

Communal Luxury and the Universal Republic in the Designs and Pedagogy of Lucien Henry

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French revolutionary, Australian artist

French revolutionary and artist Lucien Henry was tried for treason in 1873 by the French State for participating in the 1871 Paris insurrection, known as the Paris Commune. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and transported to a penal colony in New Caledonia. Pardoned by the French State six years after his imprisonment, rather than returning to France, Henry settled in Australia, working first as an artist and then as the first Instructor in the Department of Art at Sydney Technical College. In Australia, Henry worked on numerous projects, ranging from designs for architectural projects and interior motifs to a vision for art education championing an Australian style.

Henry has been described by art historians as ‘the most productive and influential artist during his time in Sydney’ (Stephen 2001b, 10) as well as ‘one of the first practising artists in Australia to advocate a national art’ through the adoption of the motifs, symbols and patterns found in the local fauna and flora (Smith 1975, 230). Meanwhile, Kristin Ross’s work on the Paris Commune finds it productive to ‘continue delineating the force fields’ of this insurrection by following the ‘displacement of its participants’ (2015, 93). Ross suggests that the legacy of some of the Paris Commune’s political refugees is still underexplored and might be evident in the various projects they led and that ‘grew out of the experience of the Commune’ (93). Indeed, few studies on Henry explore the relation between ideological debates generated by the Paris Commune and this artist’s vision for Australian art and design.

Rather, they portray Henry within the confines of a national context at the cusp of Australia's Federation, hailing him as the Australian artist behind a 'new form of Australian nationality'.¹ In Ross's scheme of things, Henry's trajectory in Australia may have 'traces of the Commune' that constitute a type of 'globalization' (93). From this angle, Henry's work may represent a type of transculturation with regard to the transmission of some of the Commune's ideology. A transcultural perspective is concerned with the fluidity of ideas and the way these notions adapt to specific political and cultural concepts. It underscores the entanglement and co-presence of trajectories and people previously separated by geographical and historical factors. A transcultural perspective can be broadly understood as 'the process of transition from one culture to another' (Ortiz 1947, 6) as well as the complex processes that go into shaping this perspective (Codell 2012; Flüchter & Schöttli 2015; Welsch 1999).

With this in mind, the aim of this paper is to extend studies of Henry that situate him within a specific Australian national context and to examine the legacy of the Commune on Henry's vision for Australian art pedagogy and design. It is argued here that Henry's artistic and teaching practices represent the ontology of transculturation generated by this artist's attempt to mediate between cultural borders. This paper connects Henry's experience in France during the Commune and his work in Australia that defines a sense of local belonging and community through art education. More specifically, it examines some of the ideology and designs of Henry, notably through the letters and articles written by the artist in art journals as well as in letters sent to government officials during Henry's period in Australia. These letters are currently archived in the State Library of New South Wales (NSW) and State Records of NSW.

The universal republic

The Paris Commune was a brief worker-led insurrection fought in Paris from 18 March to 28 May 1871. Shortly before this social and political unrest, Henry had settled in Paris from Sisteron to pursue his studies in art. A study by Pierre-Henri Zaidman describes Henry in the lead-up to and during the Commune in the following way: 'membre de l'Association

¹ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 May 1891, p. 5.

internationale des travailleurs (AIT), blanquiste, militant de la Ligue républicaine de défense à outrance et du club démocratique socialiste du XIV^e arrondissement, signataire de la seconde Affiche rouge du 6 janvier' (Zaidman 2000, 13).² Notions of a working-class internationalism and an engaged militancy stand out as some key characteristics of Henry's involvement during the insurrection. For this working-class struggle, words such as 'revolution', 'citizen' and 'universality' were borrowed from the national past in an attempt to bring down State bureaucracy and despotism (Ross 2015, 29). However, according to Ross, the Commune was not another revolution but a new way of constructing society under the 'flag of the Universal Republic' (21). In the language of the Communards, the republic conceived as universal marks a 'break from the legacy of the French Revolution in the direction of a real working-class internationalism' (23). This shift towards conceiving the revolution in a new way is emphasised in the *Journal Officiel* dated 20 April 1871 where one Communard writes: 'quant à nous, citoyens de Paris, nous avons la mission d'accomplir la révolution moderne, la plus large et la plus féconde de toutes celles qui ont illuminé l'histoire'.³ This notion of change is further highlighted by the following claim regarding the Commune's revolution: 'la Révolution communale, commencée par l'initiative populaire du 18 mars, inaugure une ère nouvelle de politique expérimentale, positive, scientifique'.⁴ While the Communards' understanding of revolution denotes change, they are also quick to underscore the values of the republican model stating that: 'la République est le seul gouvernement possible; elle ne peut être mise en discussion'.⁵

² 'a member of the International Workingmen's Association, a Blanquist, a militant for the Republican All-out Defence League and for the Democratic Socialist Club of the 14th arrondissement, signatory of the second *Affiche rouge* (Red poster) of 6 January [1871]'.

³ 'as for us, citizens of Paris, our mission is to effect a modern revolution, the broadest and most productive of all those which have illuminated history'.

⁴ 'the Communal revolution, which began as an initiative of the people on 18 March, ushers in a new era of experimental, positive and scientific politics'. *Journal Officiel*, 20 April 1871.

⁵ 'the Republic is the only possible form of government; it cannot be subject to discussion'. *Journal Officiel*, 21 March 1871.

For the Communards, the Republic was conceived as universal in opposition to past notions of the French Republic that had developed into a form of republican Universalism representing '[le] vieux monde gouvernemental et clérical, du militarisme, du fonctionnarisme, de l'exploitation, de l'agiotage, des monopoles, des privilèges, auxquels le prolétariat doit son servage, la patrie ses malheurs et ses désastres'.⁶ Rather, the Communards championed an 'autonomous collective in a universal federation of peoples' that was ultimately 'international in scale' (Ross 2015, 12). In the *Journal Officiel*, the Communards set out their vision: 'l'unité politique, telle que la veut Paris, c'est l'association volontaire de toutes les initiatives locales, le concours spontané et libre de toutes les énergies individuelles en vue d'un but commun, le bien-être, la liberté et la sécurité de tous'.⁷ For the brief duration of the Commune, its interests were characterised by aspects such as free compulsory education and a criticism of social inequalities associated with the bourgeoisie and capitalism.

Similarly, Commune artists seized upon the political and social turmoil affecting many working class people in Paris to fight for a more democratic vision of the artist's role in public life. In the years leading up to the Commune, radical socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon noted that artists had 'lost the power of collectivity' and had lost 'touch with the aspirations of the times, which it was their task to express' (Kaplow 1973, 152). Foreshadowing aspects of the Commune's ideology, Proudhon argued that artists could play a role by 'denouncing the decadence of present society, so as to clear the way for the creation of a new one' (152). He criticised notably society's 'loss of community, the debasement of art in the service of a hostile ideal of the ruling bourgeoisie, and the futility of art for art's sake' (153). Echoing some of these concepts, an assembly of Commune artists was formed and named the *Fédération des Artistes*.

⁶ 'the old governmental and clerical world of militarism, of officialdom, of exploitation, of agiotage, of monopolies, of privilege, to which the proletariat owes its servitude, the nation its misfortunes and disasters'. *Journal Officiel*, 20 April 1871.

⁷ 'political unity, such as Paris wishes it, is the voluntary association of all local initiatives, the free and spontaneous cooperation of all individual energies working to a common goal, the well-being, freedom and security of all'. *Journal Officiel*, 20 April 1871.

Though only short-lived (7 April–9 May 1871) the *Fédération* drew up a manifesto dated 15 April 1871 calling for ‘la régénération de l’avenir par l’enseignement’. The manifesto’s closing sentence links the Commune’s general call for universality to the arts and refers specifically to the idea that ‘le comité concourra à notre régénération, à l’inauguration du luxe communal et aux splendeurs de l’avenir, et à la République universelle’.⁸ This document identifies the artist as an educator serving the needs of the community, rather than an individual producer serving the needs of the elite or the State.

For the community, this also translates into the democratisation of arts training and the removal of hierarchy amongst various art forms with the aim of developing an aesthetic in republican allegory, public sculpture, architecture and civic decoration (Adamson 2001, 27). These notions underscore the artists’ democratic responsibilities and role in organising arts education and creating art works that include the decorative arts. Indeed, one of the innovations of the Commune was the recognition of the decorative arts within the ranks of the fine arts, liberating the decorative arts from the confinement of their lower status as an industrial art (Sánchez 1997, 65). Likewise, the artists of the *Fédération*, in an attempt to dismantle the tight control of the French authorities on the styles and subjects dictated to artists (66), affirmed that all of the arts were ‘artisanal in procedure and socialization’. Generally, these artists believed that contemporaneity was a key aspect of this pedagogy and many favoured aspects of daily life that would validate a community’s sense of belonging and importance.

Emerging nationhood in Australia

During Henry’s period in Sydney from 1879 to 1891, Australia was constituted of British colonies that were debating the question of whether to break away from or remain a part of the British Empire. Historian Mark McKenna describes this period in Australia as a time ‘when the fundamental bases of institutional and social practice were open to question’ (1996, 131) and when discussions on Australian patriotism were flourishing.

⁸ ‘the regeneration of the future through education’, ‘the committee will contribute to our regeneration, to the inauguration of communal luxury and the splendours of the future, and to the Universal Republic’. *Journal Officiel*, 15 April 1871.

In the latter half of the 1880s, the issue of an ‘Australian republic’ and a call for a ‘unique cultural and national identity’ were raised (151). In a world climate of burgeoning nationalism, Australia was attempting to establish an identity and many Australian journals of the time acknowledged ‘the need for new symbols of national life, new anthems, flags, histories and art’ (168).

Likewise, technical education, while still in its infancy, was also emerging and focusing particularly on the relation between technical and manual education, and between art and nation. A report on Technical Education and Manual Training published in 1891 by Edward Combes linked technical instruction to a shared national destiny. For instance, Combes’ first recommendation in this report on future courses outlined ‘the necessity that the valuable subjects of instruction included in the term manual training should be universally taught’ as he believed them ‘to be absolutely essential to the national interests of this country’ (Combes 1891, 173). The definition of technical instruction provided in this report reveals how art is an integral part of this education and refers to the ‘careful and practical instruction of our youth in the scientific and artistic knowledge demanded by any branch of industry’ (2), with drawing constituting ‘one of the most powerful agencies in the education of the child’ (168).

Henry was regarded as both an educator and an artist in the area of Australian reform. Moreover, Henry’s teaching and language reflect some of the ideological debates generated by the Paris Commune and are located within an Australian socio-political context undergoing significant change. Letters written to the Minister of Public Education and essays to art journals in the 1880s highlight Henry’s interest in the democratic responsibilities of artists and their pedagogical role in society, as well as the responsibility of the state to provide technical art education to everyone (Henry 1883). In his writings, Henry outlines a vision ‘to construct a more democratic and urbane city for its [Australia’s] citizens’, fighting against ‘the imperial dependency of a colonial culture’ (Stephen 2001b, 11).

Decorative arts and education

For Henry, the decorative arts were key to achieving the ‘advancement of Australian civilization’ (1888, 9). In an essay titled ‘Australian Decorative Arts’ written for the journal *Australian Art* in 1888, Henry’s defence of ornamentation echoes the manifesto of the *Fédération des Artistes*, which

argued for the inclusion of the decorative arts into the ranks of the fine arts. In this article, Henry writes to the ‘sceptic [sic] persons [...] who are disposed to laugh at the importance’ of the decorative arts and who consider them ‘superfluous and insignificant adjuncts of civilized life’ (11). For Henry, the decorative arts ‘constitute the substrata of civilization, the rich soil from which the other arts draw their sap’ (11). In this privileged position, the decorative arts are not only elevated to a higher status but inform all other aesthetic forms.

While Henry’s essay is a synthesis of some of the ideology articulated by the *Fédération des Artistes* in defence of the decorative arts, it also mirrors what the Commune’s *Journal Officiel* described as the mission of art which is ‘la mise en œuvre et en lumière de tous les éléments du présent’.⁹ This statement emphasises the significance of everyday and contemporary life in contrast to classical subjects favoured by traditional artistic standards that had long dominated French art standards in the 1800s. Henry does, however, contemplate the significance of past traditions in artistic practices in his essay on ‘Australian Decorative Arts’. For him, the creation of an Australian style of decorative arts is part of an ‘archeological’ process of discovery where specific traditions related to the arts are recovered yet need to draw on the everyday for meaning and purpose (Henry 1888, 12). For instance, Henry states in his essay that ‘sculpture, painting, and architecture, offer in their ensemble a complete manifestation of the civilization attained by a race, embodying in their actual records of the present a reminiscence of the past, and a fore-shadowing of the future’ (1888, 10). What this means is that traditional art practices play a role in providing a framework, or as Henry states, reveal ‘the few truths sifted out of the dust of the past’ (12). However, according to this artist and educator, these practices drawing on the past also run the risk of presenting work that is ‘sandpapered down to the flush level of Neo-Egyptian, Neo-Greek, Neo-Roman, Neo-Renaissance’ (12) because it is ‘adorned or rather encumbered with the products of Decorative Arts which are quite foreign and alien to the people who use them’ (12). For Henry, therefore, traditional art practices have their purpose provided they are reinvigorated by going ‘straight to nature, the inexhaustible fountain of

⁹ ‘the application and illumination of all the elements of the present’. *Journal Officiel*, 14 April 1871.

plenty and beauty' (12), in a way that is in tune with the everyday aspects of society. Henry's own work displays this appreciation of traditional styles that draw, for instance, on classical architecture (see Figure 2) and Islamic designs (see Figure 4), but place them within a distinct Australian context informed by Australian flora and fauna.

Despite this acknowledgement of traditional art practices, it is the local that blurs the boundaries for Henry with regard to what constitutes conventionalism and contemporaneity in art. In a letter to the Minister for Public Instruction referring to specific plants and animals of Australia, Henry states:

What real or imaginary Bird of any Art or of any period can compete for Beauty and nobleness of form with the Lyre-Bird? What can equal in form or color the flowers and foliage of the Waratah and Stenocarpus? They are undoubtedly the richest of all flowers known for constructive ornamentation and seem to have been designed to teach man what is conventionalism in Art (1890a).

This description not only demonstrates Henry's wonderment and awe with respect to species that drew from the local landscape, it also identifies an Australian style that holds a privileged position in the creative practices. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate some of the ways in which Henry incorporated local Australian nature into his designs.



Figure 1. 'Blue Mountains waratah (Waratah—study from nature)', from unpublished book, *Australian Decorative Arts*, watercolour and gouache over pencil, made by Lucien Henry, Australia/France, 1889–1891. Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney, Australia.



Figure 2. 'Pediment for Natural History Museum', from unpublished book, *Australian Decorative Arts*, monochrome, pen and ink over pencil, made by Lucien Henry, Australia/France, 1889–1891. Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney, Australia.

Meanwhile, Smith's work on Australian art highlights the extent of Henry's ambition for capturing the local everyday, stating that for designers in Australia of this period 'the idea of incorporating parrots and kangaroos, wattle and waratah into their designs was as embarrassing as asking them to cultivate a broad Australian accent. It was safer, less culturally *déclassé*, to follow European modes of design' (1975, 231).

Henry's ongoing belief in the opportunities offered by Australian nature is further documented:

there are in the Australian Flora and Fauna elements of Decoration which either for form or color, and in some instances for both, are as beautiful and as original as any which have ever been employed in Decorative Art and [...] to offer them to Industry by introducing them into Technical Schools, Libraries and Museums [would] most undoubtedly give to all industrial production a distinctive national character (1890a).

On one hand, what this shows is that Henry champions the decorative possibilities of animals such as the lyre-bird or flowers such as the waratah

that characterise for him the fundamental principles of design. On the other hand, he is concerned with the role education and training can play in developing a decorative style. For Henry, it is precisely from the form and colour of Australian flora and fauna that the ‘wants’ and the ‘ideals’ of a local spirit are derived (1888, 12), with the artist subverting the hierarchical relation between art and industry. To achieve this, Henry calls for the establishment of an Art College so that through this ‘there would be a respectable show of Australian Arts having originality and elements of their own to stamp them’ (1883). To complement the emergence of this unique style, Henry proposes developing a reference book featuring his designs on architectural subjects and settings. Originally titled *Elementary Course of Ornamentation* it was subsequently renamed *Australian Decorative Arts* (1890a). This later title highlights the distinct local intent of the work and its relation to education, a notion further underscored by Henry when he describes this undertaking as ‘both distinctly national and Educational in character’ (1890a). Despite Smith’s reference to the peculiarity, at the time, of Henry’s vision, hand-written comments that appear in the margin of the artist’s October 1890 letter to the Ministry for Public Instruction requesting financial assistance for his work, also dated 1890, support the work of Henry. They describe his work as ‘very beautiful’, the subjects as ‘distinctly Australian’, and suggest the designs could be ‘used with great advantage in promoting National Art Education’ (1890b).

While seemingly national in character, this model of art and art education is also part of what Henry refers to as ‘an admirable testimony of the Universal order’ (1890a). For Henry, this ‘Universal order’ is embedded within a global framework and is associated with the idea of advancement and civilisation. Technical education in art represents ‘a powerful agency of progress’ (1890a), wrote Henry, adding that the ‘young colonies have an immense natural supply of material in the way of form and color’. From such elements could grow ‘a style of ornamentation which may play its part in the development of civilisation under the Southern Cross’, drawing on ‘decorative elements second to none under the Sun’ (1890b). Ross reminds us that, for some socialists holding on to the memory of the Commune, the republic was a ‘transportable form’ and the colonies, undergoing new ways of imagining nationhood, provided the chance of achieving the Universal Republic, based on the ‘voluntary association of all local initiative’ (2015, 35).

In this light, Henry's notion of a national expression through art offers the possibility of a model that is founded on the relation between a collective and a language shaped by the local.

Community and education

In Henry's scheme of things, art education is intrinsically linked to the idea of community. In a letter written to the Minister of Public Education, Henry refers to technical art education, expressing the idea that the state should 'provide a technical Art Education as will really benefit the community as a whole' (1883). In another document, he proposes the publication of his designs and dedicates this publication to 'the youth of Australia in order that induced by example, they may bring their quota of efforts, and formulate ultimately a National expression' (1890a) (see Figure 3). For Henry, the relationship between art education and the wider public represents, therefore, the transmission and building of knowledge within society.



Figure 3. 'Dedication', from unpublished book, *Australian Decorative Arts*, monochrome pen and ink over pencil, made by Lucien Henry, Australia/France, 1889–1891. Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney, Australia.

Meanwhile this teaching principle linked to the transfer of knowledge also identifies the need for social equity and is critical of any art instruction that is elitist. Henry stipulates that technical training in Art should be of ‘a practical and commercial value to students [...] and not merely [...] a pleasant pastime’ or left ‘in the hands of gentlemen who have been more desirous to use them [the Fine Arts] as a means of making their fortunes’ (1883). He also locates this concern for social equality on a global scale, referring to the importance of a sound art education so that youths are ‘placed by technical education on a footing equal to that of the youths of other countries of the world’ (1883). Furthermore, the purpose of Henry’s designs in his proposed publication *Australian Decorative Arts* underscores the educational intent. This work, he states, ‘is not a commercial undertaking’ (1890a). His concern for social conditions and equity is palpable and mirrors the anti-bourgeois, anti-capitalist thinking of the Commune (Ross 2015, 18). In his request for the publication of his designs, Henry is concerned with the affordability of his book, stating that he wanted:

to keep the price of the complete work within such a limit as to justify its introduction into a certain class of Public schools and all the Schools of Arts in the different colonies; and also, within the means of the persons to whom it is dedicated (the youth of Australasia), persons who during the earlier period of their lives, cannot, as a rule, afford to buy expensive publications (1890a).

By underscoring the relation between education and community, Henry’s art education principles align with the Communard notion of ‘integral education’ that referred to ‘professional schools where the child, girl or boy, would become capable of both working intellectually and earning a livelihood’; this was designed to ‘overcome the division between manual and intellectual labor’ (Ross 2015, 42). In this context, instruction was conceived to be undertaken ‘in view of the interests of everyone’ (42) with the aim of improving social conditions. Indeed, for Henry, the notion of an integral type of education is reflected in his vision of an art education that provides ‘a thorough acquaintance with the styles, and therefore an opportunity of creating a style of Australian Art’. Moreover, this education can be applied to ‘a broad range of trades whether it be skills in drawing and perspective to be used by a miner, a geologist [...] or in fact any technical engagement with the range of the Plastic Arts’ (1883).

In one of his letters to the Minister of Public Education, Henry relates that ‘a good tradesman [...] when out of his apprenticeship if he were gifted with the necessary endowment of Genius, [...] could choose to devote his leisure time to the acquirement of a superior knowledge and do so with advantage for the community’ (1883). Through this belief, Henry’s ideology focuses on an education that blurs the boundaries between manual and intellectual life, with the purpose of subverting social hierarchies for a common good.

Communal and universal

While for Henry art and community are synonymous, they are also associated with the application of creative initiatives to everyday life. Likewise, the ‘communal luxury’ and the ‘Universal Republic’ proposed by the Communard artists entailed transforming the ‘aesthetic coordinates of the entire community’ (Ross 2015, 58). This involved calling for a public art that would decorate and enhance public buildings such as town halls across France, with the idea that ‘beauty [should] flourish in spaces shared in common’ and not just in private spaces (58). Situating artistic practices at the level of public spaces, communal luxury and the Universal Republic challenges notions of a nationalist space: lived art is vital for the community, as it takes the details of everyday life into a space framed within the local while bypassing the national. In a comment published in the Commune’s *Journal Officiel* outlining the destruction of Paris’ Colonne Vendôme in 1871, the Communards critique the use of public art to celebrate victory obtained through force and despotism, and provide an alternative vision: ‘que le monde en soit bien convaincu: les colonnes qu’elle [la Commune] pourra ériger ne célébreront jamais quelque brigand de l’histoire, mais elles perpétueront le souvenir de quelque conquête glorieuse dans le champ de la science, du travail et de la liberté’.¹⁰

Similarly, during this same period Australia was caught up in ‘the issue of a republic’ (McKenna 1996, 121), which up until Federation in 1901 consisted of numerous discussions concerning the colonies’ relationship with Britain.

¹⁰ ‘let the world be quite convinced of this: the columns that it [the Commune] might erect will never celebrate any of history’s brigands, they will instead perpetuate the memory of some glorious conquest in the field of science, work and liberty’. *Journal Officiel*, 17 May 1871.

The issue of an independent Australian republic was a significant aspect of political culture, and in the period between 1887 and 1893 republican sentiment surfaced in the colonies in a way that McKenna describes as ‘not to be seen again until the late twentieth century’ (131).

The designs Henry completed while in Sydney suggest a parallel with the Commune’s position on public design and the significance of the republican model. Much of Henry’s work was created with the purpose of shaping public spaces and drew on the local environment. Meanwhile, the Commune’s legacy in France was characterised in the values adopted by subsequent French governments which supported the idea of placing politically and civically moralising imagery in public spaces (Sánchez 1997, 67). Figures 4 and 5 illustrate some of the designs created by Henry that demonstrate his interest in shaping the shared landscape.



Figure 4. ‘Public Park Fountain; Hippocampus and waratah’, from unpublished book, *Australian Decorative Arts*, watercolour over pencil, made by Lucien Henry, Australia/France, 1889–1891. Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney, Australia.



Figure 5. 'Crematorium', from unpublished book, *Australian Decorative Arts*, watercolour over pencil, made by Lucien Henry, Australia/France, 1889–1891. Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney, Australia.

Not content with limiting himself to just the design of public space, Henry also hints through his work at his support for the republican model. By way of example, Henry designed two stained glass windows for Sydney Town Hall in 1888: the Captain Cook window and the Centennial window (also referred to as the Australia window by Henry's former student George Hippolyte Aourousseau). The latter provides us with a glimpse of how ideas in imagery cross cultural borders, particularly with regard to the republican vision and pedagogical role of the design (see Figure 6).

A homage to Henry by Aourousseau, who assisted the artist with the preparation of this stained glass window, describes the symbolism in the work in an article published after Henry's death:

the female figure signifying Australia, draped in the red and blue ensigns, symbolic of our allegiance to Great Britain; the ram's head and fleece, for a most graceful head dress typifying the wool industry; the miner's lamp, the mining industry; Neptune's trident, for maritime power, then

the four stars in the frame and the one on her forehead showing that we live under the Southern Cross. With conventional designs from the waratah, stenocarpus, and lambertia round the outer border, the full sun's rays above the head, the figure standing on the globe below, with Oceania and the rolling sea (Aurrousseau 1912, 35).

This description not only explains the meaning behind the imagery in the window, it also demonstrates how Henry put into practice his principles of art pedagogy that focus on the use of Australian form and colour inspired from local nature to convey a message of civic importance.

Research on nineteenth-century imagery in France (Ozouf 1976; Agulhon 1981) reveals that some of the imagery evoked in the Centennial window mirrors similar iconographical representations used in France around the time of the debates on the French Republic which, for the Communards, as we saw earlier, was 'le seul gouvernement possible'.¹¹ Specific images were adopted in France to evoke the Republic after the fall of the last French king in 1848 and of the Second Empire in 1870. For instance, female images replaced those of monarchs and were commonly used to represent the Republic in paintings, statues and busts. These female images were allegories of liberty—the Republic—and were usually placed in public places such as town halls. The five-pointed star was commonly used on the heads of busts to replace any signs of the monarch and suggested the 'idea of political progress and that of the enlightenment of reason' (Agulhon 1981, 86). In the republican spirit, the star was also considered 'an anti-religious, rationalist symbol'. Indeed, religion was replaced in public imagery in France by the cult of nature. Subsequently, republican imagery favoured visual representations associated with nature and freedom such as flowers, olive branches, laurel leaves and oak leaves, as well as the Gallic cock to symbolise the motherland and the plough to represent work on the land (86–87).

While the Centennial window bears similarities to the political republican imagery used in France (despite Aurrousseau's reference to the allegiance to Britain), the designs also reinvent the way nature is used by accentuating its cyclical rhythms and its relation to a local space anchored in Australia.

¹¹ 'the only possible form of government'. *Journal Officiel*, 21 March 1871.



Stained Glass Window.
TOWN HALL, SYDNEY.

Designed & Executed by
GOODLET & SMITH, LTD.
SYDNEY.

Figure 6. Watercolour, stained glass window, Town Hall, Sydney, designed by Lucien Henry for Centennial Hall, made by Goodlet & Smith Ltd, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, 1888. Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney, Australia.

This borrowing from a European context hints at the republican vision Henry had in mind for an Australia that was still debating its ties with the British monarchy, while still being very much a part of the British Empire. The design also presents a social understanding of Australia's future, which Henry associates with the work, knowledge and material emanating from the country's local wealth while placing this perspective within a global context.

Concluding remarks

Henry did not live to see the publication of his book on *Australian Decorative Arts*. He died in France in 1896 from ill health following several unsuccessful attempts to publish his work in France and England, despite the support he received from the Ministry for Public Instruction in Australia. His unpublished text remained in the archival collection of the Museum of Applied Arts and Social Sciences located in Sydney up until a 2001 retrospective of his work at this museum, accompanied by the publication of Henry's decorative arts designs in a book titled *Visions of a Republic* (Stephen 2001a).

Henry's belief in social equity and in a collective destiny achieved through the opportunity of education and art remains, nevertheless, a distinct characteristic of his time in Australia and reflects clear transcultural flows. Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*, through its discussion of transculturation, identifies the ways in which 'subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other' in terms of 'mutually transformative, but hierarchized, historical encounters, intersections, and power struggles' (1992, 231). If transculturation can be understood as a crossing of cultural borders 'where identities are inflected by multiple contact points and agendas between different populations' (Ray 2012, 21), then Henry is a transcultural figure who mediated cultural borders in art education and artistic creation as a result of his experience during the Paris Commune. The transcultural encounter of Lucien Henry's ideas reflects more than a simple mix of national cultures; rather, it encapsulates a set of complex and unresolved possible meanings on a local level. The artist not only reflected ways of understanding the relation between art, education and community, he also represented some of the concerns underscored by the Paris Commune in the area of social equity and collective destiny.

It is the fluidity of Henry's concepts and ideas, as well his ability to adapt to specific political and cultural concepts which were different from those in which his ideas had developed, that underscore the entanglement and co-presence of trajectories within art pedagogy and community. Henry's vision of art education and artistic creation, and of their relation to the wider public, is enmeshed in his concern for the democratisation of the arts and the role art plays in establishing a collective style through local colour and form.

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