



FREDERICK McCUBBIN,  
1855-1917.

FREDERICK McCUBBIN, OLD STABLES, oil on canvas, 17½ inches X 23½ inches

Felton Bequest

It is now thirty-eight years since the death of Frederick McCubbin. His reputation as one of the greatest of Australia's pioneer landscape painters mounts with the passing of time, but too little has been recorded, I think, by those of us who can still remember Frederick McCubbin the well-loved teacher and friend.

I was fortunate in studying for a time under McCubbin during his last years as Drawing Master at the National Gallery School—a position he held until shortly before his death at the age of sixty-two. My first sight of that sage and amiable head—often in winter covered by a tightly-fitting round black cap—was characteristic. I was forlornly waiting on the threshold of the Drawing School where I had just presented myself for enrolment, and glancing down the long vista of antique plaster casts I saw a close packed ring of students clustered like flies round a honey pot. It was eleven thirty and McCubbin was teaching. It was significant that an individual student receiving a lesson from the master automatically became the focal point for the class. Without compulsion students would put down their charcoal and gather around the old man to savour his wise and witty comments not only on the work in hand but on art, life, literature, music: anything and everything that would start our minds working for themselves. He never talked down to his students. The trend was always upwards. He treated us as adults and painters to be. In this lay much of his success as a teacher, for he was successful, if unconventional in his methods. Articulate in everything else, when it came to the practical assistance to a student fumbling with a charcoal fuzz of the Discobolos or Michelangelo's Slave, he would become almost embarrassed; a kindly man, he hated to hurt the sensitive feelings of the feeblest student. Standing before the easel for a moment of silence he would often come out with the never to be forgotten advice: "Feel it . . . just feel it . . ." and walk rapidly away, his long coat flapping round his heels. We sometimes felt the need of more positive instruction but I can see now, that this, for McCubbin, was a perfectly logical, and even helpful approach to our problems. He was first and last a natural born landscape painter soaked and saturated with his subject. He was a man who felt natural beauty so intensely that I can hardly imagine anything less suited to his temperament than the rows of dead white academic casts with which he was daily faced in the class room. He was capable of precise and even masterly drawing when the subject required it—such as the delicate structure of the "Old Stables" in this Gallery—but his art was too personal for the handing out of a ready made recipe to a class.

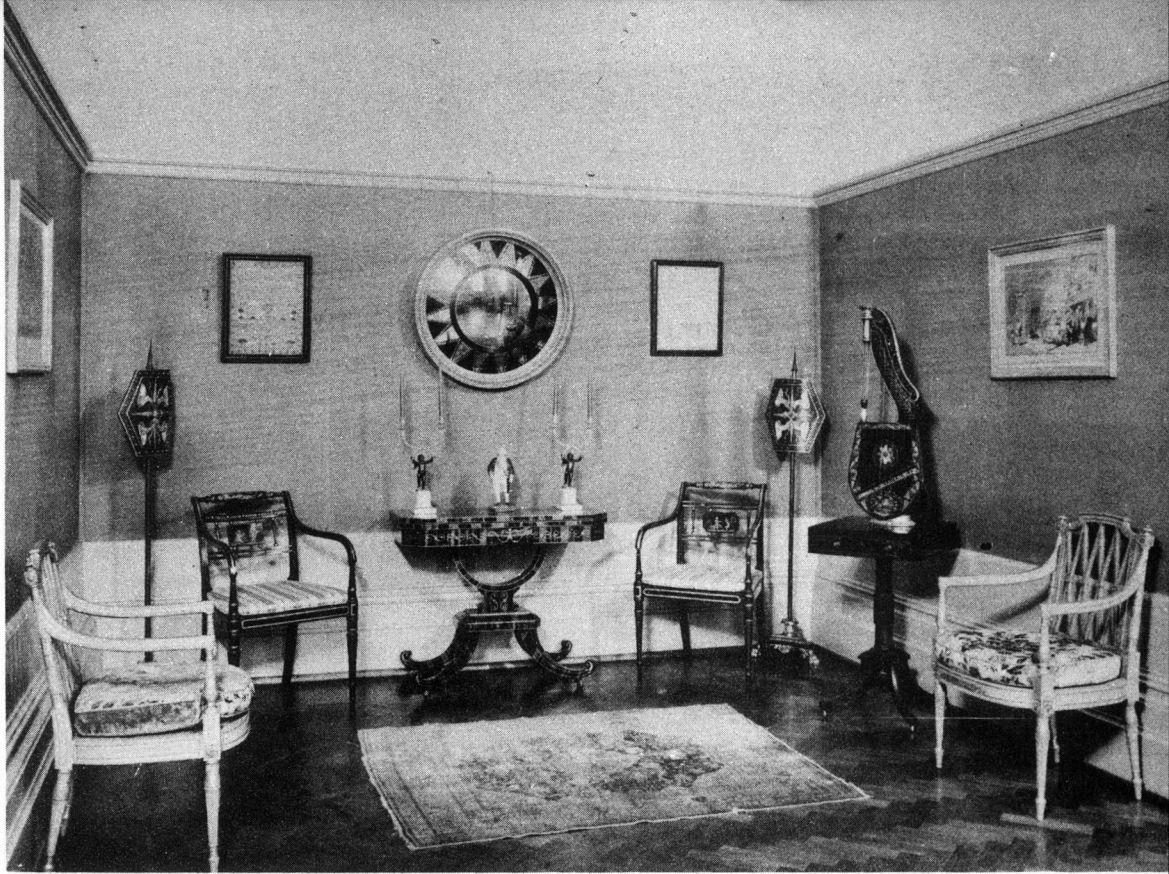
Sincerity and a rare affinity with nature were the dominant traits of his character and his art. Though he had no first-hand knowledge of French Impressionism, he evolved an approach very similar to theirs from the ideas brought back by Tom Roberts and from reproductions of the work of such open-air painters as George Claussen and Bastien Lepage. After his trip to England in 1907 his work reflects the tremendous impression made on him by Turner's watercolours.

As a portrait painter he was seldom wholly happy and at ease. He once embarked on a portrait commission of my mother. Both enjoyed the sittings, but the picture was finally abandoned after many hours of conscientious work. The unworldly rather shy man was probably inhibited from the beginning by the fact that it was a commission and not a labour of love! I have known many artists and none of them were more visibly affected by natural beauty—a tree, a cloud, a patch of bracken fern trembling in summer light moved him to a sort of speechless ecstasy. This quality of reverence and humility in the sight of beauty could be felt by even the most hard-boiled student as McCubbin stood amongst us, a squat little figure with deep set, expressive eyes, the brown parchment-like skull tanned by years of exposure to the summer sun. Like so many painters he gesticulated freely with arm and hand—an expressive hand with strong, square-topped, sensitive fingers, the thumb turned outward and used characteristically as a pointer. He liked to make us think, and to laugh, and loved to tell us of the youthful student who asked him "Please, Sir, when do I put in the expression?" No two teachers could have been less alike than McCubbin with his fun, his warmth and his humility and Bernard Hall the Director of the Painting School upstairs, a precise and formal product of the Munich Academy.

McCubbin the poet and the dreamer was also a red-blooded family man, the father of a large and obstreperous flock of boys and girls. His daughter Sheila was a gifted student in her father's class at the Gallery. The McCubbins always knew how to live well even when times were hard as they too often were for professional painters in those days. Lucky indeed was the student who was invited to a typical McCubbin Sunday in the rambling old South Yarra house whose untended garden ran steeply down to the rocks and the river and the glowing meadow flats, where Buvelot and the first of our landscape artists had loved to paint. To talk endlessly in the studio, to partake of Mrs. McCubbin's delicious unconventional soups and salads, came most of the interesting and intelligent people in Melbourne: Sir Ronald Munroe Ferguson, Dr. Felix Meyer, Bill Dyson, and Professor Marshall Hall. The list is endless. Frederick McCubbin was a magnet who drew towards him the finest and the best.

JOAN LINDSAY.





I.

Period Rooms are one of the most popular features in most Art Museums to-day and they are superbly carried out in the United States of America where nothing is spared down to the smallest detail in the quest for perfection. The Metropolitan in New York has a splendid series of European and early Colonial American Rooms and the Art Institute of Chicago has developed the idea in miniature and has possibly the finest sequences covering most periods in existence. Apart from the early 19th century Australian Colonial Room from Clarendon, Richmond, New South Wales, 1808, in the Barry Hall and the early 17th century Oak Panelling in the Buvelot Gallery, we have made no attempt to create Period Rooms in their proper sense, owing to lack of space. To get over this difficulty we have arranged a series of bays in the above Galleries to show furniture and other items that are approximately of the same period.

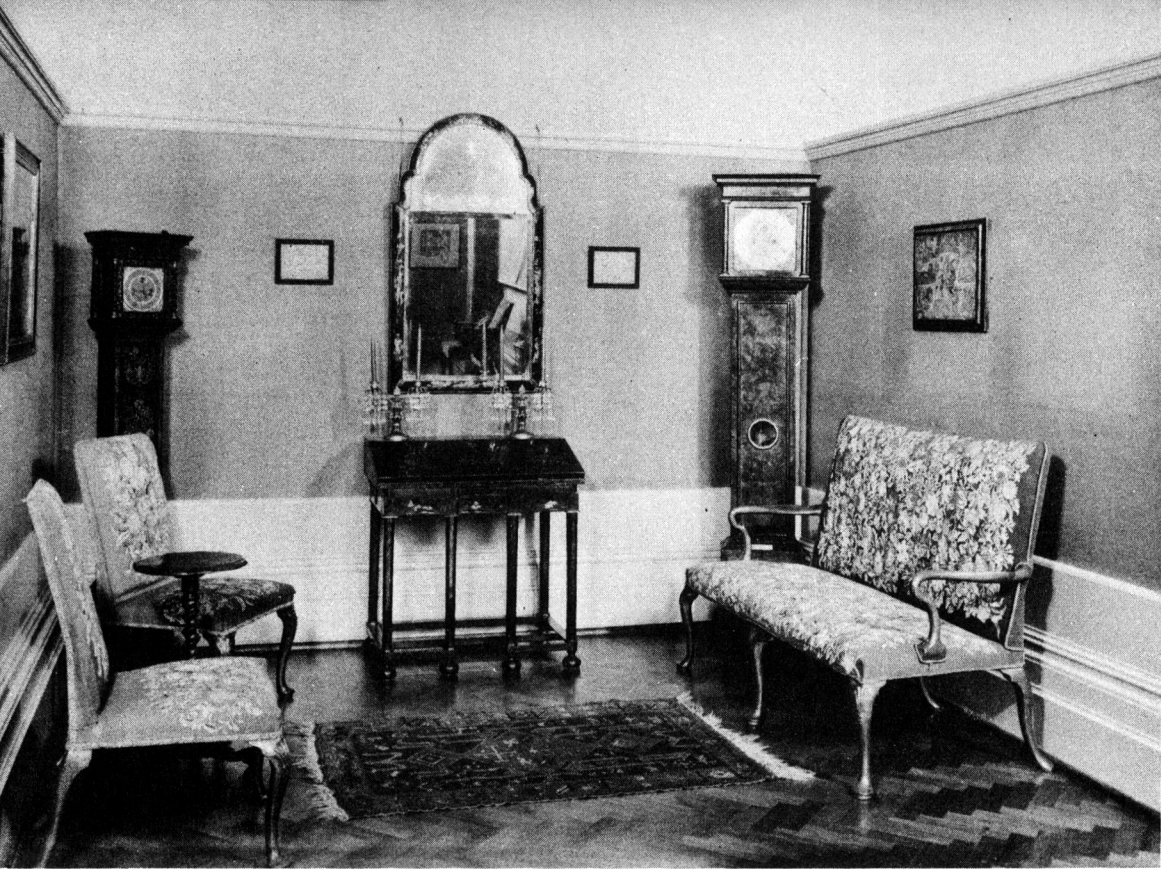
In this issue we show three of the more recently arranged bays in the Buvelot Gallery.

3. The central piece in this bay is a late 17th century oak dresser with original hand wrought iron hooks. The gate legged table (late 17th century) and the two Windsor chairs (early 18th century) are of yew wood and are first rate examples of their kind. The oak table with turned baluster legs (c. 1670) is from the Spensley Collection and on it stands a small oak and walnut linen press (c. 1650).

2. Queen Anne and William and Mary Period. The bureau and mirror are black and gilt lacquer with chinese motifs. The pair of chairs and settee with cabriole legs are of walnut upholstered with the original Soho tapestry—a floral design on a rose ground. The companion piece to the settee is at the Victoria and Albert Museum. (See Macquoid "The Age of Walnut"). The long cased clock on the right is of figured and cross banded walnut and is from the hand of Joseph Windmills, London (c. 1700). Formerly in the Murdoch Collection. The Grandmother clock with marquetry inlay—by Charles Goods, London, c. 1685, is a rare specimen and is illustrated in Britain's "Old English Clocks"; it came from the Wetherfield Collection and is on loan from Mrs. W. McBeath.

1. The Regency Period is illustrated by a pair of black and gilt elbow chairs with painted panels of classical motifs and a pair of grey and gold painted elbow chairs with rush seats and fluted legs. A *tour de force* of Regency cabinetmaking is the card table of calamander wood inlaid with satin and box woods, on a hoop support with scimitar legs. Of particular interest are the pair of banner firescreens with raised gilt decorations by Thos. Hope which came from his home in Surrey, (see Household Furniture by Thos. Hope), the charmingly designed harp in black and gold lacquer, and the small terra-cotta figure of George III., a rare piece and similar to one in the Royal Collection.

DARYL LINDSAY.



2.



3.



ARTHUR STREETON, NED HOGAN, oil on canvas, 10 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches X 9 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches  
Purchased

small impressions while abroad before 1885. The habit caught on in Victoria around 1889 when according to Press reports several artists of the Victorian Artists Society intended to join the Impressions Exhibition, first planned to take place in Tom Roberts's private studio (2). It was finally held at the commercial Buxton Gallery, with Roberts, Streeton, Conder, McCubbin, C. D. Richardson, R. E. Falls, and Herbert Daly as participants. Jane Price, Clara Southern, Jane Sutherland, though "caught by the Impression fever" did not exhibit (3).

Roberts had impressed on his fellow artists the ever-changing character of the open-air scene: "Two half hours are never alike." To catch the fleeting moment on panels small enough and with strokes broad enough to allow for utmost speed of execution and to render tone through colours was the object of the nine by five impressions.

URSULA HOFF.

1 Table Talk, August 16th. 2 ibid. July 19th. 3 ibid. August 2nd.

ARTHUR STREETON, "IMPRESSION"; ROADWAY, oil on cedar panel, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches X 9 $\frac{1}{16}$  inches.

Purchased



The group of recently acquired paintings reproduced here illustrates the growth of Impressionism among Australian painters.

The GARDEN IDYLL, dated 1890 was painted by Rupert Bunny six years after he left Australia and four years after he had begun to study in Paris. It differs from other Australian painting of the time by revealing the artist's first-hand knowledge of pictures by the French Impressionists. The shimmering screen of foliage at the back is reminiscent of Monet's youthful Luncheon on the Grass.

NED HOGAN, dated 1886, was painted soon after Streeton had made the acquaintance of Tom Roberts, who had brought back Impressionist ideas from Europe in 1885. The reddish tints in the shadow of the hat brim illustrate the new desire to replace the brown and grey shadows of the academicians with "colour values". Mr. Daryl Lindsay seems to remember some reference made by either Streeton or Roberts to the sitter as "something of a character" and a coach driver; the pose of the figure bears out this suggestion.

The two IMPRESSIONS were probably exhibited at the 9 x 5 Impressions Exhibition at Buxton Galleries in Swanston-street on August 17, 1889. It is not possible to identify them from the catalogue but both pictures, at the time of purchase were framed in the "flat panel frames painted in bronze colour" described by eye witnesses of the 1889 exhibition (1). The frames were made of Californian red wood, chamfered off around the picture. Traces of bronze paint remain on the chamfer.

The origin of the vogue for nine by fives is not clear. Streeton made pictures of this size as early as 1883. To judge from the titles of some of the exhibits, such as FOG, THAMES EMBANKMENT; PILATUS FROM LUCERNE and 500 FT. UP SITTING ON MT. ST. BERNARD, Tom Roberts had painted



RUPERT BUNNY, GARDEN IDYLL, oil on canvas x inches X x inches

Purchased

TOM ROBERTS, "IMPRESSION, 1888", oil on cedar panel,  $4\frac{1}{8}$  inches X  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches

Purchased



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Still Life .. .. .	..	..	..	..	Godfrey Miller ..	.. .. . Purchased
Dancer, drawing .. .. .	..	..	..	..	Daryl Lindsay ..	.. .. . Purchased
Mr. Henry James re-visiting America, drawing .. .. .	..	..	..	..	Max Beerbohm ..	.. .. . Purchased
Insecurity, drawing .. .. .	..	..	..	..	Max Beerbohm ..	.. .. . Purchased
Autumn Morning, South Yarra .. .. .	..	..	..	..	Frederick McCubbin ..	.. .. . Purchased
Garden Idyll .. .. .	..	..	..	..	Rupert Bunny ..	.. .. . Purchased
Impression, Roadway .. .. .	..	..	..	..	Arthur Streeeton ..	.. .. . Purchased
Impression 1888 .. .. .	..	..	..	..	Tom Roberts ..	.. .. . Purchased

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Flowerpiece by Max Meldrum, oil painting .. .. .	..	..	..	A. M. Rowe Bequest
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Sam Rabin v. Black Eagle, oil painting, by William Roberts .. .. .	..	..	..	Presented by the Contemporary Art Society, London (Sir Edward Marsh Bequest)

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The following publications and reproductions are on sale at the Swanston-street entrance :

Catalogue of the Gallery (5/-). Gallery Guide (6d.). Catalogue of Selected Masterpieces with 30 illustrations (1/6). Thirteen large reproductions (25/- each). A selection of small reproductions including Christmas cards.

THEATRETTE :

LUNCHTIME FEATURES at 1.15 p.m.

ART FILMS : Third Tuesdays of each month.

DOCUMENTARY FILMS : First, Second, and Fourth Tuesdays and Third Thursdays.

PUBLIC LIBRARY LECTURE : First Thursdays.

MUSICAL RECORDINGS : Second and Fourth Thursdays.

Cover design in this issue is a plaster statuette of King George III.  
height 11½ inches.