyone able to read and eager to learn. Copybooks made art far more accessible to a broad audience. However, the type of art instruction deemed appropriate and marketed to these 'masses' was very different from the books offering art instruction to the elite. These books were

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<sup>20</sup> N Whittock, *The British drawing-book, or, the art of drawing with pen and ink* (London: John Limbird, 143 Strand., N. D.), p.1.

<sup>21</sup> Cardoso in Romans, *Histories of art and design education: collected essays*.

primarily focused on ornamental or technical drawing, rather than figurative art. For many publishers, these cheaper volumes responded to the interests of the working classes, who might pursue drawing to improve their skills for their trade or craft. Books like Wittcock's made it clear that they bore no relation to those books concerned with art as an accomplishment. Those volumes offered instruction in figurative art remained prohibitively expensive, meaning that the art instruction offered to the wider public was one deemed 'appropriate'.<sup>22</sup>

William Dyce, the first director of the School of Design at Somerset House from 1838, penned his own drawing book for his students in 1842 (discussed in relation to Sydney schools in chapter one); *The Drawing Book of the Government School of Design; or, Elementary Outlines of Ornament* (later made available to the public when it was published in 1854). Dyce's book focused on flat outline drawing, a feature that would later characterize the drawing exercises set by South Kensington. He described ornamental art as being based on the 'abstractive' and the 'reproductive', by which he suggested that the key concern of the ornamentist is abstract shapes and patterns, and the reproduction of these motifs. He claimed that this was at odds with the key concerns of high art, which he characterizes as 'imitative'; copying the forms seen in nature. While Dyce separated high art and design into different spheres, but placed design on a separate but equal footing to fine art.<sup>23</sup>

To cater for the different skills needed by the ornamentist, Dyce suggested a different method of training. Rather than copying forms from nature, he focused on studying the "power of representing objects in the form of diagrams... [claiming that it was] far more necessary and valuable than that of imitating them with all their effects of light and shade of surface or material, as an artist does."<sup>24</sup> Dyce designed a course that would train ornamentists. Focusing on linear drawing and geometrical design that was adopted by South Kensington.

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<sup>22</sup> Whittock, *The British drawing-book, or, the art of drawing with pen and ink*.

<sup>23</sup> Romans, *Histories of art and design education: collected essays*, p.25.

<sup>24</sup> William Dyce, *The drawing book of the Government Schools of Design* (1854).

For Dyce, the dissemination of art instruction via copybooks was not about making art education more accessible. Dyce proposed a course that catered to the specific needs of the working classes, as he made clear in the forward to his Drawing book for the school of design. He wrote that his main objective was to provide “a hand-book of ornamental art, for the use and guidance of manufacturers and pattern draughtsman.”<sup>25</sup> Dyce believed that for the working classes, art instruction should remain focused on the ‘useful arts’. The emphasis on ornament offered an alternative to the Academic model of art instruction. This could easily be simplified and adapted for use in the elementary school. Understanding the motivations that guided Dyce in designing South Kensington’s copybooks is important to understanding the copybooks that were used in Sydney.

### **English Copybooks: Establishing a format**

Nineteenth-century English copybooks typically followed a similar format: they began with an introduction from the author with an explanation of how to approach the exercises. This was followed by a series of images that were intended to be copied by the student. The authors typically included some justification of the importance of art instruction. The arguments for the importance of learning to draw differ, but typically follow those three key arguments for the provision of art education outlined in Part I: the economic benefit, the need to teach taste and morals, and the broader educational benefit of art instruction.

The connection between good morals and good taste was an important argument for the provision of art education and frequently appears in an author’s preamble. In the introduction to his manual for teaching model drawing to school students, Butler Williams wrote; “whatever tends to improve the knowledge, and to civilize the mass of the people, will, if properly directed and

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.1.

controlled, improve the tone of their moral character."<sup>26</sup> It is a sentiment seen again in Robert Scott Burn's book for school students and artisans written a few years later:

we are now fully alive to the importance of cultivating what are designated 'habits of taste', and the appreciation of the beautiful in art; and this chiefly - of for nothing else - from the practical value derivable therefrom in the improvement of our Arts and Manufactures.<sup>27</sup>

This emphasis on taste and morals was important for drawing books aimed at working-class audiences, for whom the moral character of art instruction, it was suggested, would be most beneficial.

Developing hand-eye coordination and the educational benefits of drawing was another theme of copybook introductions. Many authors highlighted the connection between drawing and writing. The importance of writing and literacy was more generally acknowledged. In showing how drawing was like writing, the authors tried to show its importance and raise the status of their subject. In *Drawing and Design*, 1893, Edward Taylor states it simply:

writing is drawing - In learning to write you were learning to exercise, and by this exercise developing, exactly the same powers as are required for what is more generally understood by the word drawing.<sup>28</sup>

Authors of *The Broad Line Drawing Book* took a slightly different approach. They suggest drawing could foster children's interest in learning to write. The introduction states, "It will be found, that children prefer learning to draw to

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<sup>26</sup> Butler Williams, *A manual for teaching model-drawing from solid forms, the models founded on those of M. Dupuis; combined with a popular view of perspective, and adapted to the elementary instruction of classes in schools and public institutions* (London: John W, Parker and son, 1852), p.4.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Scott Burn, *The illustrated drawing book for the use of schools, students and artisans. with three hundred illustrative drawings and diagrams*, vol. third edition revised (London: Ward and Lock, 158 Fleet Street, 1856), p.1.

<sup>28</sup> Edward R. Taylor, *Drawing and Design: A class text-book for beginners* (London: Macmillan and co., 1893), p.1.

learning to write, and the preference should not be discouraged, as drawing necessarily teaches half the difficulties of early writing lessons.”<sup>29</sup> The connection between drawing and writing was made clear, and used to stimulate further interest in art instruction.

Drawing was also put forward as a medium for universal communication. Unlike language, which is specific to culture and geography, drawing can be used to communicate with images understood by all. Drawing was also suggested as a way of recording scenes and images that could not easily be described in words. For example, in the introduction to his copybook William Dickes writes: “The traveller, the Man of Science, the Artisan, could each tell its utility as they produced their sketched mementos of scenes once visited or of objects in nature of art carefully studied, or of machines invented.”<sup>30</sup> The pictures explained more than could be conveyed in a written account.

These three key arguments made in the introductions to English copybooks were adopted for Australian publications. As we have already seen in *Part One*, the economic benefit of art, the importance of teaching taste, and the broader educational advantage of art instruction were present in Australian discourse surrounding art education throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth-century.

### **Not just copying**

In many classrooms, teaching art consisted almost exclusively of copying from two-dimensional copy-cards or copybooks. Critics of the South Kensington system disapproved of the emphasis placed on copy exercises. However, the prevalence of the practice did not mean that it was considered the best means of teaching children to draw. In fact, authors of many copybooks warned the reader

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<sup>29</sup> *The Broad Line Drawing Book for the use of young children, containing 80 drawings of objects* (London: N. D.), National Art Library, p.1.

<sup>30</sup> William Dickes, *The Royal Academy drawing book: containing examples to the young student, selection from the works of Raffaello, M. Angelo, and others, or drawn from nature* (London: Ackermann and Co., 1870), p.2.

against the practice of mindlessly imitating from their pages. *The Broad Line Drawing Book*, intended for use by very young pupils, suggests that as soon as the child can draw the “objects here represented with tolerable accuracy, similar real things should be placed before him, and a little assistance given him, that he may early begin to draw from Nature.”<sup>31</sup>

In 1909, R. G. Hatton wrote in his craftsmen’s manual to drawing

The best use of these drawings will doubtless be made by those who also study the living plants themselves; and it cannot be too strongly impressed upon the student, that these ancient figures owe their merit very largely to their being drawings, at first hand, from nature.<sup>32</sup>

This sentiment is seen again in the introduction to *Cusack’s Model Drawing*:

Students are advised never to make a drawing from a diagram in this book, but always from the real model, and it is sincerely hoped that with model and book together, however small their opportunities, or limited their resources, they will find delight and profit in drawing even the simplest objects from nature.<sup>33</sup>

The books were imagined as an aid to a larger course of instruction.

Though it may seem counter-intuitive, from 1850 in England, the promotion of copybooks was allied with efforts to combat plagiarism. Henry Cole expressed his concern about the prevalence of plagiarism in English manufactures in the lead up to the Great Exhibition, stating: “the Exhibition will tend to eradicate that system of wholesale piracy, which manufactures have thought it no offence to

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<sup>31</sup> *Broad Line Drawing Book for the use of young children, containing 80 drawings of objects* (London: N. D.), National Art Library, p.v.

<sup>32</sup> Richard G. Hatton, *The Craftsman’s Plant-Book* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd, 1909), p.vi.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Armstrong, *Cusack’s model drawing: a text book for the use of both teachers and students of public, private, and elementary schools; for students in training colleges, and for elementary art students* (London: City of London Book Depot (City of London School of Art), 1893).

pursue.”<sup>34</sup> Many hoped that in introducing students to a visual vocabulary, they would gain the skill and inspiration to attempt their own designs. This may seem odd, as copybooks were designed to have students copy the images within. In his introduction to *The Grammar of Ornament*, Owen Jones addressed the issue. He wrote, that rather than increasing the “dangerous tendency, and that many will be content to borrow from the past these forms of beauty which have not already been used up *ad nauseam*. It has been my desire to arrest this tendency, and to awaken a higher ambition.”<sup>35</sup> Copybooks should equip students with the skills to produce their own designs.

The authors of copybooks rarely intended them to be the only tool for art instruction. They were imagined as aids to a broader art education that included drawing from observation. The vast majority of British copybooks opened with an introduction that petitioned readers to take leave of the classroom and head into nature. They note that the course of study offered in the book should be seen only as a guiding reference. They emphasise the importance of drawing from nature, collecting natural specimens for drawing in the classroom, and going outdoors to study landscape and natural scenes. In his copybook, Manskirsh reminds his reader:

This sort of practice [of copying] is merely intended to precede, not to preclude, the absolute necessity of studying nature in the original, and collecting a store of representations from real life.<sup>36</sup>

Even the copybooks produced for teaching very young children to draw, such as the *Broad line drawing book* directs students to draw from nature:

So soon as the Pupil can draw a few of the objects here represented with tolerable accuracy, similar real things should be placed before him, and a little assistance given him, that he may early begin to

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<sup>34</sup> Henry Cole, "Address," *The Journal of Design and Manufactures* 19 no. IV (September 1850), p.3.

<sup>35</sup> Jones, *The grammar of ornament: illustrated by examples from various styles of ornament*, p.1.

<sup>36</sup> J. F. Manskirsh, *Ackermann's new drawing book: comprising groups of figures, cattle and other animals for the embellishment of landscape drawings* (London: J. B. G. Vogel), p.ii.



draw from Nature.<sup>37</sup>

And in 1909, in his manual *craftsmen*, Hatton suggests:

The best use of these drawings will doubtless be made by those who also study the living plants themselves; and it cannot be too strongly impressed upon the student, that these ancient figures owe their merit very largely to their being drawings, at first hand, from nature.<sup>38</sup>

This great emphasis on observational drawing from nature is rarely acknowledged in the literature that has criticised nineteenth-century drawing instruction as rigid set of drill exercises. These copybooks show the authors' intention was to help students begin a more comprehensive course of instruction. Studying from nature and learning to create new designs made this far more than mindless copy drills.

### **Australian copybooks**

Copybooks were widely adopted for teaching art in New South Wales' schools. They offered inexperienced teachers ready-made lessons that could be taught with minimal effort. The books followed from the example set by English copybooks. Just like the English books, they typically included a short introductory statement from the author and a series of instructions. The authors also refer to the broader educational benefit of drawing instruction. These comments were typically followed by figures that became progressively more ornate. The books produced for South Kensington were a particularly strong influence on Australian copybooks. They were intended to equip children with skills in design, responding to the interest in developing art education to improve industry. The decorative designs they included followed the example set

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<sup>37</sup> *The Broad line drawing-book for the use of young children, containing 80 drawings of objects.*, vol. 2 ed. (London n.d.), p.v.

<sup>38</sup> Richard G. Hatton, *The Craftsman's Plant-Book* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd, 1909), pp. v - vi.

by South Kensington. The figures chosen for inclusion in these books introduced students to a visual vocabulary that fit within British notions of 'taste'.

### **The Elementary Freehand Drawing Book**

In the 1860s, the Superintendent for Drawing, Joseph Fowles, published a series of copybooks intended for use in the National Schools. Fowles work as Superintendent for Drawing has been considered in chapter one. His copybook will be discussed in greater detail here. Fowles' books appeared to have been the first of their kind published in Australia. They were closely linked to their English counterparts. On the front cover, Fowles' announces the connection with Great Britain in large letters.<sup>39</sup> This connection with the established system of art education in Britain lent them greater legitimacy. In his introduction to the first book Fowles explains that the books were based upon the principle that "the only certain method of training the *Eye* to a true perception of form, and the *Hand* to an obedient power of reproducing objects as perceived, is by means of a course of instruction in exact *Geometrical* figures."<sup>40</sup> His course concentrates on drawing geometric shapes in outline. He highlights the importance of art education for improving hand-eye coordination, just like many of the English copybooks.

Fowles placed emphasis on the importance of accuracy in drawing. He instructed students to strive to recreate each figure exactly, suggesting that an accurate drawing is the "proof" of success. For teachers, this made it easy to see when students improved. This was a course of study focused on training the hand and eye. There was no space for interpretation or creativity. The goal of the exercise was to faithfully reproduce each figure.

The figures Fowles includes in his books were plucked directly from the books designed by South Kensington Department of Science and Art, which had been adopted from the copy exercises designed by Dyce for the School of Design.

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<sup>39</sup> Fowles, *The elementary freehand drawing book*, 1, 5, 6.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, back cover.

Fowles' series began in the same way as the South Kensington books, with a series of drill exercises, drawing straight lines and basic geometric shapes. Students were instructed to practice drawing straight parallel and perpendicular lines. Later exercises then introduced the curve.

Fowles' books followed the example of the South Kensington manuals, moving from simple lines and shapes, to familiar objects drawn in outline, then to more complex ornamental figures drawn from historic examples. Fowles does not appear to have altered the contents of the books at all from the English example. He simply reproduced them with a local publisher.

### **The Australian Drawing Book**

In 1899, F. W. Woodhouse (discussed in chapters one and four), published a series of copybooks. His series followed the format of Fowles' books, but were longer and included a more comprehensive array of figures. The book began with simple exercises based on copying straight lines and simple geometric shapes. Like Fowles' books and the course from South Kensington, the figures gradually became more complex as the series progressed. In the final stages, ornate ornamental figures in various historical styles are represented.<sup>41</sup>

The books offered teachers a ready-made series of lessons. A newspaper review suggested that both teachers and students would benefit by using Woodhouse's series. The article also highlights the: "The books are also cheap, and made in N.S. Wales."<sup>42</sup> The fact the books were affordable and relevant to pupils at all levels, shows Woodhouse's efforts to supply the department with a copybook that could suit their needs. The books furnished teachers with copy exercises that would help them teach the curriculum.

The final volumes of the series feature ornamental motifs from a range of sources. Woodhouse includes a brief caption, identifying each source. These

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<sup>41</sup> Woodhouse, *The Australian drawing book*.

<sup>42</sup> *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 10 February 1900, p.5.

captions represent the diverse range of cultures and historical periods. For example, the figures include: ancient Greek ornaments, 10<sup>th</sup> century German church enamel work (figure 18), Japanese design and boarder patterns (figure 19), painted Maori boarder designs (figure 20), 16<sup>th</sup> century French wood carvings (figure 21) and more. The range of sources for these decorative motifs reflect these presented in South Kensington's copybooks published by Chapman and Hall in England, as well as the range presented by Owen Jones in 1865.

The inclusion of Maori design is worth discussing further as it relates to the Australian context. For Owen Jones, and the Superintendents of Drawing in Sydney, the designs made by native people were seen as 'artefacts' rather than art. As Ian Cooke suggests in his discussion of the juxtaposition of European casts and Maori art in the Auckland museum, native artworks were viewed as ethnographic specimens.<sup>43</sup> The absence of Australian aboriginal designs speaks to the fact that educators working in Sydney would not have viewed these as art. Owen Jones had included Maori design in his *Grammar of Ornament*, giving Maori art the currency it needed to be worthy of inclusion in Woodhouse's copybooks.

The range of ornamental motifs was likely influenced by the publication of Owen Jones' *Grammar of Ornament* in 1856.<sup>44</sup> Jones summarized what he saw as a key vocabulary of ornamental designs. In choosing select designs from throughout history and from different aesthetic traditions, Jones hoped to show "the most prominent types in certain styles closely connected with each other, and in which certain general laws appeared to reign independently of the individual peculiarities of each."<sup>45</sup> Jones codified an ornamental vocabulary, ideal for instructing young designers. His clear articulation of the main features of each decorative history allowed educators to select key ornamental motifs. We find many of these reproduced in Woodhouse's copybooks.

Woodhouse did not reproduce South Kensington's exercises in full. Nor did he incorporate all aspects of Jones' *Grammar of Ornament*. The elements of the

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<sup>43</sup> Cooke, "Colonial contexts."

<sup>44</sup> Jones, *The grammar of ornament: illustrated by examples from various styles of ornament*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

South Kensington syllabus Woodhouse chose to exclude are significant. Jones had a particular interest in Chinese ornament. He included a chapter on the topic in his book, populated with sophisticated symmetrical patterning and motifs drawing on stylised flora and fauna that often also carried symbolic meaning. Jones also published *The Grammar of Chinese Ornament* dedicated entirely to the topic in 1867. Yet Chinese sources are largely absent from Woodhouse's copybooks and teaching resources. Of the scores of figures he included representing Japanese, Italian, French, Greek, Egyptian, German, English and Maori ornament, he includes only one reference to Chinese design. This appears in Part IV of his series, a simple "Chinese Gourd shaped vase" with repeating pattern design (figure 22). The absence of more Chinese ornament may have been a carefully considered decision. Andrew Montana discusses the way some design motifs popular in England, did not translate directly for Australian audiences. The popularity of Chinese design in England was more problematic in an Australian context where the Chinese population were stereotyped as "a threat to both enterprise and morality".<sup>46</sup> Woodhouse may have omitted more Chinese geometric designs for this reason.

In September 1893, the first in Woodhouse's series of articles appeared in the *New South Wales Educational Gazette* that summarised the history of art, offering illustrations and further examples on view in Sydney's collections. The series of articles shows Woodhouse's passion and interest in art of the past. They also offer teachers historical context for the decorative motifs in the drawing syllabus. In his first article, Woodhouse discusses historic ornament such as the Greek decoration that later appeared in his copybook (Figure 23). The figure, he explains, is derived from an Assyrian palm leaf decoration and was a popular classical motif. The antefix was a figure found on the pediment of the Parthenon – a building identified by Owen Jones as displaying ornamentation that showed "the perfection of pure form to a point that has never since been reached".<sup>47</sup> Woodhouse draws links between historic styles, showing how each is indebted

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<sup>46</sup> Montana, *The art movement in Australia: design, taste and society 1875-1900*, p.19.

<sup>47</sup> Owen Jones, *The grammar of ornament: illustrated by examples from various styles of ornament* p. 32.

to what came before, highlighting the importance of understanding the broader context of historic ornament:

...it must be clearly remembered that the borrowing was almost wholly an unconscious process, that the new style was but a fresh link in a subtly-interwoven chain, that, in fact the insensible growth of language affords us the most perfect analogy of the birth and growth of art. 'Like some tall palm the mystic fabric sprung'.<sup>48</sup>

They places ornamental figures considered acceptable according to British taste in Australian classrooms, extending British visual culture to the colony.

Many of these ornamental designs would have been familiar to students in Sydney. They featured in architecture and decorative design. The Victorian appetite for neo classical, Neo-gothic and oriental aesthetics meant many historic styles featured in Sydney's aesthetic landscape. However, Lucien Henry who had taught art at the Technical College through the 1880s had complained about this mix of styles in Australian art education. Being both temporally and geographically distant from the original inspiration for these designs meant many lacked an understanding of their history. Henry urged his students to learn more about the rich aesthetic traditions from which these motifs emerged. He believed that teaching art via copying an eclectic mix of styles was "likely to mislead the student and teach him to mix the Egyptian with the Celtic style, the Greek with the German and so on...".<sup>49</sup> For Henry, the South Kensington's copybooks did not teach students anything about the rich aesthetic traditions represented by each decorative motif.

In the final instalment of his series of articles on the history of art for the *New South Wales Educational Gazette* Woodhouse discussed the question of a national style, "a question apt to be raised in a new country." He suggests that a national

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<sup>48</sup> Woodhouse, *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, June 1893, vol. 3, no.1, p.4.

<sup>49</sup> Henry, Submission to the Board of Technical Education quoted in Australian School Society, "Report of the Australian school society: on the principles of the British and Foreign School Society in London," (Sydney: Printed by Henry Bull, 1836), p.65.

style is likely to emerge on its own and that “a national school of design may be fostered by the simple expedient of using the indigenous flora as suggestions for ornament.”<sup>50</sup> This sentiment may have informed his decision to include numerous specimens of native flora and fauna in his series of copybooks. All of the eleven specimens included in the books are indigenous to Australia. They differentiate the books from their British counterparts and reflect the assertions made by Lucien Henri in the 1880s (discussed in chapter two), that designs based on native plants and animals could be used to shape a new National artistic tradition in Australia.

Of the natural specimens he included, Woodhouse chose exclusively Australian examples. The plants and insects reproduced include: the seed vessel of *Eucalyptus Corymorsa*, *Xylomelum Pyriforme* (native pear); flower of *Dillwynia Ericifolia*; leaves of eucalyptus; the *Sarpedon* butterfly, and the *Danais* butterfly; fruit or seed-vessel of *Frenela Verrucose*; *Epacris*; fruit of a *Hakea Platysperma*; a native rose (*Boronia*); *Blandfordia* (Christmas bell); and the *Actinotus Helianthi* (flannel Flower). Each is illustrated with botanical accuracy, as one might find in a study made for scientific purposes. Some are also shown as they might appear in a decorative motif (figures 24-28). In ornamental form, the specimens are often stylized and repeated in symmetrical patterns. Many of these plants and flowers continue to be used to evoke the character of Australia today.

In 1882, the *Illustrated Sydney News* captured this tension between learning a western vocabulary of visual form and finding a new Australian aesthetic, writing:

One great mistake on the part of Australian artists is their tendency to seek inspiration from foreign sources. The history of Australia is sufficiently rich in materials for the artist to justify a larger use being made of them, while the scenery and skies repeatedly furnish suggestions of which a Turner... would have made a glorious use. But before an Australian School of Painting can be created, broader and sounder views of what really

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<sup>50</sup> *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, 1 May 1894, p.224.

constitute the principles of true art must become diffused throughout the community.<sup>51</sup>

The notion of using native plants and animals to inspire a new national aesthetic may have also been influenced by Lucien Henry. Henry had advocated the use of native flora and fauna for in his own art and design. He had encouraged his students at the technical college to do the same. This is exemplified in his book, *Waratah: Australian Legend*, where he promoted the use of the waratah motif for decorative design.<sup>52</sup> His drawings show novel ways of using the waratah's sculptural form combined with neoclassical balance and proportion.

### **The trouble with copying**

As tools for instruction, copybooks provided simple, easy-to-use lessons that became a double-edged sword: they provided inexperienced teachers with ready-made lessons, but could also become a crutch upon which teachers could rely. Many of the criticisms levelled at the South Kensington system were based on its practice of copying flat shapes drawn in outline on cards. This meant students did not have to transform an object or scene from three-dimensions into two-dimensions as one would from nature, but instead simply imitate the lines drawn. Many teachers appeared to have ignored the instructions presented by the authors of copybooks, suggesting lessons include exercises beyond those in the copybooks.

The question of invention and creativity also became a sticking point for education reformers who did not believe that endless drill could allow the children to express themselves artistically. However, others have argued that copying *did* have the capacity to encourage creativity. Goldstein discusses the tensions between copy and interpretation, suggesting that in the early Renaissance, students were encouraged to interpret the figures they copied, representing them in their own style. This allowed young artists to find their

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<sup>51</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 10 June 1882, p.2.

<sup>52</sup> Lucien Henry, *The War-Atah: Australian legend* (Paris: Neal's English Library, 1891).



own voice through copying.<sup>53</sup> However, when the imitation of master works became standardized by the academy, emphasis moved to making accurate reproductions of the original works. It was this emphasis on accuracy that was taken up by South Kensington. This meant little space was left for experimentation or individual expression.

Many teachers, including Fowles and Woodhouse, did not endorse the practice of endlessly copying from books or cards. Many of the figures they set were intended to illustrate some of the key principle in drawing and to develop hand-eye coordination. The figures set by South Kensington illustrated the idea that every object could be reduced to simple lines and shapes. Exercises printed in copybooks often articulated this by showing the process of building an ornament from its component parts in stages (figure 19). In copying these ornaments, students were expected to take these principles and apply them when studying natural specimens. In his final article for a series on Drawing and its teaching in Public Schools, Woodhouse suggested that art should be grounded in a knowledge of what has been done before, but not “rest on servile copyism”.<sup>54</sup> Woodhouse expressed his wish that every student understand the reason why each line is laid and each operation performed – the tasks should not be purely mechanical.<sup>55</sup>

For many educators, copying was a means to an end. Copy exercises were employed as a way of training the hand and eye. Writing about Rousseau’s *Emile*, Quick wrote: “Children who are great imitators all try to draw. I should wish my child to cultivate this art, not exactly for the art itself, but to make his eye correct and his hand supple....”.<sup>56</sup> He highlights the fact that *Emile* was kept clear of ordinary drawing masters who insisted on imitating imitations. Rousseau acknowledged imitation was an important exercise for training the hand and eye. However, he drew a distinction between copying from two-dimensional figures

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<sup>53</sup> Goldstein, *Teaching art: academies and schools from Vasari to Albers*, p.121.

<sup>54</sup> Mandleson, "Norman Selfe."

<sup>55</sup> Burn, *The illustrated drawing book for the use of schools, students and artisans. with three hundred illustrative drawings and diagrams*, third edition revised.

<sup>56</sup> R. H. Quick, *Essays on educational reformers* (New York: D Appleton and Company, 1894), p.121.

and copying objects or specimens. The two are very different exercises: the first requires the accurate reproduction of lines, the second requires the reinterpretation of a three-dimensional form into two-dimensions. This latter task demands an understanding of illusionistic perspective, and it was this he believed was most important. Copying from two dimensions was an exercise that would help students develop their skill and prepare them for drawing from nature.

### **Brushwork with Nature from Design**

When Branch took over the role of Superintendent for Drawing in 1903 (discussed in greater detail in chapters one and four), he addressed the Department's interest in new forms of art education. We have seen that his appointment ushered in a new character of drawing instruction. Woodhouse had focused on teaching ornamental design and history. He set out to furnish Australian children with an understanding of those aesthetic traditions they had inherited, but from which they were geographically remote. By contrast, Branch encouraged an engagement with organic forms and drawing through observation of natural specimens.

When Branch began as superintendent, the tools used to aid art instruction also changed. Like Fowles and Woodhouse, Branch released a book of his own.<sup>57</sup> In 1906, Branch published his own book entitled *Brushwork from nature with design*.<sup>58</sup> This book is quite different to Woodhouse's copybooks. It is not really a copybook at all, but a guide to a course of instruction in Brushwork. On his opening page he writes:

With the exception of the drill in the first few plates, there is nothing intended to be used as a copy. The Drawing, whether brushwork, line drawing or modelling, should be the child's own expression of his

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<sup>57</sup> Branch, *Brushwork with nature from design*.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

mental impression, and this should be obtained from the best source – reality.<sup>59</sup>

Branch encouraged teachers to engage their students in the study of drawing, and to think of the task as visual problem solving, rather than mindless-copying. He placed emphasis on drawing from observation, rather than from copybooks and suggested every art lesson should include some aspect of ‘mental activity’.<sup>60</sup> The chapters that follow give further explanation of the elements within the study of art, including: colour, posture, brush manipulation, drill, and more. He provided clear guidelines for instructing students, but also explained his rationale, so teachers could understand the reasons behind these instructions.

Like Woodhouse, Branch included examples of Australian flora in his book. He suggested that the wattle branch could be set before students as a study in observational drawing.<sup>61</sup> However, unlike Woodhouse, Branch encouraged students think creatively about how to depict the wattle branch. Through this, he gave students a power over their visual world. Australian students, for the first time were asked to engage with their environment through drawing.

Branch’s book was a significant departure from the South Kensington style copybook. He privileged an explanation of his beliefs and methods, offering clear and detailed explanations. Only a few illustrations and drill exercises were included, as well as appendices exemplifying student work. These were intended as a visual explanation, and were not to be used as copy exercises. Branch’s book asked teachers to engage with the *process* of art education, rather than supplying activities that could be set without thinking.

In arguing for, and later designing South Kensington’s Alternative Syllabus (discussed earlier in chapter one), Cooke and Ablett suggested that children were more naturally drawn to organic shapes. The Alternative Syllabus included curved shapes, circles and ovals. Even from the early stages animals and familiar

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p.vi.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.vi.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p.2.

natural forms were set as copy exercises. Influenced by Ruskin's call to focus on truth to nature, art educators had begun to take note of children's natural inclinations, and include subjects they might find appealing.<sup>62</sup> For the first time, the interests and desires of the child were considered in the design of the syllabus.

Ambidextrous drawing was believed to be useful in developing the connections between the brain and both hands at the same time. An article written by Liberty Tadd and published in the *New South Wales Educational Gazette* in 1901, explains:

The use of both hands at the same time may appear difficult to one who has never tried it, but it is a psychological fact and easily demonstrated that one impulse of the brain controls both sets of muscles. Both arms may be made to act simultaneously and with equal power and facility, with no more brain effort than is used in moving one.<sup>63</sup>

Tadd goes on to suggest that the technique offers both teacher and pupil "freedom of movement, graceful curve, and flowing line, they will readily understand the pleasure that may be derived from it."<sup>64</sup> There is a much more pronounced interest in the physical movement involved in the exercises. However, the shapes and figures produced are not entirely forgotten. The symmetry and stylised designs were aligned with the style of South Kensington figured already familiar to teachers.

Branch brought a new approach to art education, putting new emphasis on the child's development. His introduction of ambidextrous drawing in Sydney schools is a good example of this. Liberty Tadd's *New Methods in Education: Modelling with Design*, featured a section on ambidextrous drawing and includes

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<sup>62</sup> For more on the influence of Ruskin's ideas in drawing manuals see Peter Bicknell and Jane Munro, *Gilpin to Ruskin: Drawing Masters and their Manuals 1800-1860* (Cambridge, England: Fitzwilliam Museum, 1987).

<sup>63</sup> *New South Wales Educational Gazette*, October, 1901, vol 11, no. 5, p.92.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

a forward by Branch in its Australian edition, outlining the approach he took to the method. Branch emphasizes the importance of hand-eye coordination and the physical qualities of drawing exercises. Two of the four key objectives outlined by Branch were to improve the “practical development of the eye, hand and brain by conscious (not automated) control; [and to] use ‘powerful rectifying exercises’ to reform/correct awkward muscular movement.”<sup>65</sup> This art instruction was no longer concerned with teaching taste, or improving industry, but serving the broader educational needs of the child.

### **Cole’s funny picture books: art and play**

Australian children also encountered art through books outside of the classroom. Children’s books often included illustrations, or references to art making. Though not a part of formal education, these images served a role in art education, introducing children to visual forms examining the art contained in leisure books allows us to consider non-traditional sites for education. In the 1880s, Edward Cole,<sup>66</sup> the proprietor of the enormously successful book arcade in Melbourne, published a book for children, entitled *Cole’s Funny Picture Book*.<sup>67</sup> It invites us into a world of nursery rhymes, interesting facts, and of course, funny pictures clipped from a range of sources.

Cole believed in the importance of education for all. Through both his book and his bookshop, he sought to make education accessible and entertaining. This message was conveyed through illustrations in his funny picture books, such as the back cover, in which Cole’s book arcade is pictured. Above the aisles of books, there is a banner that reads “Palace of intellect”, which Cole explains in a caption: “Intellectual, well-behaved people collect and friends meet and feel happy in the

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<sup>65</sup> Branch, *Brushwork with nature from design*, p.v.

<sup>66</sup> For more on Edward Cole’s life see “E. Cole Turnley, ‘Cole, Edward William (1832–1918),” National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, Published first in hardcopy 1969,, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cole-edward-william-3243/text4897>, accessed September 2013.

<sup>67</sup> E. W. Cole, *Cole’s funny picture book* (Melbourne: E. W. Cole, 1879).

Palace of Intellect”<sup>68</sup>(figure 29). The book, intended to “delight the children and make home happier”,<sup>69</sup> is marketed for the entertainment of children. However, it clearly served a second purpose in carrying Cole’s message about the importance of education; acceptance of all; and striving to do good. Chapters such as “Pride Land”; “Greediness Land”; and “Theft Land” include short verses and pictures with moral lessons.

In many ways, the book was an educational volume presented in the guise of entertainment. Pages 95-99 include a visit to “Drawing Land”, in which illustrations, poems and a full manifesto written by Cole give us some insight to his thoughts on art instruction. In his manifesto Cole expressed his belief in the importance of drawing, stating that pictures “are perhaps the greatest of all educating powers”.<sup>70</sup> Like many of the copybooks we have considered, Cole writes of the strength of images as a universal language, able to communicate ideas far more eloquently than words.

Cole encouraged his young readers to visit exhibitions of art. He recommended the display of pictures in all places: in the cottage, the villa, the mansion, and the schoolroom.<sup>71</sup> He also includes an illustration of “our picture gallery”, showing his young readers what it might be like to visit an exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria. Nicely dressed men and women are pictured examining paintings, and discussing what they see. This picture of the gallery may have helped demystify the grand gallery spaces and made it more welcoming to children.

Numerous pictures illustrate “Drawing Land”. Several children are shown drawing on paper and slates. Some playful pictures show a young girl painting a portrait of her cat; another drawing her pet dog, and “doggy drawing pussy’s likeness”, a dog painting a portrait of a cat. A girl stands holding a drawing of a person, with the caption “Our lady artist”, and a boy below her, “Our gentleman

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, back cover.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, front cover.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p.96.

artist” (figure 30). These playful illustrations model children’s interest in drawing, honouring them with titles such as ‘artist’. They also show a light-hearted engagement with art, bringing together education and entertainment.

Cole was clearly aware of the South Kensington method of drawing instruction. He included a reference to the South Kensington copy tasks in his illustration of a “Drawing lesson on the slate”.<sup>72</sup> Images typical of the copy-exercises set for children, such as teacups, a teapot, a bucket, and a rooster are presented drawn in outline. Cole reproduced these images in white outline on a black background, as they would appear on a slate. He offers an understanding of the experience of drawing from a child’s point of view. Copy exercises produced in books and card sets for Australian schools were drawn with black outlines on a white background. The cost of paper meant that for many students, these exercises were completed in reverse: white lines on a black background (Figure 31). Cole engaged with the child’s experience of art education.

Cole reproduced many other pictures that engaged with the child’s own artistic expression. One illustration, with the caption *Drawing lesson on the slate* shows a group of figures, drawn in a child-like way. They have thick bodies drawn in outline, decorated to show the buttons and patterns that adorn their clothes, with stick arms and legs. Their heads are perfect circles with circle eyes, a dot for a nose, and simple crescent-moon mouths (figure 31). This image, and some of the others that are presented by their child-artists show the types of drawings typically done by children, but that are absent in any of the school copy-exercises. As Cooke and Ablett noted in 1884, children are normally interested in drawing the people and animals around them, rather than the abstract shapes and geometric patterns set by South Kensington. In appealing to the interests of his audience, Cole presents the types of pictures that children choose to draw and the sort of figures that peak their interest. He combines a playful tone with a serious message. He encouraged his audience to aspire to great feats of artistry, offering a mixture of instruction, interest and entertainment.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.99.

## Plaster Casts

Plaster casts had been used as tools for teaching art since the Academy school was first established in the Renaissance. Copies of great works of sculpture were placed before young artists to draw and learn anatomical proportion. They functioned as an aid for drill exercises, but also furnished students with a vocabulary of classical form.<sup>73</sup> In the nineteenth-century the technologies for making plaster casts improved. This, together with a new appetite for cast collections saw a huge increase in the popularity of making and selling these plaster copies.

Collections of casts began appearing across the world in the nineteenth-century. In 1867, Henry Cole orchestrated the Convention for Promoting Universal Reproductions of Works of Art. Fifteen countries signed on to this agreement for the formal exchange of casts.<sup>74</sup> This was built on a mutual understanding that casts offered the ability to bring great works of art to diverse audiences who would not have had access to the originals. Cast copies brought the art to the people. They gave audiences the opportunity to view a range of works from throughout history and from around the world.

One of the motivations for making cast collections accessible to the public was to teach taste. As established earlier, advocates for art education argued that art education could cultivate civility. This idea was linked to the belief that an aesthetic education for artisans and consumers would improve the quality of British manufactures, as it would both feed into the improvement of design and contribute to a demand for better quality goods.<sup>75</sup> Mervyn Romans has suggested that the teaching of 'taste' was also part of a political agenda to connect with Greek and Roman civilization that were seen as an ideal. Educating the public in Greco-Roman aesthetics was one part of connecting with this ideal.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> For more on the early use of casts see Goldstein, *Teaching art: academies and schools from Vasari to Albers*.

<sup>74</sup> Bilbey and Trusted in Frederiksen and Marchand, *Plaster casts: making, collecting, and displaying from classical antiquity to the present*, pp.465 - 85.

<sup>75</sup> Macdonald, *The history and philosophy of art education*

<sup>76</sup> Romans, *Histories of art and design education: collected essays*, p46.



In the last decade there has been new scholarly interest in the history of plaster casts and cast collections. The collected essays: *Plaster Casts: Making, collecting and displaying from classical antiquity to the present*, edited by Frederiksen and Marchand, demonstrates the diversity of interest in the topic.<sup>77</sup> Studies of casts in Australia have been limited to the colony of Victoria. Galbally and Jordan have considered the place of casts in the museum context.<sup>78</sup>

For Australians, far away from original examples of antique sculpture, casts offered a substitute for the original works of art. Like the cast collections established in England's regional centres,<sup>79</sup> casts made fine art accessible to the broader population of Australia. Caroline Jordan considers the place casts occupied in bringing art education to regional Australians. She writes; "Correct taste was formed by exposure to the best models and vice versa: bad models would result in deformed taste. It was therefore better to learn from reproductions of the ancients and Old Masters than it was from an original by an inferior artist."<sup>80</sup> Casts brought good examples of taste before even the most remote audiences.

This chapter examines the way in which casts, as tools for art instruction, were also used to extend British notions of taste in the colony. In Sydney, casts were used as tools for teaching art across a range of institutions. Cast collections in galleries offered colonial audiences an introduction to classical aesthetics. They were also used in schools and technical colleges. Classes in ornamental design often included 'model drawing'; in which students were asked to copy casts of ornamental mouldings taken from historic facades. Art students across a range of institutions encountered casts as part of their training. This chapter explores the way in which those tools for art instruction became a link between colony and metropole, joining these students with British aesthetic tradition.

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<sup>77</sup> Gladman, *School work*.

<sup>78</sup> Jordan, "The South Kensington Empire and the idea of the regional art gallery in nineteenth-century Victoria", pp. 34-59; Galbally, "The lost museum: Redmond Barry and Melbourne's *musee des copies*", pp 29-50.

<sup>79</sup> For more on casts and the use as education aids in Leeds see: Wade, "Pedagogic objects: The formation, circulation and exhibition of teaching collections for art and design education in Leeds, 1837-1857."

<sup>80</sup> Jordan, "The South Kensington Empire and the idea of the regional art gallery in nineteenth-century Victoria", pp. 34-59.

## **Casts on exhibition**

In February 1850, a newspaper report celebrated the acquisition of a number of plaster casts, put on show for the public in the Australian Museum: “those glorious perfections of sculpture, the Venus de Medici, the Gladiators in the several positions, the Quoit Thrower, the Roman Slave overhearing the Conspirators, Cupid and Psyche, the Adonis, the Apollo Belvedere, the Boxers, and some other choice specimens [were] now within Australian gaze.”<sup>81</sup> These appear to have been the first casts displayed in a public collection in Australia. The jubilant tone of the newspaper article reflects the excitement with which they were first received. This was the first time Sydney-siders had access to great works of the western canon. The fact they were cast copies, and not originals, did not appear to dampen the spirits of audiences.

In 1851, the gallery of casts established by W. G. Nichol, previously discussed in Chapter three, was the first entire gallery of casts to be made available to the public in Sydney. Like the Australian Museum casts, they were met with celebratory newspaper articles, promoting the collection as an opportunity to advance “public taste” and foster the fine arts.<sup>82</sup> Nichol’s casts were commended for their accuracy in representing the original sculpture,<sup>83</sup> thereby providing a physical link between colonial audiences and the British heritage they represented.

The link that casts created between Sydneysiders and their British heritage was made clear in the newspaper coverage of the New South Wales Academy of Art acquisition of a collection of casts in 1873.<sup>84</sup> The article highlighted the fact that the Academy’s casts were ordered from Signor Brucciani of Great Russell St.

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<sup>81</sup> *The South Australian*, 8 February 1850, p.2.

<sup>82</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 1851, p.3.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 March 1873, p.4.

London, the same cast maker employed to make many of the casts held in the South Kensington Museum.<sup>85</sup> This gave the casts legitimacy as a first-rate collection. As an educational resource, the collection was similar to those in use in London's School of Design, allowing Sydney students access to the same tools for teaching.

When the casts were first exhibited to the public in the Academy's exhibition in April 1873, the newspaper described them as a "...graduated series of castes (sic) for the instruction and improvement of art students...".<sup>86</sup> Even in the gallery space, casts acted as educational objects that assisted students in improving their drawing skills. The fact the casts were 'graduated' suggests that they were carefully chosen for their pedagogical value, allowing students of all stages to benefit from the collection.

The value of the casts as objects of beauty was also important for teaching taste. *The Sydney Morning Herald* noted that the casts were "of great size and remarkable beauty...".<sup>87</sup> For colonial audiences who may not have ever seen an original antique sculpture, an encounter with the cast copy would bring them closer to the experience than ever before. Viewing the casts allowed Sydneysiders to develop knowledge of European art, despite their distance from the original work.

### **Casts for Schools**

In the 1870s, the South Kensington Museum began a project to collect casts in an attempt to make great art accessible to students.<sup>88</sup> Agents from the museum were sent to sites across Europe to make plaster cast copies of great sculptural and architectural monuments. It was believed that by encouraging the working classes to visit museums and view fine examples of applied arts, the public

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Design and Art Australia Online, "Edmund Thomas", chapter Three.

knowledge of art and standard of taste would improve.<sup>89</sup> This idea had been observed in the Prussian system of art education, which featured a central school of design with numerous regional affiliates, responsible for teaching designs particular to the region's manufacturing specialties.<sup>90</sup> The 1835-6 Select committee had noted:

... the remarkable effect of this was, that in every canton, however remote they might be from the capital, a taste for the arts was perceptible in the pursuits and the general feeling of the inhabitants themselves.<sup>91</sup>

The ability to reproduce the greatest examples of sculpture might allow this aesthetic education to proliferate through all levels of society.

New South Wales Superintendent F. W. Woodhouse was directly involved in South Kensington's cast collection. In 1885 He was selected for a short assignment in Rome with a team making drawings and cast copies of the decorative program in the Vatican's Borgia Apartments.<sup>92</sup> Woodhouse was selected for his skill in drawing, particularly his knowledge of architectural drawing acquired before beginning his training at South Kensington.<sup>93</sup> The trip to Rome allowed him to expand his knowledge of Renaissance architecture and study the history of Italian art.<sup>94</sup> He made detailed drawings of the Borgia Apartments, carefully recording the Renaissance designs so that his observations might be reproduced and shared with students in London.

Woodhouse's trip echoed the traditions of the Grand Tour, when wealthy young men travelled through Europe, visiting important sites of art and history as a

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<sup>89</sup> NSW Department of Technical and Further Education, *Spanners, easels & microchips: a history of technical and further education in New South Wales 1883-1983*, pp. 108-10.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, pp.107 - 10.

<sup>91</sup> Hansard 1836, p.556, quoted in *ibid*, p.107.

<sup>92</sup> A full description of the cast-making project can be found in: Prout and Rae, *Sydney illustrated*.

<sup>93</sup> Woodhouse's employment history is related in a letter of application for the position of Superintendent of Drawing in NSW forwarded by Saul Samuels, Agent General; letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> November 1889, held in NSW State Records, 20/12652C.

<sup>94</sup> Woodhouse's report suggests he undertook considerable research on the art and architectural history of the Vatican palace. Report by F. W. Woodhouse on the Appartamento Borgia in the Vatican Palace, 1885. Held in the Prints and Drawings Room of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

way to further, or finish their schooling.<sup>95</sup> Rome was a key destination, that boasted great spectacles of art and architecture, reinforcing the British taste for classical design. Woodhouse's work making casts and recording the decorative designs in Rome and the reproduction of these drawings made the experience of the Grand Tour more accessible to the English public.

The drawings Woodhouse made to accompany his report show his skill and training in design, but also reveal his limitations in the realm of high art. The drawings read like the exemplification of the syllabus developed in South Kensington for London's Board Schools. Each of the major methods of drawing; geometrical, perspectival and freehand drawing are represented (figure 32). Geometric drawing skill is shown in the great accuracy in symmetrical patterning; perspectival drawing is displayed in a scale drawing of the interior of the apartment, in which a figure is placed for a sense of scale. Freehand drawing is demonstrated in his depictions of small figurative frescos situated in the ceiling ornamentation. Woodhouse draws classical decoration with ease: repeated borders of acanthus leaves; rosettes along the spines of columns; intricate swirls and braids. However, the figures in the frescos betray the limitations of his training (figure 33 and 34). Their faces twist awkwardly and lack the expression of the originals. The hands and feet, when not draped and clothed, often extrude at strange angles with seemingly dislocated fingers and ankles. This contrast between Woodhouse's skill in drawing ornament and his inability to copy figurative paintings reveals the limitations of the design-focused syllabus of South Kensington.

The trip to Rome influenced Woodhouse's teaching in the years that followed. In 1886, shortly after his return from Rome, Woodhouse gave a *conversazione* for students of the Metropolitan School of Art.<sup>96</sup> In August 1889 he was engaged by South Kensington to prepare a pamphlet on several of the models he had made in

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<sup>95</sup> Jeremy Black, *The British and the Grand Tour* (Sydney; London: Croom Helm Australia, 1985); Joseph Burke, "The grand tour and the rule of taste" (paper presented at the Studies in the eighteenth century: papers presented at the David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Canberra, 1968).

<sup>96</sup> Archives of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Précis of the meeting minutes. January 1886. C. M 8,315.'85, p.77.

Italy.<sup>97</sup> In December of the same year, still with his Roman sojourn fresh in his mind, Woodhouse was appointed to the position of Superintendent for Drawing in Sydney and left London with his wife on the R.M.S. Ormuz in January.<sup>98</sup>

Woodhouse brought with him a set of casts, purchased from the studio of Brucciani. The same formateur who made casts for the South Kensington Museum, for the National Gallery of Victoria and for the National Gallery of New South Wales. In acquiring these casts, he hoped to fit Australian schools with these tools for teaching design. He chose simple ornamental forms, rosettes, columns capitals and arabesque designs.<sup>99</sup> These would help him to continue the South Kensington aim. These casts gave Australian students access to these important examples of good design, despite their geographic distance from the originals. They presented a European visual vocabulary and taught British notions of taste.

Casts that exemplified simple decorative figures were placed before students to copy. The three-dimensional forms allowed students to practice depicting light and shade that was absent from two-dimensional copybook designs. The receipt listing the casts Woodhouse purchased from Brucianni includes numerous designs that were included in the South Kensington curriculum such as rosettes, spheres and bowls, and other ornamental decoration. These can be seen pictured in Standard VII of the South Kensington syllabus (figure 35).<sup>100</sup> Standard VII shows drawings of ornamental casts rendered in light and shadow. At this point in the course, students had graduated from simple outline drawings, and begun to consider rendering mass through tone. The ornamental figures were similar to those depicted in copybooks, but were reproduced in three dimensions.

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<sup>97</sup> He was to be paid 30 pounds for the task. Archives of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Précis of the meeting minutes. August 22, 1889. M 4,65, p.65.

<sup>98</sup> NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>99</sup> Receipt for cast copies from 'B. and D. Brucciani & Co', NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

<sup>100</sup> South Kensington Syllabus included in NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

Casts were also used by the Technical College. When Lucien Henry began teaching at the college, he instituted drawing instruction from models. In the commemorative history of Technical Education published in 1909 it was remembered that:

The committee endorsed the view of the Instructor, and imported a valuable series of casts for the drawing classes. Subsequently, the Committee was enabled to supply copies of many of these casts to the High and Superior Schools under the department of Public Instruction, to educational establishments in the adjoining colonies, and at cost price to many private schools in New South Wales.<sup>101</sup>

In the twentieth century, the technical college became a distributor of casts, allowing greater access to these tools for art instruction.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter considered *how* was art taught Sydney between 1850 and 1915. Analysis of the introductions to copybooks, and discourse surrounding copybooks has shown that their production was motivated by a desire to improve art for industry and to teach taste. However, we also see authors emphasise the value of art education for improving hand-eye coordination and visual communication. Where policy-makers focused on art education for its impact on larger society, the authors of copybooks appear to have been more interested in the benefits for the individual.

Close analysis of the tools used to teach art has shown how some educators and policy makers believed art should be taught. However, there is a gap between what is presented in these tools for teaching, and how art instruction actually took place in the classroom. Many copybook authors intended their texts to be

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<sup>101</sup> Technical Education Branch, *A Quarter Century of Technical Education in New South Wales: A monograph published on the occasion of the exhibition of student's work held at the Sydney Technical College, Easter Week 1909*, p.84.

used alongside observational study. We know from some of the reports on Drawing in schools (discussed in *Chapter One*) that inexperienced teachers used copybooks as ready-made lessons: they simply presented students with the printed exercises. Though study of the tools used for teaching art provides some understanding of the pedagogies of the past, it is difficult to gain insight into the classroom experience of studying and teaching. The author's intentions did not always become a reality.

Though there may have been a gap between the lessons laid out in copybooks and the reality of what was taught in the classroom, copybooks do give some insight into the pedagogies of this foundational period. For most of this period, the tools for drawing instruction in Sydney followed from British examples. The copybooks published by Fowles and Woodhouse mirrored the format seen in English copybooks of this era. They featured ornamental designs that fit within British notions of taste, extending this to Australian students.

Throughout this period, there was a focus on drawing ornamental designs in outline, following the style of instruction from South Kensington. This style of outline drawing dominated art instruction into the twentieth century. Drawing from nature was also encouraged throughout this period, but became a greater focus at the beginning of the twentieth century. After 1900, we also see a growing interest in art instruction from other parts of the world, and particularly America. Sydney copybooks showed an awareness of art instruction from across the globe and England was no longer the single dominant influence.

At the end of this period, a tension existed between attempts to establish British notions of civility and taste, with the desire to pioneer a uniquely Australian voice. We see hints of this as more Australian flora and fauna featured in copybooks at the end of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century Branch also encouraged students to engage with their environments, signalling a shift in interest towards exploring Australian form. This notion of art education and its role in the development of a uniquely Australian aesthetic is an area worthy of further research.



Through close analysis of pedagogical tools used in art education, this chapter has demonstrated the way in which instruction was carried out in classrooms and at leisure. I have undertaken a close reading of the written explanations of copybooks authors, and close visual analysis of the images used in copybooks and plaster casts to consider the ways these pedagogical tools were not just tools for teaching art, but tools for disseminating British notions of taste.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to examine the history of art education in Sydney between 1850 and 1915. The result has been the first in-depth analysis of answers to four key questions about: *why* art was taught, analysing the motivations that informed the provision of art education; *where* art was taught, exploring some of the opportunities for art education across a range of institutions; *who* taught art, through analysis of the professional biographies of a range of individuals involved in Sydney's art education; and *how* art was taught, examining the tools used in art instruction.

Of the little that had been written on the topic, scholarship has focused on the place of art in government-supported schooling. This research has characterised the art instruction in Australian schools between 1850 and 1915 as "highly prescriptive, product oriented and [as emphasizing] skill and discipline to absurd lengths."<sup>1</sup> The art curriculum of this foundational period of Sydney's schooling has been compared with later eras, when creativity and self-expression were more heavily emphasized. These comparative studies found early forms of art instruction lacking. I have demonstrated that such claims paint a view that is too simplistic and incomplete. This thesis sought to broaden this view with a fuller and more nuanced understanding of art education in this foundational period.

In the introduction, the scholarly literature from the United Kingdom and America was examined to find *why* art was taught. I identified three major themes that informed the provision of art education overseas: the importance of art for industry; a commitment to teaching taste; and the broader educational benefit of art instruction for improving hand-eye coordination and visual communication. Identifying these themes in the American and British literature helped to establish an understanding of the influences affecting art education in

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<sup>1</sup> Hammond, "Art education ideologies: current emphasis in Australia," p.84.

this period, to see whether they were present in the Australian discourse. These themes have not previously been considered together in the Australian context.

*Part I: Places and Spaces* responded to the question: *where* was art taught in Sydney between 1850 and 1915? In this section I mapped the landscape of art education and identified three key spaces in which art education was offered: schools, technical colleges and exhibitions. Previous scholarship has not looked across institutional boundaries. Histories of art in schools have not ventured beyond these institutions to consider technical education. Histories of exhibitions have not considered how these exhibitions might have been informed by the same motivations as those driving the provision of art instruction in schools. This marks the first attempt to examine these different spaces for art education together. This enabled me to trace the common threads and identify common themes in teaching art in Sydney. These included: the influence of British modes of instruction that were intended to teach design for the benefit of industry and the significant impact of individual educators had in shaping the character of art instruction.

In *Chapter One: Schools*, I showed how art education within schooling occupied an increasingly important role in Sydney throughout this foundational period. In tracing the place of art in the school curriculum, I considered the influence of the English South Kensington system and the emphasis on teaching children design, responding to the value that was placed on 'art for industry'. I also examined the way this shifted. Australian educators began to look beyond South Kensington to Europe and America as they became interested in the broader educational benefits of art instruction and how these might apply in Australia. I examined the art curriculum in the context of the broader influences that affected instruction. This was a novel contribution, as I demonstrated how pedagogy in Sydney schools developed in response to local and global thinking about art and education.

*Chapter Two: Technical Education* examined the place of art in technical education in Sydney. The history of art in technical education has not yet been the topic of comprehensive scholarly research in Australia. I traced the art

instruction offered through the technical school and revealed the enormous power individual teachers held in shaping the character of art instruction. I showed that many of the earliest art teachers also identified as artists. Their artistic philosophies shaped their individual approaches to teaching, but all were focused on teaching principles of high, rather than useful art. I identified a shift in the 1860s and 70s as a more vocational approach to technical education prevailed. Art education became more focused on skills-based design and the influence of South Kensington and 'art for industry' was seen. This thesis showed that by the beginning of the twentieth century, the technical college offered instruction that 'taught taste' as well as courses in design intended for workers in industry. These are themes we also saw influence the school curriculum. A significant contribution of this thesis has been the identification of common themes in art education across these institutional divides.

Exhibitions and galleries have been neglected in histories of education. In *Chapter Three: Exhibitions and the Art Gallery* I considered three case studies of exhibitions that took place throughout the period, to show how they operated as sites for art instruction. I examined whether those mounting the exhibitions were motivated by a desire to educate their audiences; whether the surrounding discourse focused on the educational benefit of the work on view; and assessed whether audiences responded to exhibitions as educational opportunities. I found that exhibitions were principally motivated by a desire to teach taste. I showed that this was particularly important in the colonial context, as high art was linked to morality, which was prescribed as an important feature of civilized society.

In writing *Part I*, it became clear that many of the same individuals worked across different educational institutions. As they moved between these spaces, their educational philosophies and approaches to art instruction carried across institutional divides. *Part II: People* examined the professional biographies of four individuals who contributed to art education in Sydney between 1850 and 1915. This allowed for the analysis of their influence across a wide range of educational spaces. It also revealed the way in which elements such as their

personalities and educational philosophies affected the character of art education. I consulted diverse sources: periodicals; government reports; New South Wales State records; exhibition catalogues; the archives of the Art Gallery of New South Wales; school archives; personal papers and works of art, to find how these individuals contributed to art education in Sydney. I explored their lives and professional contributions, which had not previously been the subject of substantial scholarly attention.

*Chapter Four: The Superintendents Woodhouse and Branch* examined the contributions of two Superintendents for Drawing in the public schools. I considered the continuity and change in the curriculum and in teacher training throughout this foundational period. The continued influence of British modes of art instruction was made clear by the appointment of these two Englishmen. However, their different personalities and approaches to art instruction could also be seen as reflecting the changing interests of the Board of Education: from mimicking the South Kensington approach, to looking to a range of models from across America and Europe to find a more suitable form of art instruction for Australian schools. This chapter contributed an in-depth understanding of how decisions made at the top, by the Board of Education, were brought into the classroom.

In *Chapter Five*, girls' art education was examined through the professional biography of Ethel Stephens. I demonstrated that the Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School offered a range of art instruction. In catering to the interests of their students, they offered training in both high art and design. I examined the way Stephens brought her professional practice into the classroom. This analysis constitutes another contribution of the thesis as it presents the first account of the ways these young women negotiated the divide between public and private space in Sydney's art scene as part of their art education. Close analysis of Stephens' art and exhibitions showed how she modelled professional life as an artist. Stephens taught her students far more than how to paint; she taught them skills for becoming successful professionals.

*Chapter Six: Edward Combes* examined the professional biography of Edward Combes, concentrating on his contributions to art education in Sydney. I demonstrated how Combes used his experience as an engineer and influence as a politician to assist in establishment of art education in Sydney. His varied interests helped him to gather knowledge and experience across a range of areas including both high and useful art. The various decisions and recommendations Combes made in relation to the school curriculum, technical college and the Art Gallery continued to have an impact on the character of art education in Sydney after his death in 1895. In examining Combes' contributions to art education, this thesis again demonstrated the influence an individual had across a range of institutions. This analysis showed how Combes, who did not teach art in the classroom, could also have a significant influence over the way art instruction developed in Sydney.

*Part III: Tools* examined the tools for teaching art, focusing on copybooks and plaster casts. This was an original methodological approach in the history of art education, as I undertook close visual analysis of the pedagogical tools to gain insight into the classrooms of the past. This allowed for a closer interrogation of the educational philosophies that informed art instruction. Analysis of the introductions to copybooks showed that many writers hoped their books might help build students' skills in visual communication and hand-eye coordination. The importance of art for industry and teaching taste was a secondary concern. Their introductions also made clear that the books were not intended to be used alone. These were not meant to be mindless copy exercises, but part of a wider curriculum of art instruction that included observational drawing and studies from nature. Perhaps most significantly, *Part III: Tools* considered the way tools for teaching art were also tools for cultural transmission. I identified the origins of the images reproduced in copybooks and sculptures reproduced in the form of plaster casts. Many images were drawn from the western canon. I demonstrated the significance of presenting these to vast numbers of children in Sydney schools, with the desire they become part of their visual vocabulary. They informed Australian aesthetics. These tools for art instruction became tools used to further the colonial project: They were used to teach British notions of taste.

This thesis makes significant progress in exploring the history of art education in Sydney between 1850 and 1915. However, it also provides a foundation for a fuller picture with further research. Artists' societies and art classes that were intended for artists have not been considered here. I focused on the educational opportunities available to the broader population, rather than those who with an express desire to pursue art. Further research of artists' education and the ways it informed and affected broader art education is needed, as is further study of the contribution of individuals, including many artists involved in teaching art in this era. Case studies of art education in particular schools may also show a greater range of pedagogical approaches. Perhaps most interesting would be further study on how Australia's first people encountered British art instruction. I showed that art education was used as part of the colonial project to disseminate British values in Australia. However, in the sources assessed for this thesis, indigenous education was never specifically addressed and Aboriginal works of art were considered 'artefacts', not artistic objects or designs. Further research is needed examining the aboriginal experience of art education in this period.

In the 1850s, children in Sydney classrooms were drawing ornamental figures in outline, silently repeating forms such as the 'Greek Fret'. In drawing this ornament that had been featured in design since the Roman Empire, now reproduced in English copybooks, an aesthetic link was created that joined Australian children with the British Empire and with great empires of the past. By 1915, the character of art instruction had shifted. Children were more likely to be drawing natural specimens, either from two-dimensional copies, or the specimens themselves. They were encouraged to use these drawings as the basis for designs of their own. This change was driven by the new educational developments in America and Europe, discussed in *Part I*, and is visible in the tools used for art instruction discussed in *Part III* and the work of Woodhouse, Branch, Stephens and Combes discussed in *Part II*.

The thesis made progress in tackling the simplistic view presented by previous scholarship,<sup>2</sup> which tends to dismiss early art education as mechanistic and lacking the breadth and value of modern art education. By looking at how art education in Sydney was motivated by a desire to improve industry, teach taste and improve visual skills, I showed that instruction was rich and complex. Understanding this period of Australian art education gives context for the way art education developed across schools, technical education and exhibitions in Sydney. For present-day art educators, this offers insight to our educational heritage and allows us to consider the foundations upon which our present systems of art education were built. These foundations have undoubtedly influenced the character of subsequent art education, right to the present day.

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<sup>2</sup> Geoff Hammond, "Changes in art education ideologies: Victoria, 1860s to mid-1970s" (Monash University, 1978); Boughton, "The changing face of Australian art education: New horizons or sub-colonial polities?."



## TIMELINE

1833	Sydney Mechanics' School of Art established.
1835-6	English Select Committee commission to consider the Arts and their connection with Manufactures
1838	English School of Design established in Somerset House.
1841	Sydney Mechanics' School of Art first offered a series of lectures on art titled "The Principles of Taste".
1848	The National School Board and Denominational School Board were formed in New South Wales to administer state-funded schooling.
1848	The Sydney Mechanics' School of Art began offering practical drawing classes in geometrical and architectural drawing.
1851	London Great Exhibition
1851	William Grinsell Nicholl arrived in New South Wales and installed a gallery of casts in Sydney. This was the first publically accessible collection of its kind.
1853	The Department of Practical Art became the South Kensington Department of Science and Art and was given the responsibility of overseeing art instruction in elementary schools throughout England
1854	William Wilkins appointed Inspector and Superintendent of Schools for New South Wales
1854	Drawing introduced to New South Wales Public Schools and Joseph Fowles appointed the first Superintendent for Drawing.
1855	Paris hosted a Universal Exposition.
1856	A state-supported art school opened in Adelaide
1861	National Gallery of Victoria established.
1865	The Sydney Mechanic's School of Art offers practical classes in mechanical drawing taught by Norman Selfe.
1866	the Public Schools Act established the Council of Education to oversee both the public and denominational schools
1867	A state-supported art school opened in Melbourne in association with the art gallery.
1867	Henry Cole orchestrated the Convention for Promoting Universal Reproductions of Works of Art that saw fifteen countries agree to the formal exchange of casts.
1870	A School of Design was established within the Sydney Mechanics' School of Art.
1871	New South Wales Academy of Art was established.
1873	Schooling in Victoria declared "free, secular and compulsory".
1878	Joseph Fowles died. No replacement appointed to the position of Superintendent for Drawing.
1878	A Working Men's College was established. Practical art was included in the curriculum
1879	Sydney hosted an International Exhibition.
1879	The New South Wales Academy of Art received a government

	grant to purchase work for a collection. An exhibition of this work was housed in a temporary gallery built for the International Exhibition.
1880	The Education Act passed in New South Wales emphasising the importance of reading, writing and arithmetic.
1880	Melbourne hosted an International Exhibition
1880	The Art Society of New South Wales was established.
1881	Superior public schools established in New South Wales
1881	National Gallery of South Australia is established.
1881	Lucien Henry arrived in Sydney and began teaching at the Working Men's College. The art classes flourished under his direction.
1882	The Garden Palace of the Sydney International Exhibition is destroyed in fire, including a large design collection.
1883	The Technical Education Act passed, transferring control of the Working Men's College to the government.
1883	A new collection of design is opened to the public in a temporary exhibition space.
1884	William Wilkins retired from his position as under-secretary with the New South Wales Department of Public Instruction. From this time there is a steep decrease in children undertaking examinations in Drawing.
1884	In England, the International Health Exhibition includes a conference re-examining approaches to drawing instruction.
1885	The National Gallery of New South Wales moves into a temporary gallery on the outskirts of the Domain while plans for a permanent building were considered.
1886	The Sydney Art School (later known as Julian Ashton's) was established.
1887	Combes report on Technical Education for New South Wales parliament.
1889	The New South Wales Department for Public Instruction began looking to appoint a new Superintendent for Drawing. The position had been left unfilled since Fowles death in 1878.
1890	Fredrick William Woodhouse was appointed the New South Wales Superintendent for Drawing.
1891	A larger site in Ultimo was acquired to house the Technical College, securing a permanent space for the college for the first time.
1892	Ethel Stephens was elected the first female committee member for the New South Wales Society of Artists.
1895	South Kensington's Alternative Syllabus introduced to English schools
1897	The National Gallery of New South Wales opens in a permanent purpose-built gallery facing The Domain.
1901	Professor Francis Anderson, of the University of Sydney had delivered an address at the Public School Teachers' Association questioning the current state of schooling.

1903	John Branch appointed Superintendent of Drawing for New South Wales.
1903	Peter Board distributed his report on Primary Education that would be widely influential in school reform.
1904	The Report of the Commissioners Knibbs and Turner was presented
1905	Peter Board was made under-secretary and director of the New South Wales Department of Public Instruction
1906	The New South Wales Society of Arts and Crafts was established. Ethel Stephens was its first vice president.
1910	The New South Wales Society of Women Artists was established

## UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

### Newspapers and Periodicals

The Argus

Australian Town and Country Journal,

Australasian Star

Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal

Boudoir Gossip

Bowral Free Press

The Bulletin

Clarence and Richmond Examiner

Colonial Times,

The Daily Telegraph

Empire

The Evening News

Illustrated Sydney News

Launceston Examiner

The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser

The Maitland Daily Mercury

Maitland Weekly Mercury

The Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate

Northern Star

The South Australian

The Star

Sydney Evening News

The Sunday Herald

The Sydney Mail

Sydney Morning Herald

The New South Wales Educational Gazette

## **Archives**

Art Gallery of New South Wales archives

Australian National Library

New South Wales State Records

National Art Library, London

State Library of New South Wales

Sydney Grammar School archives

Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School archives

UK National Archives

Victoria and Albert Museum archives

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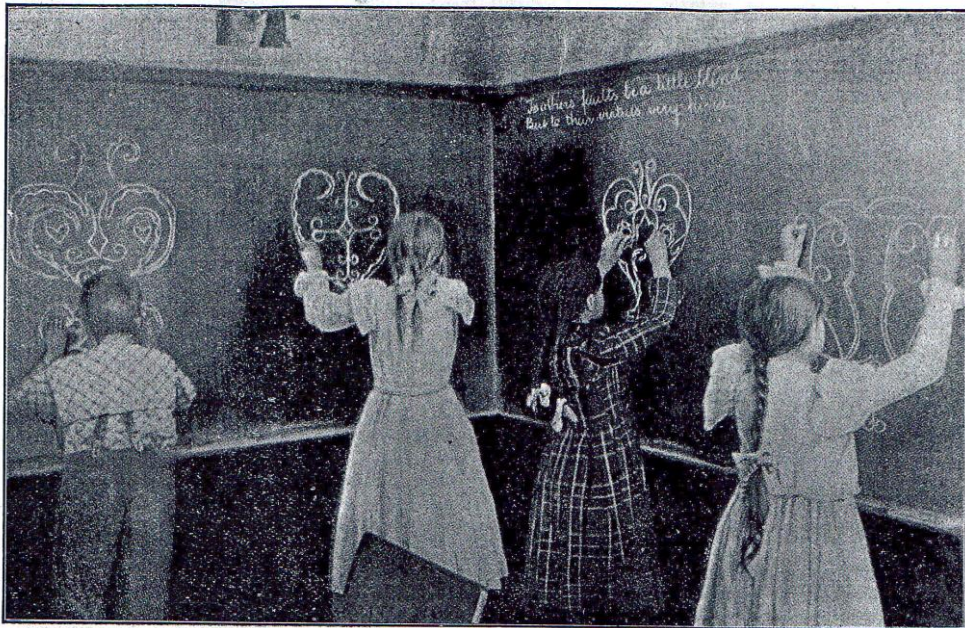
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## ILLUSTRATIONS



FIFTH GRADE.

Figure 1: 'Ambidextrous Drawing' in *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, October 1901 pp.101

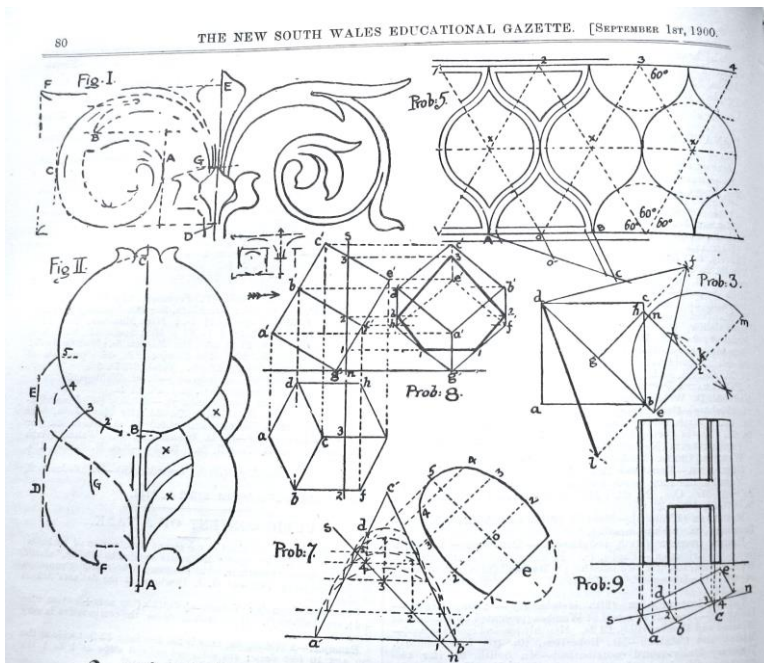


Figure 2: F. Woodhouse, 'Drawing Examination', *The New South Wales Educational Gazette*, September 1900, p.80.





Figure 3: John Skinner Prout, *City of Sydney N.S.W. From the Government Paddock. Parramatta Street*, 1844, tinted lithograph, 23.5 x 44.2 cm, State Library of New South Wales

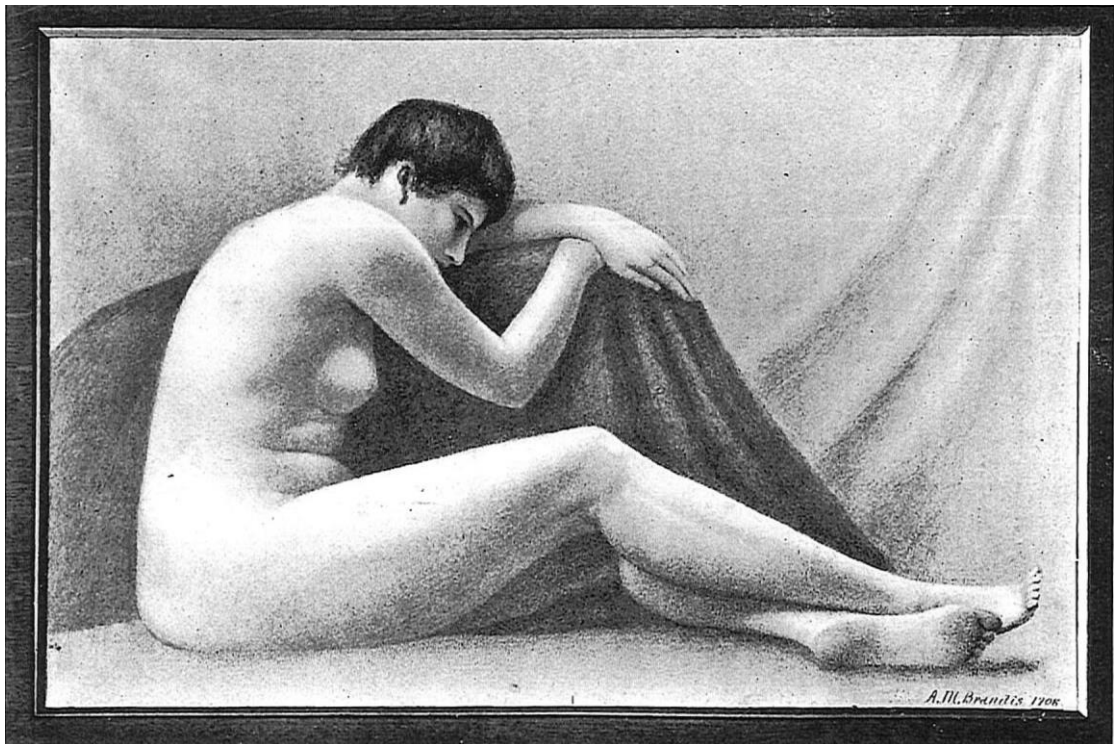


Figure 4: A. M. Brandis, 'Life class student's work', 1908, in *A Quarter Century of Technical Education in New South Wales: A monograph published on the occasion of the exhibition of student's work held at the Sydney Technical College, Easter Week 1909*: p. 143.



Figure 5: Photographs of Crowds lining up (bottom) and viewing (top) Holman Hunt's *Light of the World* at the National Art Gallery of New South Wales. Photographs from the Art Gallery of New South Wales Archive, Press clippings.

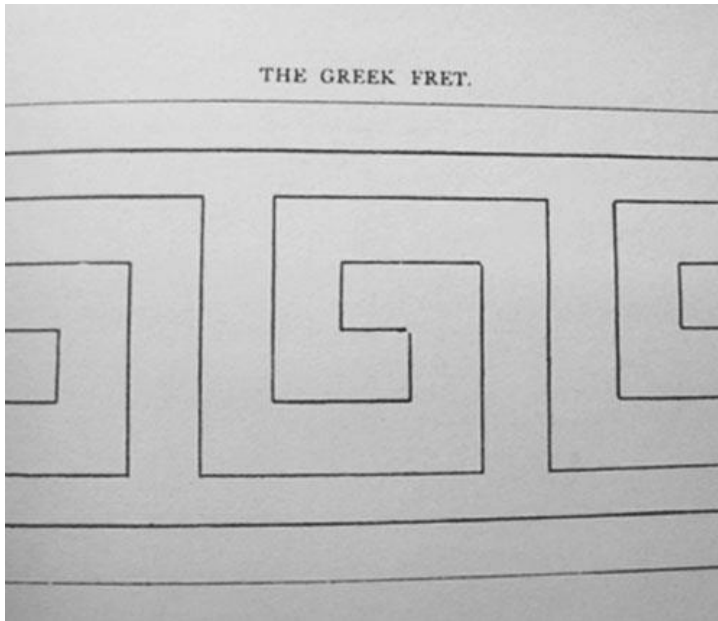


Figure 6: 'Greek Fret' in F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.



Figure 7: Column base at the front façade of the New South Wales State Library  
Photograph by the author.





Figure 8: *Detail of an Attic red-figured kylix, ca. 490, Vulci, The British Museum*

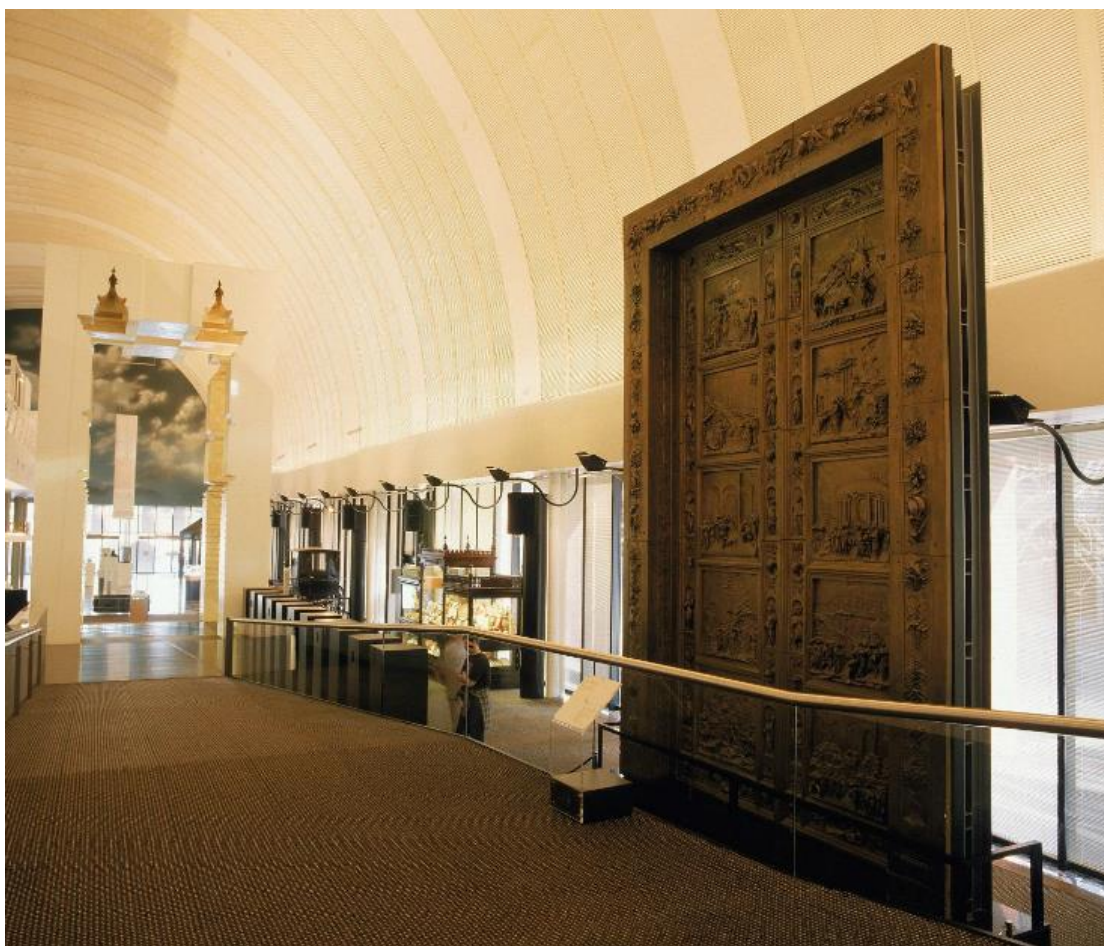


Figure 9: The cast of the Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise*, The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Photograph source: <http://from.ph/59050>



Figure 10: Photograph of J. Branch attached to his letter of application. C.1903, photographer unknown. File of the Superintendent for Drawing, New South Wales State Records.





Figure 11: Ethel Stephens, portrait from an article dates August 1902 in Stephens Album, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archive



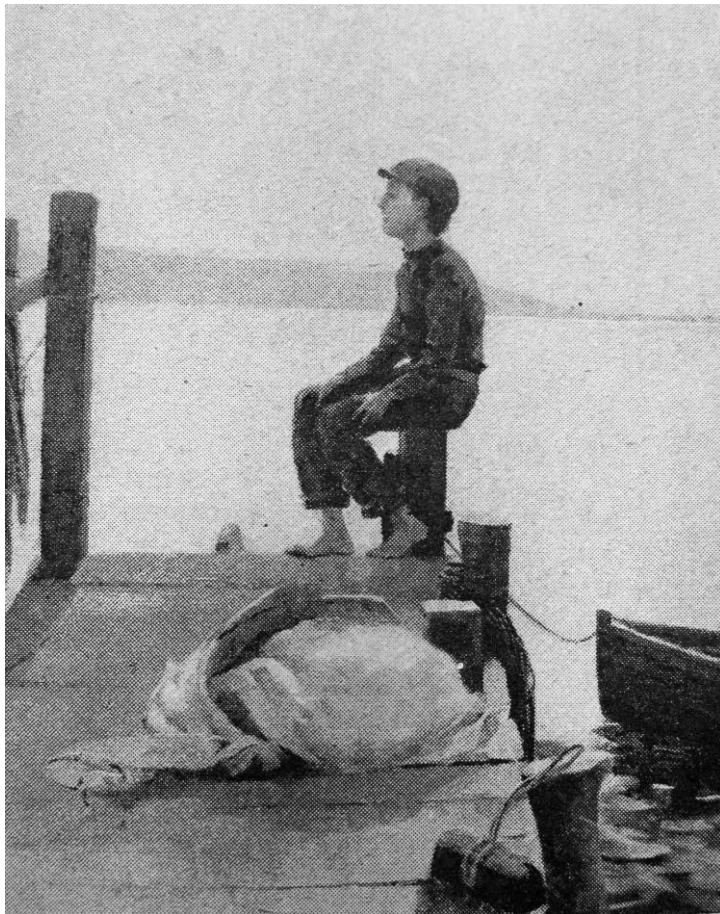


Figure 12: Ethel Stephens, *Stannard's Warf*, 1894 Painting reproduced in the *Sydney Mail*, 'Pictures at the Exhibition of the Art Society of New South Wales, 1894 – Second series' Saturday October 13, 1894. (Stephens Album)

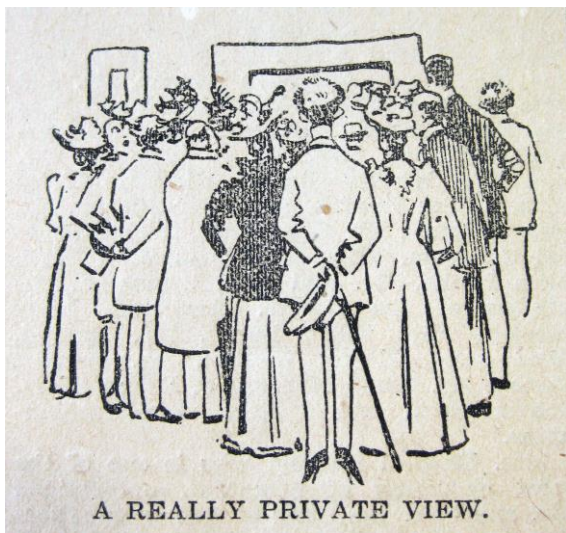


Figure 13: Three illustrations from a newspaper article dated September 15 1894. Stephens Album, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archive.



Figure 14: Costumes for 'Trachiniae', performed in 1912. Photograph reproduced in Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School. *Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School 1895-1955*. Darlinghurst: Council of S.C.E.G.G.S, 1958. p.58.





Figure 15: Edward Combes, black and white photograph, c.1872-1885; 28 x 23.6 cm, National Library of Australia.

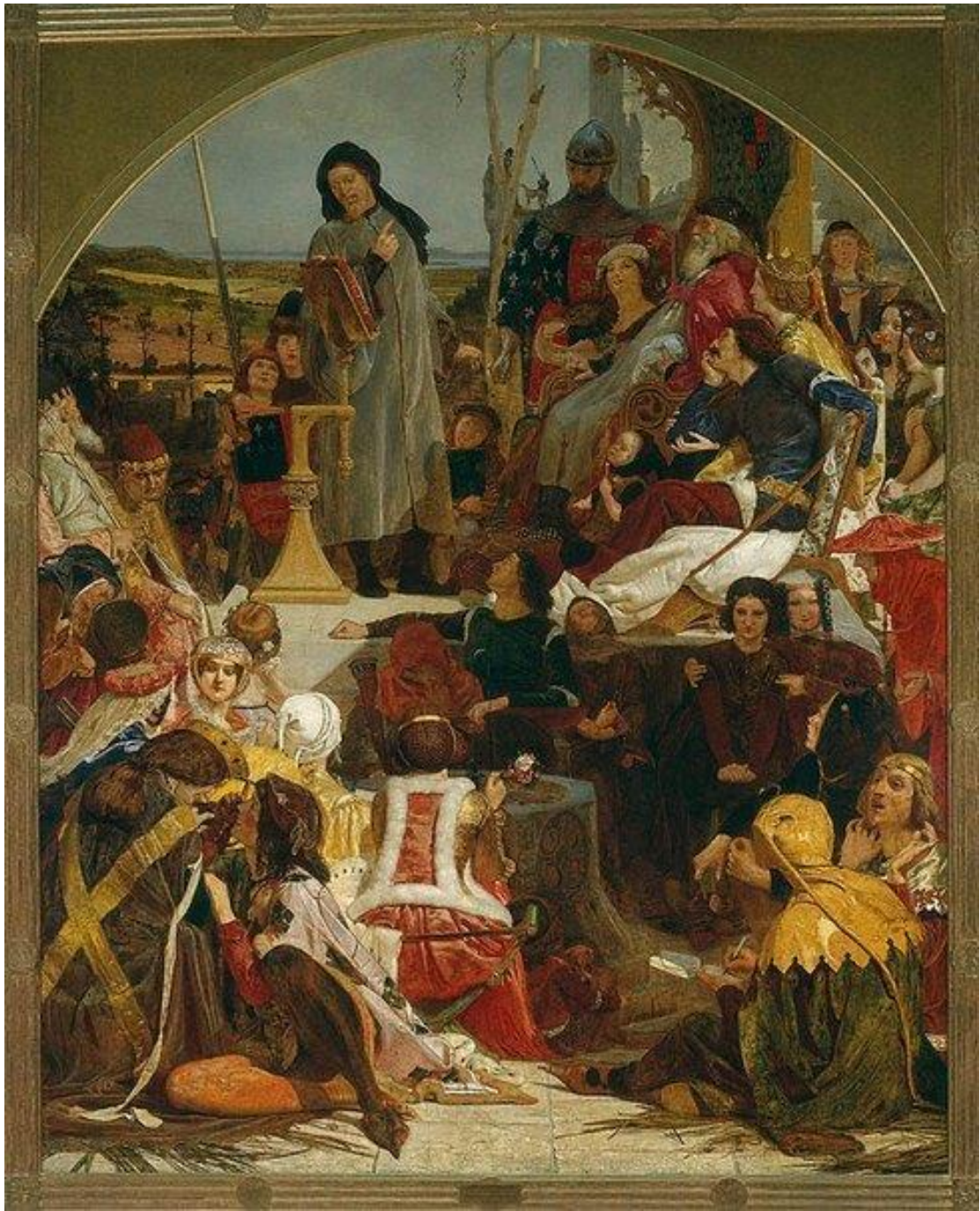


Figure 16: Ford Madox Brown, *Chaucer at the court of Edward III*, 372.0 x 296.0 cm stretcher; 391.0 x 315.0 x 8.0 cm frame, Oil on canvas, 1847-1851, Art Gallery of New South Wales.



Figure 17: Edward Combes, *The Settlers Hut*, 1880, Watercolour, 43 x 65 cm.

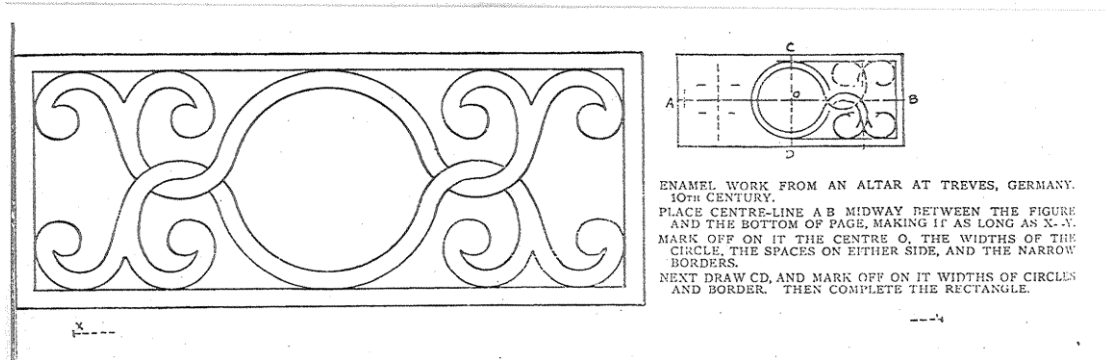


Figure 18: 10<sup>th</sup> century German church enamel work, F Woodhouse, *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899

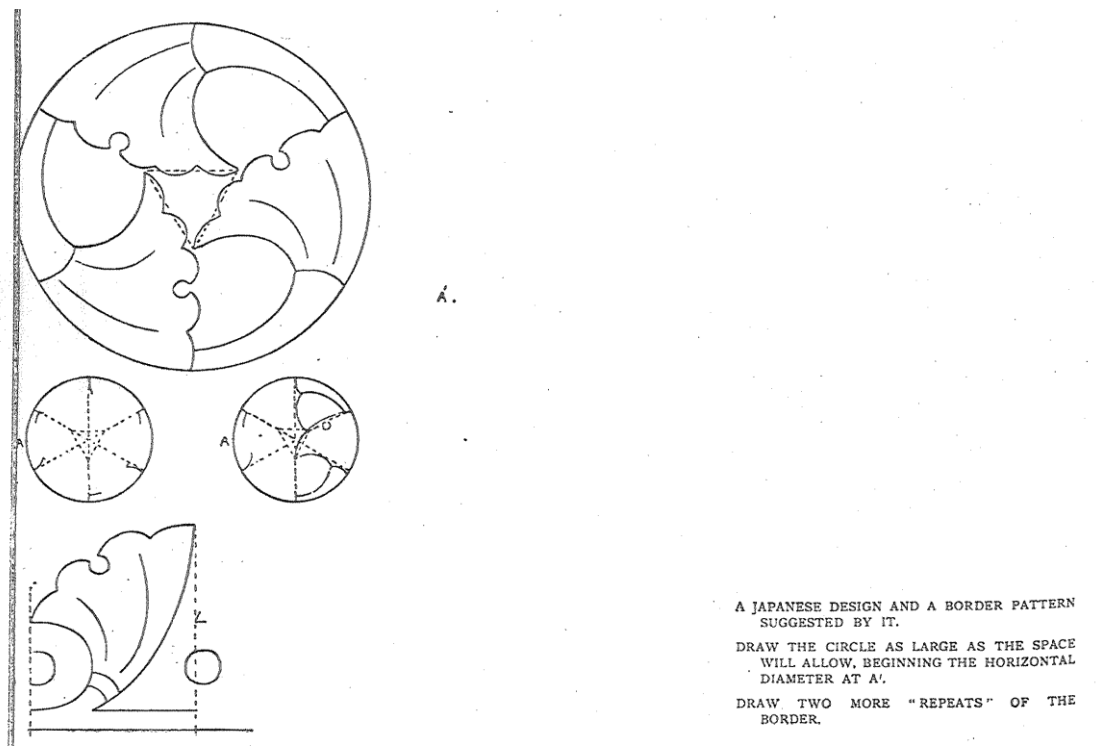
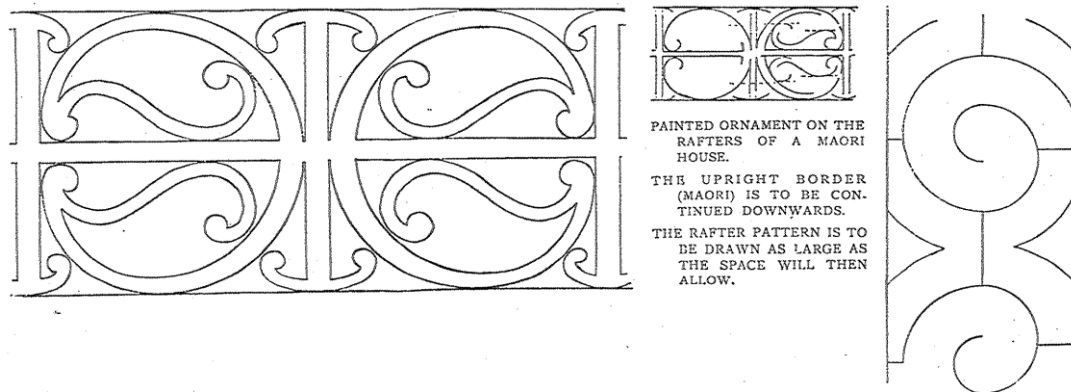


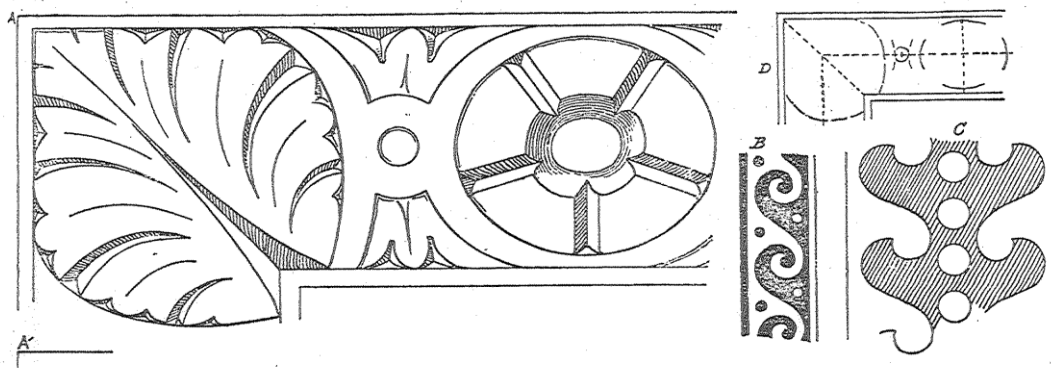
Figure 19: 'Japanese design and boarder patterns', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.





PAINTED ORNAMENT ON THE  
 RAFTERS OF A MAORI  
 HOUSE.  
 THE UPRIGHT BORDER  
 (MAORI) IS TO BE CON-  
 TINUED DOWNWARDS.  
 THE RAFTER PATTERN IS TO  
 BE DRAWN AS LARGE AS  
 THE SPACE WILL THEN  
 ALLOW.

Figure 20: 'Painted Maori boarder designs', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

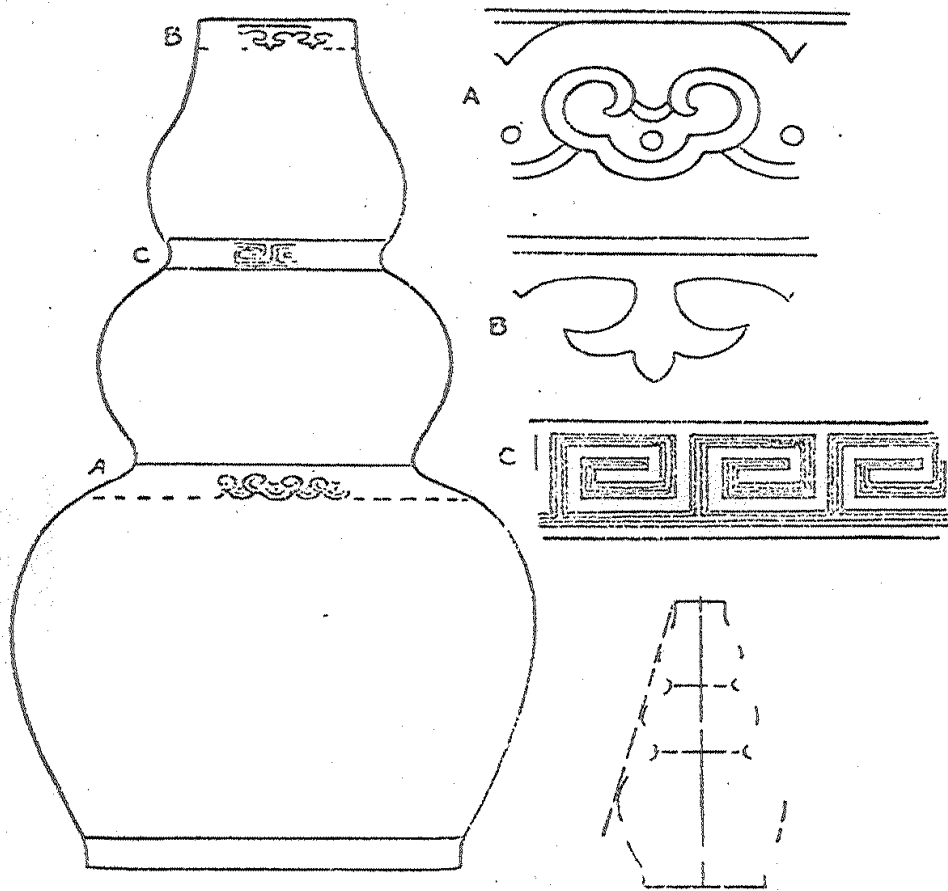


BORDER OF A PANEL. CARVED WOOD. FRENCH, 1560.  
 BEGIN AT A' AND MAKE THE DRAWING A LITTLE LARGER THAN  
 THE COPY. CAREFULLY FOLLOW METHOD SHOWN AT D.

B.—WAVE PATTERN. GREEK. NOT TO BE COPIED.  
 C.—MOSAIC. RAVENNA. BYZANTINE. 6TH CENTURY.  
 REPEAT THE BORDER DOWNWARDS.

Figure 21: '16<sup>th</sup> century French wood carvings', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.





CHINESE GOURD-SHAPED VASE.

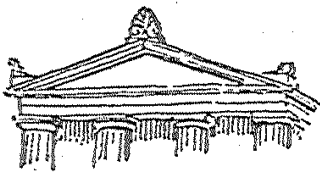
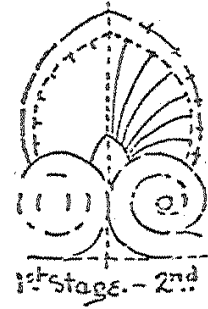
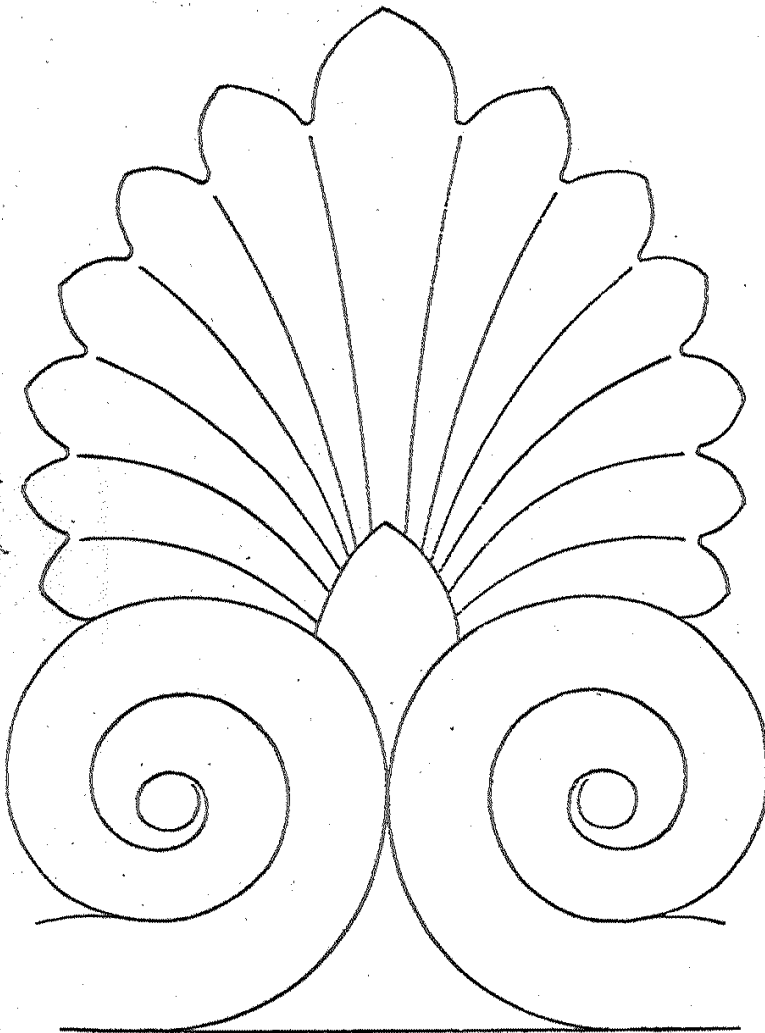
SOME OF THE PATTERNS USED IN DECORATING IT ARE GIVEN. THE PUPIL MAY REPEAT A AND B ONCE, BUT SHOULD OMIT THE PATTERNS ON THE VASE ITSELF.

C IS CALLED THE KEY PATTERN OR GREEK FRET, BUT HAS BEEN USED BY THE CHINESE AND OTHER NATIONS.

COPY THE VASE AS LARGE AS THE SPACE WILL ALLOW.

Figure 22: 'Chinese Gourd Vase', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

19-4-1900. copy from 1900.



ANTEFIX OR ORNAMENT ABOVE PEDIMENT  
OF A GREEK TEMPLE.  
POSITION SHOWN IN SMALL SKETCH.  
DRAWING TO BE MADE RATHER LARGER.

Figure 23: Antefix, F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.



ACTINOTUS HELIANTHI.  
(FLANNEL FLOWER).

SKETCH FIRST THE DIRECTION OF THE STEMS, MARK THE PRINCIPAL HEIGHTS, AND "BLOCK-IN" THE FORM OF THE FLOWER, BUDS AND LEAF. MAKE THE DRAWING A LITTLE LARGER THAN THE COPY.

THE DESIGN IS NOT INTENDED TO BE COPIED HERE.

Figure 24: 'Actinotus Hellanthi', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

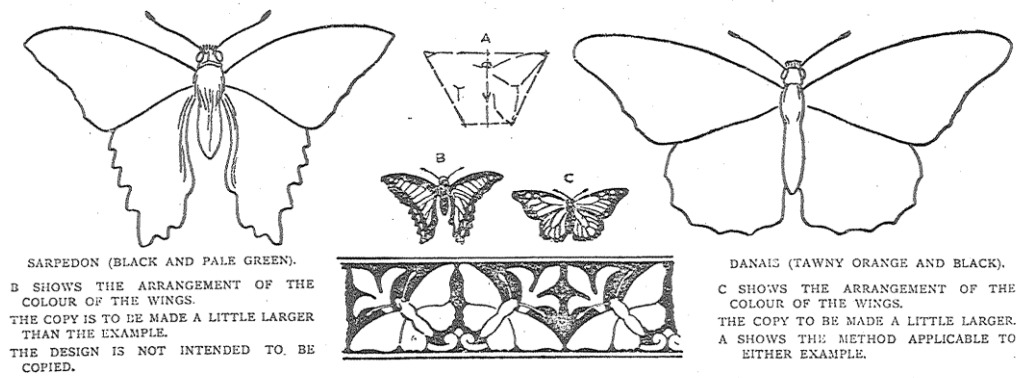


Figure 25: 'Sarpedon' and 'Danais', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

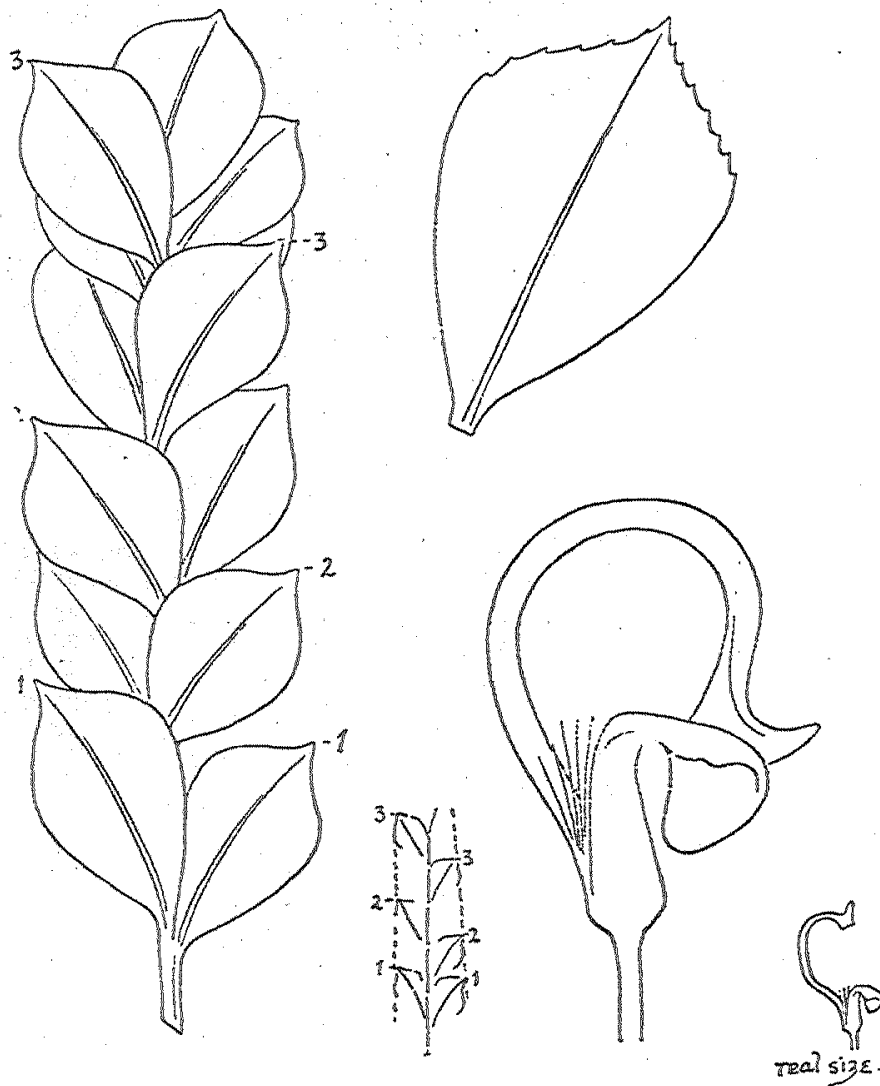


LEAVES OF EUCALYPTUS.

DRAW FIRST WITH GREAT CARE THE LINES OF THE STEMS AND MIDRIBS OF LEAVES, AS AT A.

DRAW THE OUTLINE OF EACH LEAF FIRST AS AN EVEN CURVE, MAKING THE SLIGHT "SCALLOPS" AFTERWARDS, AS SHOWN AT B.

Figure 26: 'Leaves of Eucalyptus' F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.

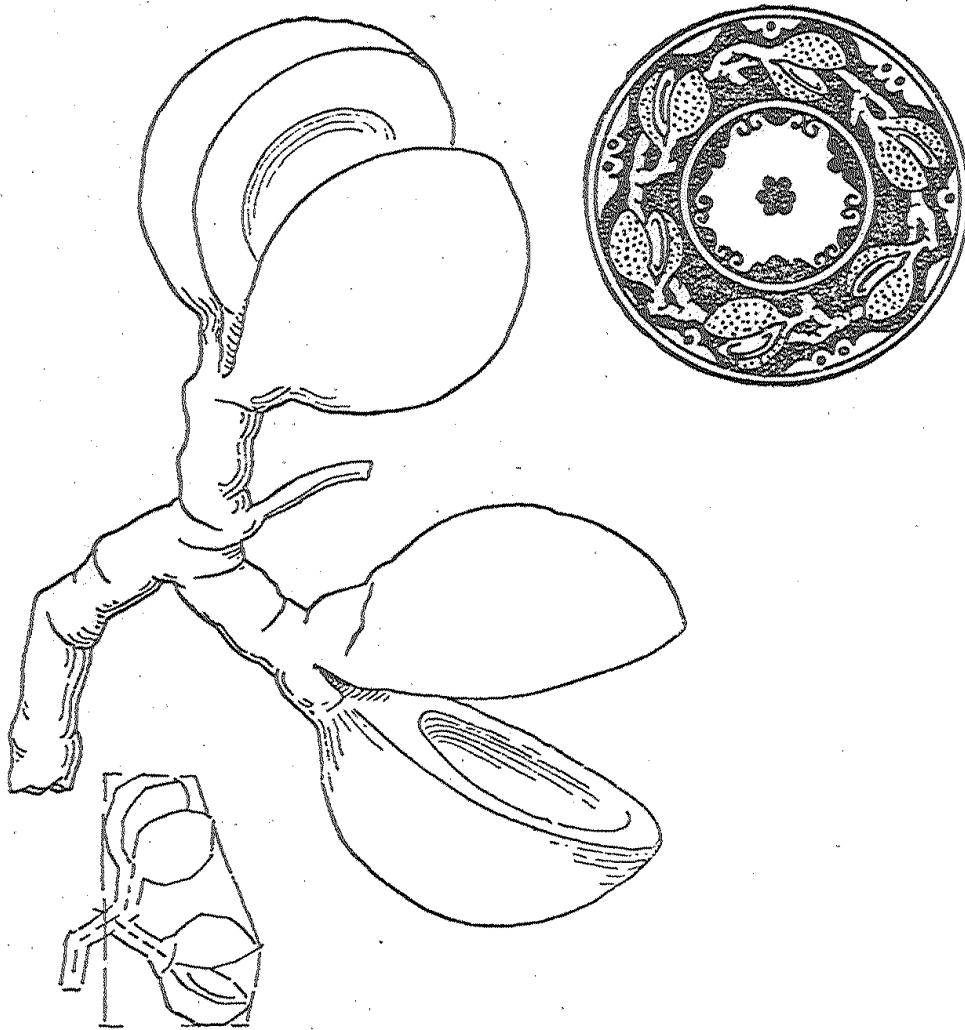


NATIVE ROSE. (BORONIA.)

THE DRAWING IS ABOUT TWICE THE ACTUAL SIZE, AND THE SERRATIONS OF THE LEAVES ARE OMITTED.

THE SINGLE LEAF AND THE SPIDER-FLOWER ARE TO BE DRAWN THE SAME SIZE; THE SPRAY OF BORONIA IS TO BE SLIGHTLY ENLARGED.

Figure 27: 'Native Rose', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.



FRUIT OF HAKEA PLATYSPERMA.  
THE CIRCULAR DESIGN IS NOT INTENDED TO BE  
COPIED.

Figure 28: 'Fruit of Hakea Platysperna', F.W. Woodhouse (ed), *The Australian Drawing Book*, 1899.



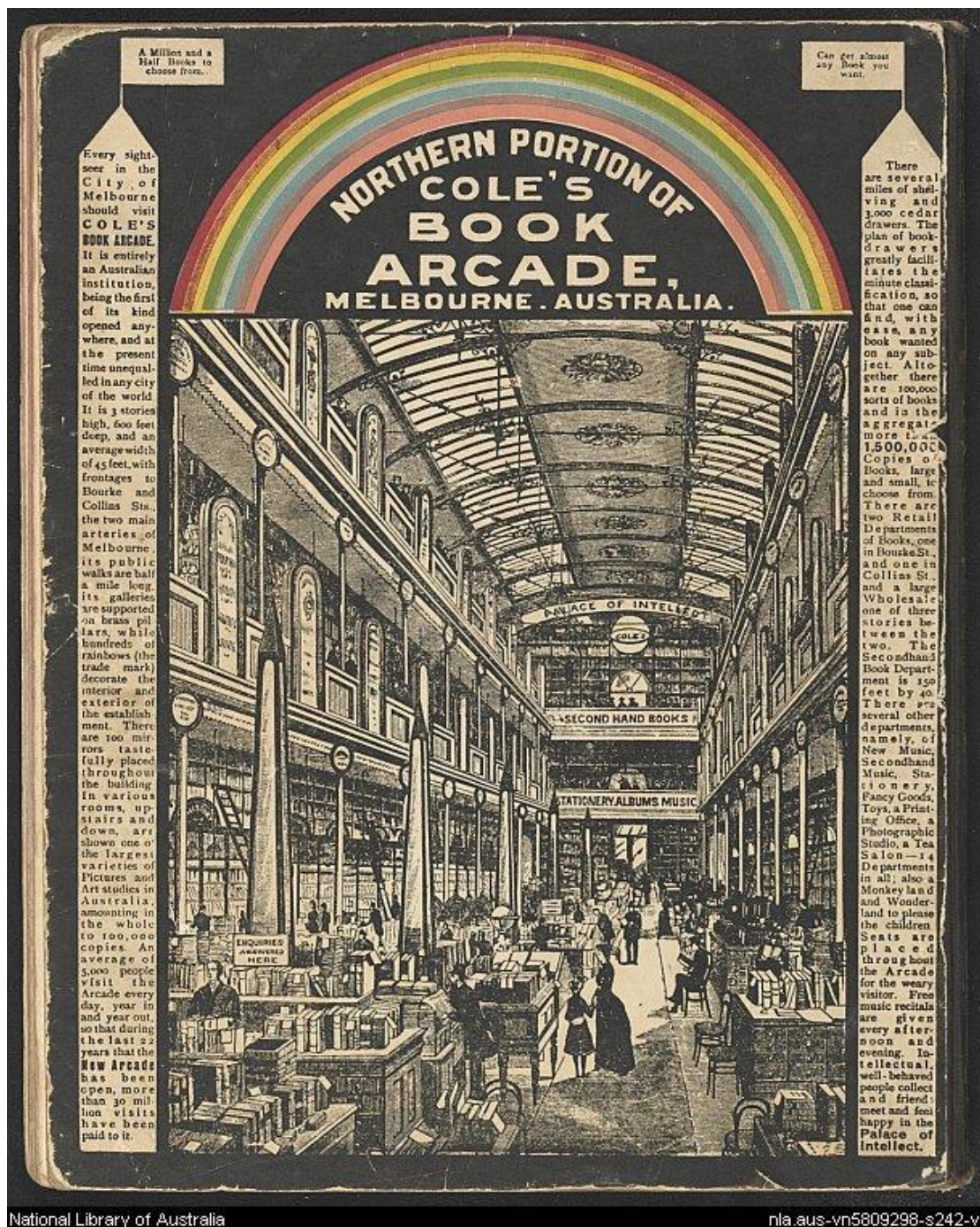


Figure 29: Back cover, Cole, E. W. *Cole's Funny Picture Book*. Melbourne: E. W. Cole, 1879. National Library of Australia.



## DRAWING LAND.

## Learning to Draw.

Come, here is a slate,  
And a pencil, and string,  
And now sit you down, dear,  
And draw pretty thing,  
A man and a cow,  
And a horse and a tree,  
And when you have finished,  
Pray show them to me

What! cannot you do it?  
Shall I show you how?  
Come, give me your pencil:  
I'll draw you a cow.  
You've made the poor creature  
Look very forlorn!  
She has but three legs, dear,  
And only one horn.

Now look, I have drawn you  
A beautiful cow:  
And see, here's a dicky-bird,  
Perched on a bough.  
And there are some more  
Flying down from above.  
There now, is not that  
Very pretty, my love?

Oh, yes, very pretty!  
Now make me some more—  
A horse with a gate,  
And a window, and a door,  
And a little boy flying  
His kite with a string:  
Oh, thank you, mamma,  
Now I'll draw pretty thing



Doggies sitting to have their  
Portraits taken.



Young Artist Touching up.



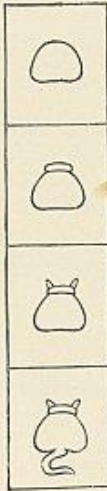
A Fairy in Great Danger.



Our Picture Gallery.

Figure 30: Cole, E. W. *Cole's Funny Picture Book*. Melbourne: E. W. Cole, 1879.,  
p.95. National Library of Australia.

**A Lesson in Drawing.**



i.  
Take a pencil, black or red,  
Draw a little loaf of bread  
On a piece of paper white—  
Make the bread extremely light

ii.  
Then, before your work you stop,  
Draw a little loop on top,  
And a satchel will be found  
Such as ladies carry round

iii.  
Then you may, my pretty fears,  
Add a pair of little ears,  
And, if Art is not in fault,  
There's a bag of extra salt

iv.  
Pause, and in a rapture fine,  
Contemplate the great design—  
And a flowing tail, and that  
Makes a perfect pussycat



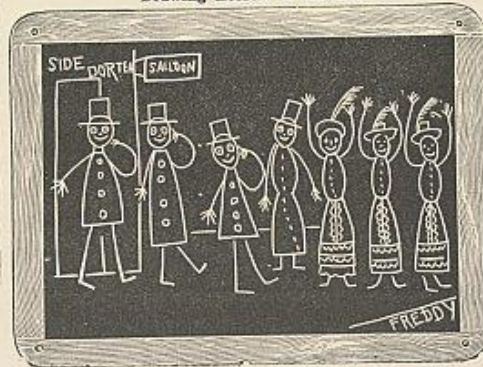
Drawing Lesson on the Slate.



Drawing Lesson on the Slate.



Wounded.



Drawing Lesson on the Slate.

Figure 31: Cole, E. W. *Cole's Funny Picture Book*. Melbourne: E. W. Cole, 1879. p.99. National Library of Australia.



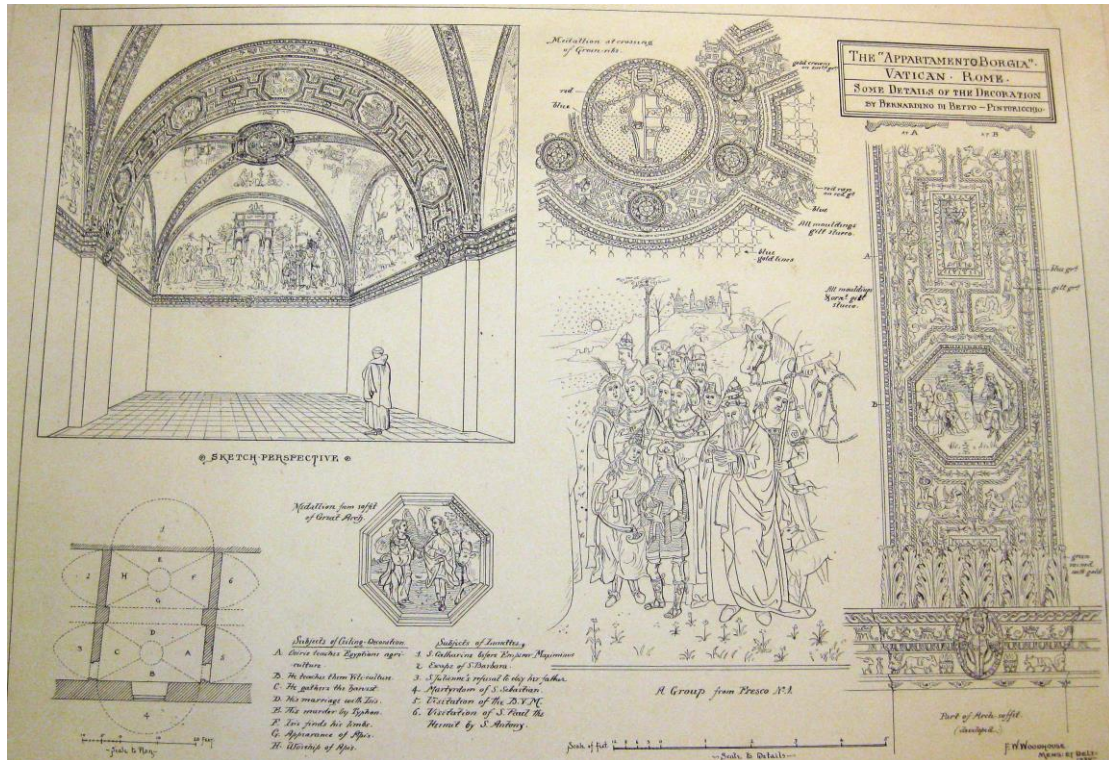


Figure 32: F. W. Woodhouse, Illustrations of the Borgia Apartments, V&A Prints and Drawings collection, 1886.



Figure 33: Pinturicchio, The Myth of the Bull Apis, Fresco, Borgia Apartments, Hall of the Saints, 1492-94



Figure 34: F. W. Woodhouse, watercolour sketch of ceiling decoration in the Borgia Apartments, V&A Prints and Drawings Collection, 1886.



13.  
STANDARD VII.

*(c) Drawing any common objects and casts of Ornament  
in light and shade.*

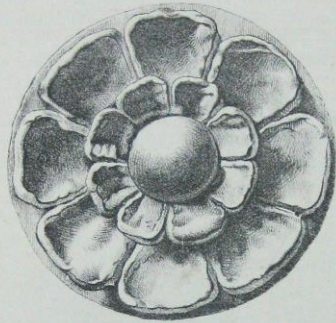


Figure 35: South Kensington Syllabus included in NSW State Records, Superintendent for Drawing 1890-99.

