Diploma Lecture Series 2011
Art and Australia II: European Preludes and Parallels

Misty moderns: Max Meldrum and the Australian Tonalists

Tracey Lock-Weir

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Introduction:
This lecture will focus on the distinctive school of Australian tonalism, which flourished during the twentieth-century interwar period. It will outline the beginnings of this painting movement from when it was first pioneered in 1915 by the controversial artist, teacher and art theorist, Max Meldrum (1875-1955). Despite being widely condemned, Max Meldrum had an impact on the development of a young generation of Australian artists. Several of these artists became leading figures of the modern art movement in Melbourne and Sydney. Some of Meldrum’s other followers became known as the Meldrumites. Working in opposition to established tastes, these artists produced some of the most abbreviated and abstractly well-designed landscapes in Australian art. During the 1950s Meldrum’s ideas also had an enduring influence on a second generation of young Australian artists. Aspects of these influences will be demonstrated and discussed.

Slide List

1. Max Meldrum, Portrait of Ida, 1910, oil on canvas, AGSA
2. Photograph of Max Meldrum
3. Margaret Preston, The tea urn, c.1909, oil on canvas, AGSA
4. Arnold Shore, Blue hydrangeas, 1921, oil on canvas, AGWA
5. Photograph of Meldrum’s painting technique from The Science of Appearances, 1950
6. Percy Leason, At the campfire, San Remo, c1934, oil on canvas, QAG
7. John Farmer, Peking, 1921, oil on board, CAGHM
8. Photograph of Studio Group, 1896
9. Photograph of Max Meldrum in his Paris studio, c.1901
10. Max Meldrum, Picherit’s Farm, c.1910, oil on canvas, NGV
11. Max Meldrum, Frosted poplars, Pâcè, Brittany, c.1910, UQ
12. Max Meldrum, The little farm (Sketch, Eltham), 1917, oil on board, PC
13. Arnold Shore, Blue hydrangeas, 1921, oil on canvas, AGWA
14. Colin Colahan, King Island, 1920, oil on board, PC
15. A.E. Newbury, Morning light, 1919, oil on cardboard, PC
16. (left) Max Meldrum, Portrait, 1910, oil on canvas, Kerry Stokes collection (right) Max Meldrum, Portrait of Ida, 1910, oil on canvas, AGSA
* 17. Clarice Beckett, Summer fields, 1926, oil on board, PC
18. Napier Waller, The Pastoral Pursuits of Australia, 1927, oil on canvas, AGSA
19. Clarice Beckett, Hawthorn Tea Gardens, c.1933, oil on canvas, AGSA
20. Photograph of The Meldrum Group exhibition, 1920
* 21. Max Meldrum, The three trees, c.1917, oil on board, PC
22. Max Meldrum, Eltham bush, 1925, oil on canvas, AGSA
23. (left) Max Meldrum, The three trees, c.1917, oil on board, PC (right) Hans Heysen, The three gums, 1915-20, oil on canvas, AGB
24. Roland Wakelin, Self-portrait, 1920, oil on paperboard, AGNSW
25. Grace Cossington Smith (detail) Rushing, c.1922, oil on canvas, AGNSW
26. Grace Cossington Smith, Rushing, c.1922, oil on canvas, AGNSW
27. Roy de Maistre, *Berry’s Bay*, c1920, oil on board, AGSA


29. (left) Roy de Maistre, *Berry’s Bay, Sydney Harbour*, 1920, oil on board, AGSA (right) Roy de Maistre, *Berry’s Bay*, c1920, oil on board, AGSA

30. Roy de Maistre, *Still life*, c.1922, oil on paper on paperboard, AGNSW

31. Lloyd Rees, *Morning at Parramatta River*, c.1922, oil on canvas, PC

32. Lloyd Rees, *Boy on a bridge*, c.1922, oil on canvas, AGSA


34. Photograph of The Meldrum Group exhibition, 1920

35. (left) Percy Leason, *Two of the artist’s children*, c.1922, oil on canvas, CAGHM (right) James McNeill Whistler, *Harmony in grey and green: Miss Cicely Alexander*, 1872-4, oil on canvas, Tate Gallery


37. (left) Justus Jorgensen, *The shopping centre (Brighton)*, 1933, oil on cardboard, PC (centre) Hiroshige, *Dyers’s Street, Kanda*, 1857, colour woodcut on paper, AGSA (right) Colin Colahan, *Cumberland rooftops, Lorne*, 1928, oil on board, Xavier College

38. Colin Colahan, *Tarczynski on the beach*, 1930s, oil on board, Xavier College

39. Colin Colahan, *Cumberland rooftops, Lorne*, 1928, oil on board, Xavier College

40. Percy Leason, *Caravan, Eltham Park*, c.1930, oil on canvas, AGSA

41. Percy Leason, *Campsite study, San Remo*, c1934, oil on board, AGSA

42. Colin Colahan, *Winter landscape*, c.1935, oil on canvas, AGSA

43. Clarice Beckett, *Wet night, Brighton*, 1930, oil on board, PC

44. Clarice Beckett, *Taxi rank*, c.1931, oil on canvas, Kerry Stokes collection

45. Polly Hurry, *Still life*, c.1940, oil on canvas, MCG+SP

46. Max Meldrum, *Iris in the mirror*, c.1945, oil on board, NGA

47. Colin Colahan, *Ballet of wind and rain*, 1945, oil on canvas, AWM

48. Hayward Veal, *Harbour scene, Sydney*, 1946, oil on board, MCG+SP

49. Fred Williams, *Figure in a landscape*, c.1958-59, oil on board, AGSA

50. (left) Max Meldrum, *The three trees*, c.1917, oil on board, PC (right) Fred Williams, *Figure in a landscape*, c.1958-59, oil on board, AGSA


52. Photograph of Max Meldrum’s Colour Diagram in *The Science of Appearances*.

53. Ian Burn, *Left to Right Painting*, 1965, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, PC

54. Percy Leason, *Two of the artist’s children*, c.1922, oil on canvas, CAGHM

Bibliography


Max Meldrum, *Pcherit's Farm*, c.1910, oil on canvas, NGV
Clarice Beckett, *Summer fields*, 1926, oil on board, PC
Max Meldrum, *The three trees*, c.1917, oil on board, PC
Roy de Maistre, *Berry’s Bay*, c1920, oil on board, AGSA
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Colin Colahan, *Ballet of wind and rain*, 1945, oil on canvas, AWM