

AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS IN FRANCE

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It could be argued that *Explorations* has not paid enough attention to Franco–Australian connections in fields other than politics and literature (taken in the broadest possible sense). We should probably plead guilty and admit that in music and the fine arts, for example, the links go well back into the nineteenth century and are solidly documented. The present note is intended to draw our readers' notice to the exhibitions held in Australian galleries and in particular to one of them that was organized in one place—Bendigo—over the summer of 2007–2008. Often, of course, such events travel from town to town in regional and metropolitan Australia, but sometimes one must make the effort to go to a unique location.

A printed catalogue *The Long Weekend: Australian Artists in France 1918–1939* (Bendigo, Bendigo Art Gallery, 2007, ISBN: 978-0-949215-48-2) is a permanent memento of an occasion that lasted from 8 December 2007 to 10 March 2008 and was exclusive to an institution that, notably through its Neptune Scott bequest, has a distinguished collection of nineteenth-century French paintings. A preface by Karen Quinlan, the Gallery's director, precedes essays by Bettina and Desmond MacAulay, Tansy Curtin and Juliette Peers, who concentrates on the strong group of women artists represented in the exhibition. There are biographical notes on the various expatriates and more or less long-term sojourners in Paris, especially around Montparnasse and the Luxembourg, and then a catalogue of the works shown. Colour reproductions of chosen items and sepia versions of others, in particular postcards of Paris in the early part of the twentieth century, complement the list. A Nicholsonian could cavil at the accuracy of some of the transcriptions (and indeed of the labels in the exhibition room), but *francisants* are not licensed inspectors of the misuse of the language they teach or study... For all this the volume is worth having, and not just because one may be interested in a group as diverse as Will Ashton, Stella Bowen, Rupert Bunny, Robert Campbell, Ethel Carrick, Bessie Davidson, Madge Freeman, Bessie Gibson, Agnes Goodsir, Anne Alison Greene, Max Meldrum, Kate O'Connor and Hilda Rix Nicholas.

Ten years ago the Bendigo Art Gallery took the initiative in organizing a retrospective of Agnes Goodsir. For twelve months between mid-1998 and mid-1999 the exhibition toured regional galleries in Victoria and New South Wales after starting in Bendigo, where the artist trained a century before. The catalogue—Karen Quinlan's *In a picture land over the sea:*

Agnes Goodsir 1864–1939 (Bendigo, Bendigo Art Gallery, 1998, ISBN: 0949215163)—is a valuable tribute to someone who moved to France definitively. Readers of *Explorations* (n° 33, pp. 25–27) have already seen a notice of the memoirs of Agnes Goodsir’s friend Amie Livingstone Stirling, so they hardly need a reminder of the attractions Paris held for enterprising young women of artistic and musical inclinations in that generation.

Even in our new millennium the lure is still there and indeed institutionalized through the Cité internationale des Arts opposite the Ile Saint-Louis. Some people still go to Paris to work and to seek intellectual stimulation. It is one of *Explorations’* jobs to record some of the concrete results of these contacts.

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