

**CHANGING FORTUNES:THE HISTORY OF CHINA PAINTING IN SOUTH
AUSTRALIA**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses a gap in research regarding South Australian china painting. Although china painting has been practised in Australia for the last 120 years and is held in major Australian collections, it has been little researched and then in a minor role associated with ceramics and studio potters, or as women's art/craft. The china painters too, have been little researched.

My research identifies the three 'highs' of the changing fortunes of china painting, and how the practice survived in between. I argue that it was first taught in the city's School of Design, Painting and Technical Art in 1894 as a skill for possible industrial employment, due to the initiative of School Principal, Harry Pelling Gill. However china painting classes were discontinued by 1897 due to an economic depression and the fact that the anticipated industry did not eventuate.

In 1906 china painting classes were reinstated in the (re-named) Adelaide School of Art and teacher Laurence Howie was pivotal in that revival. China painting classes ceased during the First World War while Howie served overseas in the Australian Forces, but resumed in 1923 after his return and appointment as Principal of the (renamed) School of Arts and Crafts. The resulting change in the fortunes of china painting was the outcome of the School's appropriate training in art and design, and I argue this enabled emerging professional female artists to confidently exhibit china painting alongside their fine art. I will devote a chapter to the important role of the South Australian Society of Arts in facilitating this important public exposure of china painting.

The Second World War marked a decline in popularity of china painting. Chapter 5 traces its survival till it burst into popularity again in 1965. Further chapters describe china painting's following meteoric rise in fortune and the role played by the South Australian teachers of the art/craft, few of whom had received formal art training. I argue that china painting became a conservative social craft, but nonetheless a serious hobby, pursued by married, middle-class women who strongly believed their work was art, not craft. I will point out how they were visited and influenced by entrepreneurial American teachers, politically active in the art/craft debate in the United States of America.

Chapter 8 will chart the steps taken by Australian teachers in the 1980s to break from the American influence and regain an Australian identity in teachers' organisations and iconography. I will describe the debates that ensued following experimental work exhibited by avant-garde Australian teachers to resolve the art/craft debate regarding china painting in Australia, and the difficulties of maintaining china painting momentum as the majority of practitioners became elderly women.

This thesis identifies education of the practitioners as a key factor throughout South Australian china painting history as a way of better understanding the place of china painting within the decorative arts. China painting is currently in decline; nevertheless, as I will point out in my conclusion, there are several future pathways it could take. Only within recent decades have curators and writers shown an increased interest in women's decorative arts, including china painting. It is timely to undertake research before existing documentation of china painting is lost.

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

**Thesis Title: CHANGING FORTUNES: THE HISTORY OF CHINA PAINTING IN
SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Candidate's name: Avis Carol Smith

I declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge or belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Signed

Date *15 December 2008*

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I appreciate the correspondence and assistance by the following curators and staff who facilitated my access to view china painting held in many gallery collections. Christopher Menz and Robert Reason of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Glenn Cooke of the Queensland Art Gallery, Dr. Grace Cochrane of the Powerhouse Museum Sydney, Deborah Edwards of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Robert Bell at the Art Gallery of Western Australia and later at the National Gallery of Australia. Narelle Symes at the Shepparton Regional Gallery, and staff at the Castlemaine Regional Gallery also kindly allowed me access to china painting in their collections. Librarians Anne Mather at the University of South Australia and Graham Powell at the National Library, Canberra were particularly patient and helpful.

Mary Howie generously shared her memories of her father Laurence Howie with me and allowed me to handle her collection of his china painting. Lionel Peisley, Susan and Les Wright, Phil and Christine Sunman were of considerable assistance in locating pieces of

signed South Australian china painting that feature in this thesis. I acknowledge the assistance of Joan Drew and Judy Evans during my research on Ada Hough.

I particularly wish to acknowledge the friendship and consistent help of the committees and members of the South Australian China Painters Association and the Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers South Australian Region. They allowed me unlimited access to the library, records and extensive collection of china painting held in the Porcelain Art Centre, Buttery Reserve, Norwood.

Finally I express my gratitude to the many women who consented to be interviewed in their homes. They freely answered many questions and brought their treasures out of china cabinets and cupboards for me to handle. Moreover I was always offered afternoon tea or morning coffee - usually in exquisite hand-painted cups and saucers reserved for special occasions. It was a privilege to be admitted into their social rituals.

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It is not customary for china painters to attribute a title to their china painting, but in accordance with the conventions of Art Historical captions, the following titles have been attributed by the author and are in all captions wherever they appear in the thesis chapters. Numerous images in the list of figures are reproduced in the thesis, but do not appear on the digital version.

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Introduction

There is perhaps no branch of Art-work more perfectly womanly and in every way more desirable than painting on china. The character of the designs brings them within the reach of even moderate powers, and it must be admitted that painting flowers and birds and pretty landscapes, or children's heads, is work in itself more suitable for women than men.¹

Those words of wisdom printed in England in 1872 certainly set the scene for china painting as a perfectly suitable feminine pastime, while the preference for the artistic qualities of hand-painted china over factory-printed items was firmly stated in 1881 by William Morris's admonition that:

Don't try ... to make a printed plate look like a hand-painted one: make it something which no one would try to do if he were painting by hand, if your market drives you into printed plates: I don't see the use of them myself.²

Morris's advocacy for the value of the hand-crafted over the machine-produced object extended into the decoration of china in the pottery industry in England in the late nineteenth century. His philosophies informed the British Arts and Crafts movement which, in turn, influenced the design and production of many Australian objects that now come under the general heading of 'decorative arts'. This term encompasses many objects and crafts; from architectural embellishments, furniture, ceramics, and jewellery, to items made or decorated within the cult of women's domesticity, such as quilts and china painting. (See Appendix 1) Although Australian decorative arts have been slowly acquired by state galleries and museums in the nineteenth and twentieth century, it is only since the early 1970s that the importance of such collections is recognised within our cultural history.

China decorated by various techniques, including china painting, is found in many Australian institutions and individual collections. Major collections in most Australian State Galleries and Museums contain china from European and English factories/potteries such as Meissen, Sevres, Worcester, Doulton, Wedgwood and others, decorated by the factories' painters and

paintresses. Other employees such as gilders often worked on the same item to add richness to the decoration. For example, on the Art Gallery of South Australia's Doulton vase *Australian Wildflowers*, Louis Bilton's china painting is enhanced by intricate additional work done by gilders.³ However ceramic history and prestigious collections focus on the styles and fortunes of factories rather than on specific china painters, because several painters could work on the one large piece. To own handsomely painted and gilded china from Meissen, Sevres or other European and English factories was a status symbol for the wealthy. Mutual prestige to benefactor and recipient often followed the donation of valuable European and English pieces to state galleries and museums. For example in Victorian England, collecting decorated china was a popular pastime of women throughout a wide range of society, from middle-class to aristocratic women such as Lady Charlotte Schreiber (1812-1895), whose collection was bequeathed to the Victoria and Albert Museum.⁴

In contrast to high status factory-produced porcelain, china decorated by Australian china painters is currently undervalued and poorly represented in Australian State Galleries and most Museums. Small amounts of Australian china painting are held by a few Regional Galleries such as the Castlemaine and Shepparton Galleries in Victoria. The Powerhouse Museum in Sydney holds the most comprehensive collection, including an amount of South Australian china painting, due in part to the Lyons bequest.⁵ The collection of South Australian china painting held by the Art Gallery of South Australia includes some interesting pieces by South Australian china painters of the 1920-30s, notably Laurence Howie, Mamie Venner and Lois Carne (nee Laughton), but contains no works by any Australian china painters from the vigorous post-1960s period.⁶ Although Floy Hubble's *Protea* plates and Lois Laughton's *Grevillea* cup and saucer are often on public view in the gallery, they are only a small indication of the extent of South Australian china painting practice.

There are a number of factors contributing to the lack of serious research into Australian china painting, especially that produced in the latter half of the twentieth century. Has china

painting in South Australia been marginalised and devalued in art and social history because of a perception that it was, and still is, part of the traditional feminine domestic role? As Catherine Speck noted, feminisation of the decorative arts occurred during the mid to late Victorian era with the rise in the 'cult of domesticity', and continued when later modernism theorists such as Clement Greenberg classified domestic art/craft objects made by women as 'kitsch'.⁷ Art critics and researchers were disinclined to waste time on objects so classified.

Such experiences and contacts underpinned my preliminary research for this thesis. I discovered that the best pieces of Australian china painting are rarely sold or bequeathed to institutions but firmly kept within the family, with the result that curators of decorative arts rarely have the opportunity to view such collections. Australian work is usually on smaller pieces that will fit into a personal kiln, and done entirely by the one china painter, including raised-paste work, gilding, and firing. Moreover Australian china painting is easily overlooked as it often differs in appearance to that produced by commercial factories/potteries with associated gilders and decorators.⁸

Further difficulties for researchers are the lack of adequate background information on the few Australian china painters whose work is held in state galleries. Knowing the background of an artist enables researchers to better understand and evaluate the significance of his/her work. However china painting was produced predominantly by women whose training, careers and backgrounds has rarely been documented unless they became teachers of note. For example, in the Art Gallery of South Australia's collection, the china painting of native *Boronia* blooms by South Australian china painter Vi Johns reflected her family industry and is an historical link with how South Australian farming communities used their land.⁹ Other early South Australian china painters could well have been influenced by a family collection of decorated china. Many middle-class women such as Robert Fiveash's wife Margaret, brought their collections with them when they emigrated from England to South Australia in

the mid nineteenth century. Their daughter, china painter Rosa Fiveash, later enlarged that collection and a case study of Rosa Fiveash is included in the next chapter.

My thesis traces the fortunes of china painting in South Australia from the time of Margaret Fiveash into the beginning of the twenty-first century. My own interest in the topic stems from my long-standing practice as a china painter, my membership of several china painting organisations, and awareness that there is scant documentation and analysis of the craft.¹⁰ My research indicates that South Australian cultural values followed many nineteenth century English values, and that interest in china painting did not disappear in the twentieth century, but underwent changes. I will argue that there were three stages in the fortunes of china painting in South Australia. In the 1890s, I will show that it was first taught at the School of Design for possible industrial use. After the First World War, there was a shift in the fortunes of china painting. I argue that at the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts it then became popular in the 1920s as one of several art/craft skills taught to multi-skilled professional artists to exhibit and sell in fine art exhibitions.

Following the Second World War there was a change in many social attitudes and art/craft practices and debates, and, within that mix, I explain how china painting almost disappeared. It underwent a marked change in fortune in the mid 1960s when it was taught privately by women without formal art training and saw a dramatic revival in popularity. I will argue that china painting then became a very popular social hobby for middle-class married women, especially when Australian china painters became closely aligned with their American counterparts, and American philosophies, that categorised china painting as a fine art, and not a craft. However the Australian fine arts world did not accept china painting as fine art.

During the 1980s china painting reached the peak of its popularity in South Australia, but some teachers started to question American dominance and philosophies. The last chapters of

the thesis will explore this change in outlook and point to factors that eventually led to the battle by Australian china painters to forge their own identity.

Terminology and Parameters of Research

Brief definitions are necessary to clarify my use of the terms ‘ceramics, pottery and studio potters, and china painting.

‘**Ceramics**’ is the overall definition embracing the widest range of clay bodies of varying formulae that require firing to mature the matrix into the final fixed shape of the designed item.

‘**Pottery**’ defines a product made from natural clay earthenware available in colours ranging from buff to dark red.¹¹ ‘**Studio potters**’ is a definition applied to artistic craftspeople who either work solo in their own studio, or within a small group. They have the skills to work with their clay body of choice – often the above-mentioned natural clay pottery earthenware - and control the piece from start to finish, including the decoration. However studio potters usually prefer to decorate their hand-made wares with under-glaze enamels, coloured slips or glazes, rather than on-glaze enamels. Gladys Reynell in South Australia and the Australian Anne Dangar in France are examples of women studio potters.¹²

‘**China painting**’ is the technique of applying on-glaze enamels to the glazed and fired surface of a (usually) factory-produced piece of blank china. The term ‘decorated ceramics’ does not always indicate if the decoration is actually china painting, because the distinction between ‘under-glaze’, ‘in-glaze’ and ‘on-glaze’ painting is not always made. There is difference in techniques and colours that can be used in each of those three methods of decoration, and at times, it is difficult to tell the difference at first glance. The technique of on-glaze is also called over-glaze painting. One publication that discusses the difference is

Richard and Hilary Myers informative *William Morris Tiles*.¹³ ‘China painting’ is the term I use throughout this thesis, although when appropriate to the occasion, I will use the alternative terms of ‘on-glaze enamels’, or the current language of ‘artwork’ or merely ‘work’.

‘**China painters**’ applies to all practitioners who apply on-glaze enamels to glazed, fired, white china blanks. Confusion can arise when, from the mid 1970s onwards, many Australian china painters decided to call themselves ‘porcelain artists’ instead, hoping that the name change would bring a change in status. However it was not indicative of a fundamental change in training and practice, and in this thesis I continue to define them as china painters.

Although china painting has been practised in all Australian states, this thesis will concentrate on South Australia. There are several reasons for this. Most published accounts of the decorative arts only mention china painting briefly, or concentrate on that produced on the Eastern Seaboard. There is a lamentable scarcity of in-depth research on china painting in South Australia., and what is published is discussed later in this chapter. Moreover, that literature has been based on a comparatively small body of Australian china painting. Research for this thesis is based on a much larger sample. I also assembled my own collection of South Australian china painting, as I am well aware that much is disappearing as family estates are cleared.

During my early research, I viewed and discussed china painting with relevant curators in the major Australian Art Galleries. However I discovered a particularly rich collection in South Australia housed at the Porcelain Art Centre and assembled by china painters themselves.¹⁴ The library housed at the Centre also contains numerous records and an almost complete set of *Brush & Palette* magazines documenting various activities of china painting groups in South Australia. China painting has been far more active in South Australia than is realised.

I have also drawn on archival documents such as letters, exam results and other records from a wide variety of sources to obtain information regarding china painting practice in South Australia during the first half of the twentieth century.

My methodology is based on feminist art history. I conducted sixty-three qualitative interviews of china painters, or their descendants, from rural and city areas, predominantly in South Australia, but some in other states. Interviews were conducted in homes where I was given access to numerous personal collections. Interviewees were asked how they thought china painting fitted into women's lives; is china painting given the recognition it deserves; what they did with the work they produced; how they learnt china painting; what was their favourite iconography and further questions regarding other arts and crafts involvement. Standpoint epistemology was used to interpret some information.¹⁵ This methodology acknowledges that many china painters did indeed see that the images they painted on their china were not those accepted as legitimate fine art by the more powerful (male) artists, critics and writers of their time. Paintings of daisies and double roses on cups and saucers, or a 'Birth Plate' with storks, teddy bears and a child's birth date and weight always delighted new mothers and close friends, but not art critics.

Literature Review

Most scholarly writings on china painting locate it under the umbrella of 'decorated ceramics' and link it firmly within the areas of craft, studio potters and/or employment within the pottery industry. Cheryl Buckley in her seminal publication on potters and painters in the English pottery industry, noted that for most of the nineteenth century, gendered roles were assigned for the decoration of china. Male artists were employed as designers and master painters, while women, considered to possess gender-specific skills of producing meticulous and decorative china painting, were assigned inferior artistic status.¹⁶ Nevertheless those perceptions started to change after 1870 when women in English potteries/factories such as

Doulton, Wedgwood and Minton challenged those patriarchal working practices. They sought improved working conditions, recognition and better pay for the skilled decorative work they could do.

Their resulting successes, Buckley argues, were due to the educational opportunities available to those women in art schools such as London's Lambeth School of Art. Moreover training in china painting in an art school environment was also useful for middle-class women who wished to paint and exhibit decorated china as amateurs. Buckley noted that, from 1876, the art form was sufficiently popular for the firm of Howell and James in London to organise china painting competitions and exhibitions that were patronised by members of Royalty and judged by Royal Academicians.¹⁷ The events were open to amateur and professional china painters, including women from the Doulton studios.

The definitions of 'amateur' and 'professional' are multi-layered and controversial. Caroline Jordan, in tracing the histories of colonial women artists and the amateur tradition, points out the difficulties faced by women working as professional artists, and that some women worked discreetly as 'private professionals'.¹⁸ Jordan also discusses the complexities inherent in defining the term 'amateur'.¹⁹ She points out that, although when used negatively, it implies a superficial, 'amateurish' approach with a lack of skill, it was not necessarily a pejorative term in the nineteenth century when applied to artists of either sex. Art skills were considered a desirable 'polite accomplishment' in middle and upper-middle-class colonial society up to the last decades of the nineteenth century. Being an amateur, inferred social status and the artist painted for pleasure, whereas a 'professional artist' had a lower social standing and painted as a financial necessity.²⁰ Furthermore, she argues there were various levels of amateur category, and classified those women artists who produced art that circulated 'beyond the hearth' as 'public amateurs'.²¹ While Jordan's research focuses on that distinction, my research of predominantly the twentieth century era, where women did have

access to art school education, is showing up a different distinction, that of professional versus hobbyist. Although Jordon does not mention china painting, she describes the methods by which Colonial women artists acquired their various art skills under difficult circumstances, and the popularity of instruction books on a wide range of art practices.

My own research reveals this was the case. For those unable to attend an art school, some tuition in painting on porcelain was possible through text books, and when china painting was in its infancy in Australia, English text books would have been valued resources. Florence Lewis was a creative artist employed at Doulton in the 1870-90s and wrote a text book *China Painting* that was published in 1884.²² It contained many floral designs with full painting instructions and was used by amateur china painters in South Australia.²³

By the time of Federation in Australia, china painting was practised in various locations, and it became a popular form of art/craft for women, especially when native flora such as the waratah was promulgated by Lucien Henry with his large design 'Wall Decoration, Majolica'.²⁴ Tuition however was somewhat scattered between private teachers and a few establishments, in Sydney it was the Sydney Technical College. Peter Timms' informative publication *Australian Studio Pottery and China Painting* includes relevant historical facts on the formation and interest in Australian studio pottery with which he closely links china painting. He discusses the teaching of china painting in various ceramic courses in East Sydney Technical College and similar vocational colleges in Victoria and Brisbane, and in South Australia mentions the role played by Rosa Fiveash and Laurence Howie. However the book has the drawbacks of not investigating work produced in the latter half of the twentieth century; it tends to concentrate mostly on china painters on the Eastern Seaboard, while the biographies provide only brief information on South Australian china painters.

My research reveals that, although some china painters had links with studio pottery practices, most were not interested in making their own ceramic pieces to paint. They preferred to purchase factory-produced porcelain tiles or flat plates to china paint, frame and hang in the traditional manner of fine art paintings, believing that it was the art on the surface, and not the matrix, that was important. Such a viewpoint is one indication of the difference in outlook between some china painters and studio potters.

This perspective is commented on by Caroline Miley who researched the arts and crafts movement in Victoria 1889-1929 and noted that china painting was a popular practice there in the early twentieth century and was one of the contributions women made to the arts and crafts movement in Victoria. Although Miley's references throughout her book to china painting are relatively minimal, she does observe that 'Arts and Crafts tendencies are difficult to discern in china painting, due to the fact that in the vast majority of cases it is exactly that – painting applied to china rather than canvas'.²⁵ She argues that, despite the fact that the Arts and Crafts movement in Australia was thought to be but a pale imitation of the British movement, Australian art and craft practitioners adapted British ideas to suit their own regional developments because of various subtle differences in leadership and social, economic and political circumstances.²⁶

A scholarly publication that surveys crafts, of which china painting is a minor category, is Grace Cochrane's *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History*, published during her time as a curator in the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.²⁷ Cochrane refers to some china painters, predominantly those on the Eastern Seaboard, but she mentions the role of H. P. Gill and L. H. Howie in establishing china painting classes in Adelaide at the School of Design. My research reveals their influence in producing several key china painters such as Rosa Fiveash, Gladys Good and Lois Carne (nee Laughton). I include a case study of Howie in my thesis.

Like Miley, Cochrane was aware of the loss of documentation of Australian craft, stating in her introduction, 'In our world, what is not documented does not exist'.²⁸ Such a statement implies the value of further research and documentation before yet more valuable and useful records are lost.

The greater part of that research, however, has been of china painting in other parts of Australia. For instance Deborah Edwards, a Curator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, in her catalogue *Australian Decorative Arts*, produced in 1991 to accompany the exhibition of the same name, includes well-researched articles on the collecting policies of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.²⁹ Information on sixteen Australian china painters whose work is in that Gallery's collection is also included, but no mention is made of china painting practices in South Australia.³⁰

In *Heritage: The National Women's Art Book*, editor Joan Kerr explains that women artists have been active and visible in the fine arts, community and domestic arts, and her publication includes a wide variety of artwork from all those areas. She places biographies of a number of the better-known Australian china painters in several different sections such as 'Flora and Fauna', 'Nationalism & Heritage', but there is little mention of china painting practices in South Australia. Noris Ioannou, in his treatise on the history of ceramics in South Australia, includes both the earlier history of china painting in South Australia and the 1960s revival within a chapter that investigates the search for suitable clay for porcelain manufacture in South Australia. However his research examined china painting practice only up to 1986, and his 'Post-War Revival' section is not an in-depth study of this contemporary period.³¹

In my research, I found the 1960s revival and the following decades to be a remarkably active and complex period for Australian china painting, with much networking between china painters in all Australian states with those in England and Europe, but especially with those in

America. I found that most Australian women who took up china painting in this period had a different educational background to the china painters of the 1920-30s. I will argue that this difference in education and training was a contributing reason as to why so many of the post-1960s china painters took it up as a hobby with an overwhelming penchant for copying pretty studies.

Cochrane examined cultural attitudes towards the arts and crafts movements and discussed how crafts practitioners of the late sixties and early seventies expressed dissatisfactions at systems that seemed to reinforce patriarchal and class-based ideologies.³² The craft revival during that period was a time when craft competed with art as a high art form. She noted some international influences on art and craft in Australia and the formation of an International Crafts Network.

In the 1970s the Australian Council for the Arts set up a Committee of Enquiry into the Crafts, however china painting received scant attention in reported results of the Craft Council's initiatives.³³ This could be due to a lack of response to Craft Council questionnaires sent to some china painters. As I will show in my thesis, most china painters of the 1970-80s insisted that their work was not craft, but fine art and consequently refused to be associated with the word 'craft', believing that this demeaned the status of china painting. They called their practice 'porcelain art' instead. Australian china painters, however, were influenced by their own International Network, and I will argue that the Australian china painters' belief that their work was fine art, was influenced by American trends.

In the post World War II revival, American china painting was practised predominantly by white middle-class married women to whom it was a serious hobby. These china painters were charming, entrepreneurial, outspoken women, who profoundly influenced their Australian counterparts to adopt their American philosophies. I will show how those American china painters venerated and copied the work of their late nineteenth century

immigrant German china painters and teachers such as Leykauf and Aulich, especially in the paintings of double pink roses, and they transmitted this perspective to influential Australian china painters. This fetish for copying conservative art of the nineteenth century turned china painting into a comfortable social hobby and as I argue in this thesis, towards the end of the twentieth century it was a contributing factor that held back the push for an Australian identity in china painting, and contributed to the low status of china painting in the eyes of the Australian fine arts community.

Insight into the importance of hobbies and the role they played in productive leisure within American life from the 1880s to the 1960s, is examined by Steven Gelber in his publication *Hobbies*. He notes that hobbies were an important component of leisure activities for men and women in the 1950-60s, but tended to have a gender dimension, with men enjoying ‘do it yourself’ home repair and maintenance, while women decorated the house with sewing, painting and crafts.³⁴ He defines work as paid productive employment performed predominantly outside the home, although he also includes as ‘work’ such activities as were necessary for life maintenance whether personal, family or home care. He then defines ‘leisure’ as the opposite of work, namely pleasurable free time in which a person could choose to undertake whatever activity he/she wished.³⁵ I adopt a more liberal definition of ‘work’ within my thesis, using it to cover an activity with a tangible result whether remunerative or not, for example volunteering for charity, or producing china painting whether to exhibit, gift, use, or to teach for a fee. Gelber points out that, since the 1880s the ‘Protestant Leisure Ethic’ in America encouraged people to engage in productive leisure to avoid idleness and destructive pastimes. He notes that one popular way of engaging in productive leisure was to have a pleasurable, socially acceptable hobby which developed specialised skills that rewarded perseverance and integrated people into similar groups within their social culture, and could lead to ‘serious leisure’ where their achievements could be measured.³⁶

I will show that, following the 1960s revival of china painting, making the hobby pay was not the real purpose and the social ritual was important in setting the price, for example, when the work was sold through church activities or for charity. This was applicable to the majority of 1960-90s china painters in South Australia and is another indication that their level of engagement was that of a conservative, feminine, caring role rather than that of serious artists seeking to exhibit and make a name within the more prestigious societies of the time such as the Royal South Australian Society of Art. Teachers such as Necia Birch and Valda Ellis, who led the revival, often used their china painting skills to assist charities, either by giving pieces of hand painted china to raffle for church funds, donating a percentage of china painting exhibition sales to nominated charities, or occasionally providing free tuition to disadvantaged people. They did not exhibit in fine art exhibitions.

Women who did not have to support the family financially by entering regular paid employment outside the home were generally sheltered from the 'rough and tumble' of the economic world. Nevertheless, as Gelber points out, many still replicated work-place values through their serious hobby activities, albeit in a gender-modified way, and at times they attempted to make their hobby pay.³⁷ In the last chapters of my thesis I will show that this indeed was the case with many activities of members of the International China Painting Teachers Organization in America in the 1970s onwards, and that the Australian members followed suit with their subsequent Exhibitions and Conventions in Australia. Fund-raising fees were charged to attend each one-hour speech or demonstration, although it was usually a voluntary service by the speaker/demonstrator.

Although the primary purpose of a hobby was represented as the productive, enjoyable use of leisure time without an aim to make money, after World War Two and the rise of consumerism, some commoditisation of hobbies did occur. As I will show in my thesis, a few entrepreneurial women in South Australia and other states, started china painting supply

shops with attached studios in which classes and demonstrations by visiting teachers took place. Making money at home was popular with women who did not have a professional career qualification or other adequate training to gain outside employment after marriage. For a decade or so, some china painting teachers in Australia, as in America, covered their expenses and made a profit. Gelber comments that, in the post World War Two hobby revival, the belief developed that hobbies could indeed make a profit providing that was not their main purpose. Moreover 'the insidious influence of profit evaporated so completely that the phrase "for fun and profit" became an advertising cliché'.³⁸ In 1963 the American Ruth Little wrote *Painting China for Pleasure and Profit* which became immensely popular with Australian china painters and some South Australian teachers also followed her example and published instruction books.

But were there any books on china painting published in Australia that were not instruction books? Between 1984 and 1988 Australian china painter Tricia Bradford, who was a member of the Australian Commonwealth Territory Porcelain Artists' Association, published four books on Australian china painting. The titles, such as *Australian Porcelain A Fine Art*, reflect the American belief that calling their work 'porcelain art' instead of china painting, will increase its acceptance by the fine arts world as an art form and not a craft.³⁹ The book titles also give the impression of some research and analysis of china painting produced.

However all four publications were merely instructional texts consisting in a series of lessons by individual teachers on a different aspect of technique or subject matter. A brief article on each teacher with photographs of her own work is included with her lesson, although the articles appear to be the work of each contributor herself, with little editorial guidance. The photographs are interesting for what they reveal about the practice of china painting in the 1970-80s and the originality – or lack of - in the work produced by women who were some of the leading china painting teachers of the day. Most china painting of those years appears to

have been composed of copies from photographs or re-arranging components of illustrations in magazines, or painting flowers such as double roses by rote. My research reveals that the few who produced really original work were art school graduates. Nevertheless, the reader needs to be reminded that Bradford's books show the high technical standards achieved by Australian china painters by the 1980s and the wide range of products and techniques that became available in the 1970-80s. Bradford's books also show the diversity of images taken from various cultures such as Chinese, and various European countries, which reflect the networking of Australian teachers with other countries and the influences of china painting magazines. These issues will be addressed in the final chapters of this thesis. The conclusion to the thesis will postulate future directions for Australian china painting in the twenty-first century or if we are witnessing the final stages of this art/craft practice that has been of particular interest to so many women.

Art Historians may well ask how and why has the practice of china painting in South Australia survived from the Colonial period to the first decade of the twenty-first century? There has been minimal previous attention paid to those questions, which underpin much of my research into china painting and will be explored in my thesis. I will argue that the education of women, has been a key element in the shift of the fortunes of china painting in this state.

¹ 'Art-Work For Women', *Art Journal*, in 1872. Cited in Cheryl Buckley, *Potters and Paintresses; Women Designers in the Pottery Industry 1870-1955*, The Women's Press, London, 1990, p. 50.

² William Morris, 'Art and the beauty of the Earth', lecture at Burslem. Cited in Bevis Hillier, *Pottery and Porcelain 1700-1914*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1968, p. 263.

³ Christopher Menz, *Australian Decorative Arts: 1820s-1990s: Art Gallery of South Australia*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, 1996, pp. 67, 68 provide details of Bilton's piece. It was gifted by George Brookman 1899.

⁴ Hillier, pp. 294-5.

⁵ The bequest was made early in the twentieth century. The author inspected this collection, by courtesy Dr Grace Cochrane, at the Powerhouse Museum, 21 July 2003.

⁶ The author has viewed china painting by the South Australian artists Lois Carne (nee Laughton), Nora Godlee, Gladys Good, Maude Gum, Floy Hubble, Vi Johns, Mamie Venner, Lorna Moore (nee Woolcock), and (recently) Laurence Howie, in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia.

⁷ Catherine Speck, 'Issues in the Decorative Arts', lecture presented in the postgraduate course 'Decorative Arts and Design', University of Adelaide, October 2007.

⁸ Some Australian china painters such as Lulu Shorter and Ellis Rowan had their designs painted in English potteries, but that is not the same as the artists themselves doing their own china painting in Australia.

- ⁹ The author's family property was adjacent to the John's family property at Houghton. Johns studied at the School of Arts and Crafts in the 1920s.
- ¹⁰ I have been a member of the International Porcelain Art Teachers Inc., Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers NSW Region, and the South Australian China Painters' Association.
- ¹¹ John B. Kenny, *The Complete Book of Pottery Making*. Pitman & Sons, London, 1962, p. 7.
- ¹² Peter Timms, *Australian Studio Pottery and China Painting*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 99-108.
- ¹³ Richard and Hilary Myers, *William Morris Tiles*, Richard Dennis, Somerset, England, 1996, pp. 12-14.
- ¹⁴ The Porcelain Art Centre has shifted location several times, but in 2008 is in the Buttery Reserve, Norwood, SA. It is not normally open to the public unless members of the South Australian China Painters Association or the Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers are in the clubrooms. The address is PO Box 3381, Norwood, SA 5067.
- ¹⁵ Standpoint epistemology starts with the assumption that the less-powerful group in a society have the potential to observe the beliefs and practices of the more powerful group above them, at the same time being conscious of the different realities manifest within their own subordinate group. The subordinate group has 'double vision', thus becoming more knowledgeable and better able to negotiate the social order, although some members might need training to develop that vision. Ref. Joyce McCarl Nielsen. (ed) *Feminist Research Methods: Exemplary Readings in the Social Sciences*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1990, pp. 10, 11.
- ¹⁶ Cheryl Buckley, *Potters and Paintresses: Women Designers in the Pottery Industry 1870-1955*, The Women's Press, London, 1990, pp. 1-3.
- ¹⁷ Buckley, p. 63.
- ¹⁸ 'Caroline Jordan, *Picturesque Pursuits: Colonial Women Artists & the Amateur Tradition*, Melbourne University press, 2005, pp. 124-5. Although Jordan's writing is focussed more on the early rather than the last decades of the 19th century, her comments on professionalism have some relevance to mid 19th century South Australian culture.
- ¹⁹ Caroline Jordan, 'No – Man's Land?', *Art and Australia*, vol. 32, no. 3, 1995, pp. 358, 360.
- ²⁰ Jordan, *Picturesque Pursuits: Colonial Women Artists & the Amateur Tradition*, 'Amateurs and Amateurism' pp. 178-186.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 112.
- ²² Buckley, pp. 62, 63.
- ²³ Florence Lewis, *China Painting*, Cassell, London 1884 second edition. This book is now in the library of the Porcelain Art Centre, Norwood.
- ²⁴ Ann Stephen (ed.), *Visions of a Republic: The Work of Lucien Henry*, Powerhouse Publishing, Sydney, 2001, p. 175.
- ²⁵ Caroline Miley, *The Arts Among the Handicrafts. The Arts and Crafts Movement in Victoria 1889-1929*. St. Lawrence Press, Melbourne, 2001, p. 116.
- ²⁶ Miley, p. 10.
- ²⁷ Grace Cochrane, *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History*. New South Wales University Press, Kensington, NSW Australia, 1992, p. xiii. At that time Cochrane was the curator of contemporary Australian decorative arts and design at the Powerhouse Museum of Sydney's Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xv.
- ²⁹ A research article by Alisa de Torres was also included in this publication.
- ³⁰ Deborah Edwards, *Australian Decorative Arts, The Trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1991*. Not to be confused with John McPhee, *Australian Decorative Arts*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, 1982, which does not contain very much information on china painting.
- ³¹ Noris Ioannou, *Ceramics in South Australia 1836 -1986; From Folk to Studio Pottery*, Wakefield Press, 1986, p. 295.
- ³² Cochrane, p. 313.
- ³³ Cochrane, in chapters 6, 7 provides considerable information on the Crafts in Australia and the Crafts Councils from 1973 into the 1990s, but china painting practices are not mentioned.
- ³⁴ Steven M. Gelber, *Hobbies: leisure and the culture of work in America*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1999. pp. 282, 283, 298. Although various American hobby publications encouraged women to use power tools for 'do it yourself' home hobbies, women remained limited participants in such activities, preferring instead more traditionally feminine hobbies.
- ³⁵ Gelber, p. 7
- ³⁶ Gelber, 11.
- ³⁷ Gelber, p. 5.
- ³⁸ Gelber, p. 54.
- ³⁹ See the Bibliography for full details. *Australian Porcelain: A Fine Art* was published in 1986.

Introduction

Artist Miss Rosa Catherine Fiveash (1854-1938) is an important link in the history of china painting in South Australia.¹ In 1894 she was the first teacher of china painting in the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art in Adelaide, when the emphasis was on training artisans for possible industrial employment.² In this chapter I will show that in order to gain such a teaching position in the School, Fiveash was one of the South Australian women in the 1880-90s to take advantage of the widening opportunities in the State for women to gain qualifications to fit them for a professional career.³

The necessity for providing improved educational opportunities for women and children was publicly debated in South Australia in the 1870s and was an issue tackled by the prominent and outspoken Catherine Helen Spence (1825-1910), who, like Fiveash, never married. Spence was aware of the problems of financially disadvantaged women seeking to establish respectable, remunerative careers to support themselves and perhaps some dependents. I will discuss some background issues behind the push for better education for women during the 1870s in South Australia. Not only did a better education for women result in some becoming graduates of the University of Adelaide in the 1880s, but I will also explain the role of the then School of Design and the School of Painting in providing structured, formal educational programs for students. The result was anticipated to provide a pool of multi-skilled students available for industrial employment.

In 1881-82 the Board of Governors of the South Australian Institute restructured the former art school and appointed Harry Pelling Gill (1855-1916) as Master of the School of Design and Louis Tannert as Master of the School of Painting.⁴ Tannert was already teaching within the School when Gill arrived. I will show that both Masters agreed on the introduction of

Certification for graduates of the Schools of Art, which led to a professional art teaching career for some students. Gill's agenda was to implement various courses of instruction in the School of Design that would enable industry and manufacturers to become more competitive against interstate and overseas markets.⁵ He strongly believed in the value of training students in drawing and design skills to improve the standards of manufactured products.

The pottery industry in South Australia was one of several areas in which Gill believed he could achieve results of benefit to South Australia. I will argue that his introduction of china painting into the curriculum of the School of Design in 1894 was one of the steps he took to further decoration and design skills within the ceramics industry. In this, the School of Design would be following a precedent set by several English art and design schools and I will show that this fact was recognised in South Australia. I will point out that the expertise of Fiveash was essential to the introduction of the School's china painting classes. Furthermore, as I explain, by exhibiting china painting in the 1895 Chamber of Manufacturers and Industry Exhibition in Adelaide, the School of Design gained good publicity and an increase in enrolments in the class.⁶ However enrolments dropped dramatically in 1896 and classes were discontinued. I argue that this was due to a depressed economic situation in South Australia, exacerbated by the prolonged drought in the 1890s.

I will then point out how the imagery that Fiveash used within her art practice, including her china painting, reflected the increasing Nationalistic fervour in the 1890s to develop Australian-ness. It was a time when Federation issues were publicly discussed and Australian women became increasingly confident and visible in public. Fiveash used her art teacher's qualification to further her professional career to include the areas of teaching, exhibiting, and working as a botanical illustrator.

Although Fiveash's china painting classes in the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art ceased at the end of 1896, the practice continued through several private studios in Adelaide and classes were re-started, under other teachers, in the School in the first decade of the twentieth century. By that time, as I will show, Fiveash's increasing involvement with commissioned scientific illustrations left her with little time for other artistic pursuits. By the 1920-30s she was out of step with 'modern' artists and did not diversify her style of painting. However, as I argue in the conclusion to this chapter, public interest in Fiveash's work waned towards the end of her life and few examples of her work, either china painting or botanical illustration, have survived outside institutional collections.

Early Art Influences in Rosa Fiveash's Life

Rosa Fiveash's early childhood was spent in a South Australian middle-class environment in Adelaide. She was born on 23 July 1854, the youngest child and one of the two daughters who grew up in the 'financially comfortable' but not wealthy, middle-class Fiveash family.⁷ Her father Robert Fiveash, had sufficient financial resources to take his wife Margaret and children on a visit to England in 1857, and in 1859 after they returned, purchased a home 'Gable House' in Ward Street, North Adelaide.⁸ The home contained antiques, original paintings and a collection of English and Oriental china, much of it hand-decorated, that showed the artistic tastes of the family and knowledge of traditional English and Oriental decorated ceramics.⁹

Some of the Fiveash china collection had been handed down through the female line of the family, and had particular sentimental as well as monetary value. The knowledge that Fiveash gained during her childhood regarding the provenance of the family's china collection influenced her agenda during her trip in 1900 to England, where she visited the

Royal Worcester Porcelain Museum and also added new purchases to her collection when travelling on the continent during the same trip.¹⁰ Bevis Hillier, writing on the social history of the decorative arts, pointed out that collecting china was a popular pastime for women in England in the late nineteenth century and that most drawing rooms had a china cabinet.¹¹ Moreover, in examining the issues and ideas of women aspiring for recognition of their artistic abilities in Victorian England, Pamela Gerrish Nunn quoted from an 1872 article, ‘there is perhaps no branch of art work more perfectly womanly and in every way desirable than painting on china’.¹² Decorating the home tastefully was an acceptable feminine pursuit, while the drawing room became a suitable area in which women entertained and displayed or practised their ‘polite accomplishments’ albeit to a restricted circle of their social peers.¹³

Middle-class girls were schooled in the ‘polite accomplishments’ of reading, drawing, music, dancing, and embroidery by either a governess or at small private schools for young ladies. Caroline Jordan, when discussing early colonial women artists, considered such an education to be more ‘ornamental’ than practical.¹⁴ Furthermore, drawings and paintings of flowers and ‘nature’ were viewed as acceptably female pursuits.¹⁵ Catherine Speck, in reviewing Jordan’s work on public and private amateur artists, commented that drawing had always been on the menu of a middle to upper-middle class young woman’s education, but then queried ‘how did amateur women artists learn to draw at home?’¹⁶ Speck pointed out that drawing manuals were available for home instruction, and private tutors who came and went tended to have different teaching styles.

Fiveash’s first schooling was by a private governess at home in ‘Gable House’. Her governess, and also older sister Mary Emily Fiveash, encouraged her to draw, and just before her eleventh birthday Fiveash won an art prize in June 1865 at the Society of Arts.¹⁷ Learning

to paint by copying the work of others was a common art practice of the nineteenth century and Fiveash developed her eye for meticulous detail by copying artwork such as ships with painstakingly fine work in the rigging.¹⁸ Annie Benham, noted for her bird paintings, has been credited with providing Fiveash with her initial instruction in painting and fostering an interest in painting birds.¹⁹ Copying, either from drawing manuals or from a demonstration by the teacher, applied to boys as well as girls but, as Jordan pointed out, ‘although copying on its own was considered a fairly lowly achievement, often associated with the ‘lesser’ talents of amateur women artists, it formed the basis of all advanced academic training’.²⁰

The untimely death of Robert Fiveash in 1872, when Fiveash was eighteen years of age, necessitated a change in her attitude to art. The family fortunes suffered a decline, although the two Fiveash sisters and their mother continued to live quietly together in the family home.²¹ Art had been an enjoyable subject to study and an absorbing pastime as a teenager, but teaching art became a financial necessity. Moreover accepting a few pupils into the artist’s home studio, or acting as visiting art teacher or governess in the pupil’s home, was an acceptable role for a middle-class young lady to earn some income. Fiveash put her accomplishments to practical use and taught a small number of pupils during the late 1870s.²² Advertisements in South Australian newspapers during the 1870s showed there was a demand for governesses to teach a variety of subjects, including drawing.

In South Australia during the last decades of the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of women were seeking access to a better education and to establish professional careers for themselves, as doctors, scientists, lawyers, teachers and artists.²³ Women artists who taught in the South Australian School of Art during 1888-1968 shaped their professional and social lives with a focus on how they included full or part-time teaching as part of their careers and challenged standard assumptions regarding professionalism and career paths. The flip side of

the professional artist was *the amateur* and being considered an amateur artist in the first half of the nineteenth century was an indication of a woman's respectability and gentility. Although in England by the latter half of the nineteenth century women could enter art schools and gain qualifications that placed them on the road to professionalism, in the 1870s in South Australia there was not yet an established art school that provided formal qualifications. Women artists seeking professional careers might indeed sell some of their work, but for a meagre profit only, whereas teaching art, albeit without formal qualifications, was the most reliable way to earn some income.

But where did they teach? One solution was to teach art in a room set aside in their homes.²⁴ By the last decades of the nineteenth century, it was a respectable act of professionalism for a female artist to have a home studio and Fiveash had a room set aside as a studio at the back of 'Gable House'.²⁵ Other women artists in South Australia such as the Hambidge sisters, who were contemporaries of Fiveash, also had a large room in their home set up as a studio.²⁶ Part-time teaching of drawing in private schools was also another aspect of professional employment for women artists as it was for other visiting professionals who might specialise in music, languages or mathematics.

Nevertheless in the 1870s women were not yet on the art teaching staff of the influential South Australian Institute that offered afternoon and evening classes for drawing, painting and modelling. The Institute's art classes were taught by Art Master Mr. C. Hill, under the direction of the South Australian Society of Arts.²⁷ However the emerging groundswell of opinion advocating political rights and wider educational opportunities that could lead to a diversity of career opportunities for women, was indicated by articles that appeared in South Australian newspapers.

Background to Training Women for Suitable Professional Careers

In 1874 a lengthy article in the *Register* argued for the necessity of a change in female education, stating that:

With the growth of that feeling in favour of conferring equal political rights upon the two sexes, which constitutes one of the most noteworthy facts in the history of modern times, must necessarily be associated a lively sense of the necessity for a radical change in the system of female education which at present obtain ... and add to those lighter accomplishments, which so eminently qualify them to adorn the social circle, attainments of a more solid and practical manner ... the flimsy course with which females were at one time obliged to rest content, but much still remains to be accomplished before girls are placed in a position to compete fairly in the educational field with scholars of the opposite sex.²⁸

In the same article readers were further advised that a better education for women would not only enable them in the ‘proper discharge of their electoral possibilities’, but a good education would produce good teachers and ‘wives and mothers competent to train their children to be good and useful citizens’. The author of the article upheld the Victorian value by adding ‘we hold it to be seemly and right that the sexes should in actual life keep to their own separate spheres’, but admitted that much prejudice existed that needlessly limited women’s sphere.²⁹

The prejudices alluded to that limited women’s sphere outside the home were an aspect of ‘The Woman Question’ increasingly aired in public in England and Australia. Suffragists pushed for the right of women to vote and to lead fuller and more public lives. Education was perceived to be a key issue and of particular importance for women who desired to work in a chosen remunerative profession in a wide range of fields, such as teaching, politics, medicine, science or art. In South Australia, Catherine Helen Spence established her reputation as a champion of a wide range of issues that affected women and children.³⁰ She was an effective journalist and writer who advocated improved public education for all children and better remuneration and training for women who taught privately or in schools.³¹ Spence wrote in her autobiography:

In the seventies the old education system, or want of a system, was broken up, and a complete department of public instruction was constructed ... I hoped that the instruction of the children

of the people would attract the poor gentlewomen who were so badly paid as governesses in families or in schools³²

Articles in newspapers and journals affected public opinion and her writing published in the *Register* enabled Spence to express her opinions on a number of issues, especially those on the education of women. Not all her articles appeared under her name; some were anonymous and for one lengthy article ‘Some Social Aspects of Early Colonial Life’ Spence wrote under the pseudonym ‘a colonist of 1839’.³³ In it she firmly stated:

If a woman has a genius for art or for literature, or perseverance and industry to qualify herself for a profession, she must depute to others those domestic duties which she has not time to discharge, but her intelligence will make her a better organiser, and will enable her to exercise more effective control over her subordinates than if she spend her time in the frivolities of dress and visiting or the whirl of dissipation.³⁴

Deputising domestic duties was well within the role of middle-class women in the Victorian family, when financial support and social standing came from a husband or father and servants were available. However, not all middle-class women married or were adequately supported financially by male members of the family throughout their life, and it was not easy to organise domestic responsibilities concurrent with establishing a respectable remunerative employment. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, Australian society contained many single women, although in South Australia at least, there was no shortage of potential husbands.³⁵ Examining the reasons why women remained single, and why the birthrate fell in the late nineteenth century, Alison Mackinnon stated that, ‘some women were remaining single through choice rather than lack of opportunity’ and that such women were ‘reassessing marriage and motherhood as merely options among a range of other possibilities’.³⁶ Mackinnon argued that it was a choice between love and freedom. This was indeed the case with Spence, who chose to remain single, wished to become financially independent and not defer to a husband, as she clearly stated:

It is always supposed that thoughts of love and marriage are the chief concerns in a girl’s life, but it was not the case with me. I had only two offers of marriage in my life, and I refused both.³⁷

Spence commented somewhat humorously that, in her time, people married young if they married at all, and at 30 years of age, maiden aunts put on caps to signal they accepted their fate. She also summed up her decision to remain single by stating, ‘although I often envy my friends the happiness they find in their children, I have never envied them their husbands.’³⁸ However for many women the decision to remain single necessitated careful financial planning. Although legacies might be left to single women by parents or relatives, earning extra income was often necessary, especially if the single woman had an elderly widowed mother or close family to care for, as was the case with Spence. In these instances, one woman shouldered the bulk of domestic duties to allow the other woman freedom to pursue a remunerative career. Spence was helped in the home by a live-in companion as well as close family members. Fiveash remained single, while her sister Mary took over domestic duties.

Middle-class women in straightened circumstances who sought some forms of income were often restricted by gender ideology as to what was deemed respectable employment. Spence’s father died in 1846 and Spence chose to pursue a career in writing, hoping to earn some income from her efforts. As Susan Magarey pointed out, a novel was an acceptable form of writing whereby a woman could become publicly visible in the 1840s and Spence’s first novel *Clara Morrison* was published in 1854.³⁹ Of more useful financial benefit was Spence’s foray into journalism, but as Magarey pointed out, a ‘lady journalist’ was a contradiction in terms. A daily press newshound was not considered an acceptable occupation for a lady. Women could occasionally submit items by using only their initials or a pseudonym, as Spence did for her early writing for newspapers.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, by 1878 Spence was offered employment on the literary pages of the *Register*, and was delighted to accept, as it enabled her to earn regular income through her pen. Such writing did not require her to work amidst male staff in the newspaper offices, thus her employment was more

acceptable. Instead, writing could be done in her own separate study at home, and as with women artists' home studios, it was a mark of 'private professionalism'.

Nonetheless, for most young middle-class women during the Victorian era, their expected role was a comfortable life of marriage, domesticity and caring for husband and children. To fit them for this life, their traditional schooling was based on the English model that tended to emphasise 'genteel accomplishments' of music, needlework, languages and drawing. Middle-class women aspired to be viewed as a 'lady' but as Judith Godden noted, the status of 'lady' was never quite secure in Australian mid to late Victorian Society.⁴¹ Should a middle-class woman need to seek remunerative employment, there were acceptable mores regarding the type of work she could undertake without losing too much status. The concept of what was acceptable work changed as women received better education, and more single women entered the workforce in areas such as nursing. Nevertheless, teaching remained a popular and acceptable way for single, middle-class women to earn some income.

Numerous advertisements were inserted in Adelaide newspapers by women who ran small schools that offered traditional genteel subjects.⁴² In 1869 an indication of coming educational trends was shown when Miss West advertised 'Educational Classes' for ladies in a house that she had taken in North Adelaide and offered, in addition to the conventional Victorian era accomplishments of drawing, music, languages, singing and dancing, other classes in 'the Higher Branches of an English Education, comprising Mathematics, Natural History, Botany, Geology and use of the Globes'.⁴³ At that time, it was not mandatory for teachers to have qualifications, so there is no way of ascertaining the standard of teaching in Miss West's higher educational subjects.

Visible employment within commercial industry was debatable and could lead to loss of social status for middle-class women. Nevertheless Cheryl Buckley noted that during the last quarter of the nineteenth century it became increasingly acceptable in the English pottery industry for example, for middle-class women with formal arts school training to gain employment in the more prestigious areas of pottresses and designers.⁴⁴ Buckley commented that 'their status, either amateur or professional was important, as was status of their designs, which depended on whether they were signed', as one of the often complex and sometimes contradictory factors that shaped the attitudes to middle-class women seeking paid employment in England. Buckley pointed out that higher status was accorded to women who trained in art and design as a career option rather than art as a lady's accomplishment.⁴⁵ In Adelaide during the late 1870s the necessity for girls to receive a wider, more formalised education, rather than mere accomplishments, was subject to increasing attention and Rosa Fiveash would have been aware of this trend.

In 1879 the House of Assembly in the South Australian Parliament hotly debated the establishment of an Advanced School for Girls where it was proposed that education in mathematics and sciences should be available to qualify the girls for possible tertiary education.⁴⁶ Mackinnon examined the proposals for this Advanced School and noted the fact that, while a few select private schools in Adelaide offered a good secondary education for boys, no equivalent facility was available for girls.⁴⁷ She believed it to be due to the past emphasis on 'the accomplishments' in girls' schools and also changing attitudes in the 1870s on the benefits of a more academic education for girls.⁴⁸ Mackinnon's research revealed that many students of the Advanced School for Girls valued their education and later pursued professional careers such as nursing, medicine or teaching children, that were indeed associated with acceptable feminine Victorian roles of caring for others or teaching. Such an education enabled middle-class women to enter the public domain and navigate a path

towards a remunerative professional career, although Mackinnon maintained that it divided women along class lines by allowing some influential professional women to dictate acceptable modes of behaviour to working-class women.⁴⁹

During the debate on the Advanced School for Girls, some male parliamentarians disapproved of girls being educated above their station in life. Parliamentarian Mr. Downer commented that ‘girls who would normally be respectable servants would be absolutely unfit for menial duties’ and that it was stupid to give ‘higher education to people who had no business with it’.⁵⁰ Within a few days of the debate, Catherine Spence wrote a spirited reply in the *Register* in defence of the necessity of better education for girls. Spence pointed out the opportunities that existed for good education for boys in Adelaide but argued that:

The old idea was to provide for the boys, and they by marriage would provide for the girls. Times have changed, and public feeling now runs counter to this one-sided application of funds ... [there are] the urgent needs of the great middle class ... for substantially good education for their daughters at a reasonable price ... I hope that the art of drawing, which is useful in so many departments of industry, will also cultivate that love of beauty and of the picturesque which adds to the happiness of life both to rich and poor.⁵¹

Such words in a popular South Australian newspaper indicated changing social mores. To teach drawing privately to other young ladies as did Annie Benham, and without formal qualifications, was socially acceptable to Fiveash, but a formal qualification in drawing and painting would open wider doors of opportunity including financial remuneration.⁵² Moreover by 1879 precedent had been established for middle-class women with formal art qualifications to gain employment as pottresses within the pottery industry in England.⁵³ Fiveash was perspicacious, single and ambitious. Although she was then 27 years of age, in October 1881 she enrolled in the newly established School of Painting under the Master, Louis Tannert at the South Australian Institute, Adelaide. She was determined to work hard and do well. Benham also enrolled at the same time.⁵⁴

Training in the Schools of Art in South Australia

Tannert was appointed Master of the School of Painting and in his report to the Board of Governors of the South Australian Institute, advised that he commenced the 'Academie of Art' on 10 October 1881.⁵⁵ In a later report on progress made during that quarter he mentioned that pupils Miss Benham, Miss Hambidge and Miss Fiveash all attended frequently during the December 1881 and January 1882 holidays. The fact that South Australian women, including some who were already teaching, were serious and keen to undergo formal art training was indicated in that same report by Tannert's remarks that:

Very satisfactory however is my report on the female students, they show almost without exception, great zeal and make the best use of their time and mine. Yes, I must even say that amongst them some fine talents are developing who justify me to expect the best results. – In contrast to the young men they are modest and receive thankfully every advice ... among them are a number of teachers who notwithstanding their age show the others a good example. It seems to me that whilst in Europe the Art is the earnest work of men, here in South Australia the future generation will attain the finer sense for art and good taste only in an indirect way through the female influence/their mothers.⁵⁶

Somewhat to Tannert's consternation, Harry Pelling Gill arrived to take classes in 1882.⁵⁷ He was fresh from the School of Science and Art, South Kensington, London and was also engaged as an Art Master for the Adelaide School organised by the Governors of the South Australian Institute. Tannert was then designated Master of the School of Painting and Gill the Master of the School of Design. Nevertheless, Tannert and Gill worked together on many issues and by November 1882 both signed a request to the Board of Governors that certificates be granted to 'students who have passed through the art schools'.⁵⁸ Furthermore in 1883 the Masters put a joint proposal to the Board of Governors for a scheme for examinations.⁵⁹ In January 1883, following reports from Tannert and Gill, First Class Certificates were awarded to nine female students and two male students. Rosa Fiveash's name topped the list, which also included Florence Kay, Lizzie Armstrong, Ellen Hinde, and Helen Hambidge.⁶⁰

By 1887 Gill and Tannert jointly made further recommendations regarding the future of the schools to the Fine Arts Committee of the Board of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of South Australia.⁶¹ (See Appendix 2.) The two Masters proposed that students be divided into two groups: Elementary and Advanced. Students would be first admitted into the Elementary grade and have to pass examinations in a wide range of drawing skills and geometry, before being able to enter the Schools of Painting and Design. The Masters also suggested that the Board set aside an annual sum of money for prizes. The proposed changes were in place by the time the 1888 Prospectus for the South Australian Art Schools was printed.⁶² (See Appendix 3.)

Details of courses of study within the School of Painting in the 1888 prospectus indicate that work produced was predominantly original and not copied from prints. Fiveash had, when young, learnt by closely copying the art of others, and such a system of instruction by copying from prints and drawings was noted by Marissa Young as a common method of art and design education under the South Kensington system.⁶³ The 1888 Art Schools Prospectus indicates that, nevertheless, under Tannert in the 1888 painting classes, the only instance where copying was stated was in the landscape class where the work was to be ‘Landscape from Copies and from Nature’. However some restrictions were placed on copying and only competent students under Tannert were allowed to copy original paintings owned by the Art Gallery.⁶⁴ Tannert encouraged originality, a fact noted in a critical review of an 1885 Exhibition, where the reviewer wrote:

One of the most marked characteristics ... is their originality. Out of twenty-six paintings, ranging over a variety of subjects, there are only three or four copies, the others are studies from nature or original designs according to their character. It has always been a strong point in the system of the Master of the School of Painting to teach his pupils the value of faithfully reproducing objects of nature as they actually are, the pupil using his or her own judgement in the arrangement.⁶⁵

Nevertheless the ‘originality’ so favoured by many in South Australian art of the 1880s was deemed to be faithfully copying nature, and this was firmly taught in the School of Painting.⁶⁶

Realism was popular in paintings during the Victorian era.⁶⁷ Such a doctrine that defined Fine Art as closely copying nature, remained firmly entrenched in Rosa Fiveash's mind throughout her life, and was why, as will be explained, she became a noted botanical artist.

The 1888 Prospectus showed that the School of Design provided training in skills useful in a wide range of industries, including architecture, building construction and machine construction.⁶⁸ There was also a range of design classes that would be useful for future art teachers and also for students wishing to pursue careers in, for example the pottery industry. By 1888 procedures were in place that would enable students with sufficient prerequisites to sit for the South Kensington exams which would provide useful certification for a professional career in art teaching. The 1888 prospectus included the following information about affiliation with South Kensington:

The Board of Governors have made arrangements with South Kensington whereby candidates who successfully pass the Local and Grade Examinations may be presented for examinations under regulations framed by the Department of Science and Art of the Committee of Council on Education, London, S.W. Other South Kensington examinations of advanced grades will be initiated in due course.⁶⁹

Although Fiveash studied under Tannert in the School of Painting in 1881 and throughout the 1880s, she also studied various subjects under Gill in the School of Design during the same decade.⁷⁰ Gill encouraged the school's advanced students desirous of teaching art to take the exams set by the School of Art and Science, South Kensington, London, and the first group of students sat for those exams in June 1888.⁷¹ Fiveash, who had passed the necessary Local and Grade Examinations, sat for and was granted Certificates for three of the Second Grade Examinations in Drawing set by the Science and Art Department of the Committee of the Council of Education in 1888.⁷²

Over the next few years Fiveash sat for further South Kensington exams and eventually in 1891 received her 3rd Grade Certificate.⁷³ This was the highest grade in the Art Teacher's

Certificate examinations of South Kensington. She had gained her objective of becoming a highly professional artist well qualified to teach a wide range of art subjects, and collected her Certificate in Adelaide in February 1892.⁷⁴

Rosa Fiveash and China Painting in the School of Design

Gill introduced the initial pottery classes and pottery decoration into the School of Design in 1886.⁷⁵ This was done within the context of discussion about the necessity for a system of suitable technical education to aid industry and employment in South Australia currently being aired in South Australian newspapers. In July of the same year, a well attended meeting was held in the Chamber of Manufactures to discuss the question of ‘Technical Education: How it may be Practically Adapted to the Circumstances of this Colony’.⁷⁶

Then one month later the economic benefits to the colony from the School of Design’s courses in pottery were argued in a lengthy article in an August issue of the *Register*. The writer commented favourably on the new classes and the progress of industrial art, singling out the local pottery firm of Shearings as an example of successful benefit from the School of Design’s teaching program.⁷⁷ The Board of Governors of the School was lauded for the decision that pottery should be made on the School’s premises and decorated by the students. The writer also noted the benefits in England of the association between the ‘well known pottery of Messrs. Doulton & Co’ and the Lambeth School of Art that had ‘adopted the course of instruction which is peculiar to it’.⁷⁸ Furthermore he argued that, ‘throwers and decorators become artists rather than artisans, the general art training of the school being precedent to the special training of the potter and decorator’ and that ‘art decoration as applied to pottery exists under somewhat similar circumstances at Messrs. Minton’s, Wedgwood’s and other English potteries.’⁷⁹ Within two days the *Register* printed a letter from the Chamber of

Manufacturers that also commented on the ‘excellent work that is being done by the School of Design under the admirable management of Mr. H. P. Gill’.⁸⁰ Such comments made publicly in 1886 indicate an expectation that the South Australian pottery industry, allied with the School of Design, could expand somewhat along similar lines to the English pottery industry.

Gill was well informed regarding English art and design schools. There was a connection in 1884-85 between the Worcester Royal Porcelain Company and the South Kensington Science and Art department as the latter helped the factory with evening classes in Botany, which included exams, certificates and prizes.⁸¹ He realised that formal classes within an Art School could provide employment opportunities for women in the pottery industry. The Minton Art Pottery Studio in South Kensington under William Coleman gave employment to students from the South Kensington School in the 1870s, and was an attempt to gain equality between male and female designers in the industry.⁸² The Lambeth School of Art also taught useful skills, including china painting, to enable women to work as designers and decorators.⁸³ Gill’s plan to introduce china painting, and his purchase of kilns especially for firing the items, and conducting further decorative experiments for South Australian potteries, was in accord with Arts and Crafts ideals of a ‘hands on’ approach. The Arts and Crafts movement also rekindled interest in various other crafts.⁸⁴

Gill then wrote a report published in the *Register* in August 1886 in which he reiterated that the objectives of the School of Design were to afford ‘instruction in all points artistic that pertained to any technical industry ... the whole are instructed in ornamental design as applied to different industries’. Gill further pointed out the importance of the teaching of drawing to technical education ‘at least to those branches that bear on handicrafts.’⁸⁵

He maintained his interest in seeking new ways of helping the South Australian pottery industry. In the 1888 Art Schools' prospectus under 'Pottery Class', Gill wrote that, 'experiments have been and are still being made' and he anticipated that students would assist with other experiments.⁸⁶ Furthermore he hoped to have a 'kiln and other appliances necessary for the full success of this branch'.

By the time Fiveash gained her teaching certificate in 1891, she was aware of Gill's interest in pottery and the decoration possibilities involved. She knew the history behind the Fiveash china collection and was trained in the art of displaying china and using it within middle-class women's social rituals of entertaining. For Fiveash, china painting would be another medium to exhibit, sell and teach. It is not surprising that she decided to add china painting to her own art skills.

Rosa went to Melbourne to learn china painting.⁸⁷ As she was already an experienced artist, it would not have taken her very long to learn the basic technique of china painting, but she also needed to know the technical aspects of loading a kiln and firing at the correct temperatures. (See Appendix 1 for information on firing.) Fiveash returned to Adelaide full of enthusiasm and showed her finished pieces to Gill in 1892.⁸⁸

Gill was suitably impressed. For him, china-painting classes would increase the prestige of the School and be a good political move to indicate he was extending the range of design and decorating classes of use within industry. Although there were a number of potteries in South Australia, clay deposits were more suitable for functional earthenware production rather than fine quality porcelain or china. Nevertheless, should a suitable porcelain tableware industry emerge, the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art as it was now called, would have a pool of students trained to attend to the artwork.

Before a class could be started, the problem of firing had to be solved. Gill experimented with 'burning' (firing), some of Fiveash's china painting in a kiln in Adelaide. It was not a successful experiment, as Gill reported to the Fine Arts Committee in August 1892.⁸⁹ With his report he submitted three groups of exhibits. Exhibit A was seven works in china painting by Miss R. C. Fiveash 'executed and burnt in Melbourne'. Exhibit B was one work in china painting executed by Fiveash and burnt by Gill in Adelaide. He wrote that this piece cracked in the muffle due to 'heat applied too suddenly - this caused the green colour to bubble'. Exhibit C was also one work in china painting by Fiveash and burnt by Gill in Adelaide. He reported that this piece was overburnt as the pink had turned purple, but he claimed it was 'overburnt purposely for experience sake, and to make a prolonged test of the consumption of gas'.⁹⁰

Gill then stated in the same report that 'The process of burning china enamel color is absolutely simple'. It was rather an ironic statement to make, considering the lack of success in the two firings he conducted. However it alerted Gill to the fact that firing hand-painted china with on-glaze enamels was not the same as firing pottery decorated with glazes and other techniques. He realised that a suitable kiln situated within the School was essential to fire students' china painting. At the end of the report he suggested that the School make such a kiln and that it be installed in the basement of the Exhibition Building.⁹¹ He also recommended, 'that Miss Fiveash be permitted to teach this subject. That all fees be paid to the school.' Fiveash was to be paid the sum received less 5% which would go to the school.

However there were still problems to be overcome regarding a suitable kiln in which to fire the china painting. Gill found that no local clay suitable to make a muffle was available, so he obtained an American catalogue and decided that a Wilke gas kiln was preferable.⁹² The

kiln arrived from America in the latter half of 1893.⁹³ By February 1894 Gill and Fiveash had conducted trial burnings in the new kiln.⁹⁴

The first china painting classes taught by Rosa Fiveash in the School started in the Autumn Session, February 1894. They were held on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. – the fee was one pound ten shillings a session.⁹⁵ It was the first time that formal china painting classes were held in a technical school in Australia and ahead of Sydney where Arthur Peach did not start to teach china painting in East Sydney Technical College until 1896, while Mildred Lovett, who returned to Hobart Technical College by 1905 only commenced teaching china painting there in 1908.⁹⁶

In March 1894 Gill reported that the Wilke gas kiln ‘burnt the china perfectly’ and furthermore he had even ‘burnt some pieces for the Hon. The Minister of Education Dr. Cockburn’s child’.⁹⁷ Gill was at pains to remind the Committee of Fine Arts that they ‘will remember that it was the Minister who placed the grant for a kiln at your Committee’s disposal’. He added that he was ‘anxious to assist the potters of this colony’ and had contacted several local potteries, and had received from them some ‘biscuits’, glazes and colours with which to experiment.⁹⁸ However Gill added that to do this, it would be economically advantageous to also purchase a Fletcher’s muffle kiln with a tall window through which the progress of the burning experiments could be watched.

In his next report, several days later, Gill further commented on the use of the proposed Fletcher’s kiln and added that it would also be suitable for burning china painting ‘if now required to complete an order’.⁹⁹ His statement regarding ‘an order’ indicates that Gill also envisaged possibilities of the school taking orders for china painting similar to the situation with art needlework.¹⁰⁰ The Fletcher’s kiln arrived from Melbourne in May 1894.¹⁰¹

Fiveash and her china painting class were busy. In another report in May 1894 Gill stated that the 'china kiln' had been operated six times and had satisfactorily burnt around ninety pieces of china.¹⁰² Always with an eye to the budget, he recommended that in future a charge of three pence to six pence a piece be made to the students for firing the wares in order to cover costs.

Knowledge of the new kiln and the class spread within the community. Gill wished to maintain harmonious relations between local potteries and the china painting classes and not disadvantage the local industries in any way, so in October he reported on the firing charges and the possibility that commercial potteries might be disadvantaged if the School fired china painting for non-students who may have otherwise taken their business to local potteries.¹⁰³ However when he approached pottery establishments in Adelaide and the suburbs he was advised by each firm that 'your burning imported china painted in enamel colours for painters other than your students will not interfere with our business'. In light of this Gill then recommended that the School be permitted to fire china-painting for other than School students and that charges for such firing be twice the fee charged to the students.¹⁰⁴

Exhibiting China Painting from the School's Classes

By May 1894 china painting was exhibited for the first time at an open meeting of members of the School of Design Art Club and their friends in the large upper classroom of the School of Design. An exhibit of twenty pieces of china hand-painted in enamel by the students and teacher Fiveash, was proudly placed on a tablecloth that covered a large table in the centre of the room. This was a preview of work that would be exhibited in the forthcoming South Australian Society of Arts Exhibition in June to be opened by His Excellency the Earl of Kintore. A newspaper report of the School of Design Art Club event pointed out that the

china had been painted during the last session, fired at the school and was ‘as perfect in glaze as the floral ornaments are accurate in drawing and colour’.¹⁰⁵

However in the report of the South Australian Society of Arts Exhibition, printed in the *Quiz and The Lantern*, no mention was made of any china painting exhibited by students, but the report stated that, ‘Miss Rosa C. Fiveash also takes our wildflowers, and has painted some pretty sprays on china sets and plaques’.¹⁰⁶ The *Advertiser* commented only on the hung artworks and did not mention the china painting exhibits.¹⁰⁷ The official catalogue for the exhibition listed only Fiveash’s china painting.¹⁰⁸

In March 1895 Fiveash and Gill made a good political move in promoting china-painting classes at the School of Design in terms of their possible commercial benefit. A considerable amount of china painting was entered in the month-long South Australian Chamber of Manufactures Exhibition of Art and Industry 1895. The Exhibition was large and occupied the Jubilee Exhibition Building and surrounding grounds on North Terrace, Adelaide with various ancillary sideshows and displays and included the best of industrial machinery, including potter’s wheels, and various South Australian products. The Exhibition drew people of diverse interests and would have promoted china painting to a wider audience than just the art lovers who attended the South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions.

In this exhibition china painting entries listed in the Group of Fine and Applied Arts, Architecture and Photography were entered in competitive and non-competitive sections. A review in the *Advertiser* briefly commented that:

Two vitrines contain some pretty specimens of painting on china. The colours are placed on the clay before it is burnt, so that they are perfectly fast. In most cases Australian flowers, gum blossoms etc., are appropriately chosen for illustration.¹⁰⁹

Not all china painting entries listed the artwork painted on them, nor did all entries have a sale price. Fiveash's china painting entry (no. 569) was entered in the 'not for competition' class and consisted of twenty-four china items of potential use for afternoon tea. Two afternoon tea trays in this group were decorated with china-painted pink and white eucalyptus.¹¹⁰ Fiveash entered a china tray (no. 627) in a competitive class. It was listed for sale at three pounds three shillings, the same sale price for her entry painting *White Eucalyptus* (no. 622).¹¹¹

Three of Fiveash's students in the 1894 china painting classes, Laurence Howie, Lama Barker and Rose Johnson also entered china painting and received awards in the same exhibition.¹¹² Howie was awarded a Certificate of Merit for his china painting entry of one vase and three tiles.¹¹³ A major prize was awarded to Lama M. Barker for her large entry that consisted of a teaset painted in a blackberry design, a vase with an arbutus design and two cups and two saucers featuring a seaweed design.¹¹⁴ Rose Johnson received a Certificate of Merit for her entry of a teapot, plate, two cups and saucers.¹¹⁵ Fiveash's china painting was predominantly of Australian flora and fauna but some other entrants used English or European subject matter such as apple blossoms and birds, primroses, almond blossom, butterflies. The Dominican Nuns from Franklin Street and Clarence Park exhibited china painting that depicted Irish Scenery.¹¹⁶ It seems Fiveash and her pupils' success was good for the School's reputation because enrolments for the china painting classes increased after the 1895 Exhibition to a total of twelve enrolments for the two remaining sessions of 1895, as compared to ten enrolments for the entire 1894 year.

The School of Design, Painting and Technical Art experienced criticism and problems during 1896. In February, a newspaper article was critical of the art at the School with the writer commenting that the 'carrying out of the works designed by ... students would be better interpreted, whether in carving, china-painting or in needlework, if the executant ... were

conversant with the principles which underlie the production of the original drawing'. The writer extolled the advantages of further courses in the principles of conventional design, but warned that unless the designer had 'knowledge of the harmonious laws of nature', decorative art would become 'flaccid and boneless'.¹¹⁷ Gill possibly had some forewarning regarding that article, as in the same issue, information from the School of Design appeared, advising readers that, in February 1896 the School of Design was offering four additional classes that were to be taught by the Director of Technical Art himself, Harry P. Gill.¹¹⁸ They were 'especially arranged for designers, wood carvers, china painters, etc.' and included a course on elementary conventional design. Fees ranged up to ten shillings a course.

Gill's introduction of extra classes would have provided extra income for the school at a time when there was some anxiety following the financial stringencies being debated in the State Parliament in the latter half of 1895 due to an economic downturn. Service reductions were foreshadowed in September 1895 and some government departments were already altering pay sheets.¹¹⁹ A deputation from the Board of Governors of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery waited on the Minister of Education in September 1895 to discuss proposed funding cuts and salary reductions.¹²⁰ During the deputation the Minister commented that he thought the art school should charge higher fees for some of the art classes and become more productive. Moreover the Minister noted that the public could view high art as luxuries and not connected with industrial training purposes.¹²¹

However increasing fees had its problems. Fees charged for china painting tuition in the School of Design were already hefty for a two-hour session and did not include the added charges for firing. For the beginning of the 1896 sessions, China Painting was advertised at a fee of thirty shillings (one pound ten shillings) a session, the same fee charged for the Advanced Painting class.¹²² This was expensive compared to the fee of twenty shillings a

session for art needlework and fifteen shillings for woodcarving. These fees appear to have deterred students because records show that only one student, Miss Charlotte Murray enrolled in china painting for the session starting in February 1896 and was also the only one enrolled for the winter session that ended in September 1896.¹²³

Nevertheless china painting was displayed in the annual School of Design, Painting and Technical Art Students' Exhibition, open daily to the public in September 1896.¹²⁴ A review of the exhibition published in the *Register* described the china painting in one sentence, 'The paintings on china by pupils of Miss R. C. Fiveash, principally Australian flowers, birds and insects, are perfectly lovely, some are on Doulton and some on B elique (sic) ware'.¹²⁵ A review published in the *Advertiser* was slightly more informative:

In the same room there are two cases of china that will deservedly secure the praise of lady visitors. These exhibits consist of articles for the tea-table, door plates, plaques, & c., all beautifully embellished with Australian flowers. The work of firing these dainty wares was carried out in the school kiln.¹²⁶

No enrolments were recorded for china painting in the Spring Session of 1896, nor for all of 1897. Indeed in the 1897 Autumn Session starting in February, the time slot formerly allocated for china painting, namely Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. was allocated to art needlework. China painting was still listed in the advertisement inserted by Gill for the School of Design Students' Exhibition in September 1897, but there was no mention of china painting in the exhibition review.¹²⁷ In 1898 Fiveash, looking back on china painting, wrote that it required much patience and skill, adding:

There are many disappointments as well as much pleasure for any one desirous of painting china, and I have often felt tempted to pack away the colours and never touch them again. There are so many difficulties arising from all sorts of unaccountable causes that they seem almost impossible to overcome.¹²⁸

The cause for lack of enrolments in the china painting classes in late 1896 and 1897 was the economic climate in South Australia at that time. Brian Chapman in his study of the late nineteenth century depression in South Australia examined the multifactorial causes of the

depression, including an Australia-wide financial crisis in the early 1890s, but argued that the main cause in South Australia was the deepening drought from 1895 to the end of the century.¹²⁹ Chapman pointed out that the economy of the state relied on the production and export of wheat and wool, both of which were affected by the drought that was particularly bad in the summer of 1896-7.¹³⁰ Unemployment in the state rose, fiscal policies of the banks tightened, the Kingston government introduced wage cuts, retrenching policies and reductions in public building programs, all of which had a flow-on effect for secondary industries a significant number of which employed women.¹³¹ Spence, a firm advocate for women's rights including not only suffrage, but the right to financial employment, returned to Adelaide in December 1894 after an absence overseas and commented, 'I have now to confront the financial situation'.¹³² She wrote later of the increasing difficulty of earning income and the necessity of financial stringencies:

My journalistic work after my return (from England and Europe) was neither so regular nor so profitable as before I left Adelaide. The bank failures had affected me rather badly, and financially my outlook was anything but rosy in the year 1895.¹³³

It is little wonder that the fees charged for china painting classes in 1896 and 1897 made it an expensive luxury, with little chance for future employment opportunities in industries that were battling to survive.

China painting was not included in the School's advertisements for 1898, 1899 and in the first years of the 1900s. Nor was it mentioned in reviews of the students' exhibitions in 1898, 1899, and china painting disappeared from the school's curriculum until 1906 - its revival in that year will be discussed in the next chapter. China painting classes for applications to South Australian industry were no longer feasible, and student enrolments had fallen dramatically. Also since 1898, china and earthenware household items decorated with 'neat printed patterns' were imported into Adelaide and afternoon tea sets were advertised at an attractive price of fourteen shillings and sixpence.¹³⁴ In comparison, Fiveash's tea set that

featured native flowers, exhibited at the June 1894 South Australian Society of Arts Exhibition, was priced at six pounds six shillings. This was over eight times the price of the 1898 commercial tea set.¹³⁵ Indeed it is doubtful if local potteries could have competed with the mass-produced fine tableware by English potteries for the overseas markets in the colonies in the 1890s and into the twentieth century. Another problem was that no suitable clay body for fine china or porcelain was found in South Australia.

Although classes were not held by the School from 1897 till 1906, china painting could still be practised by ex-students out in the community as a hobby, but there was always the need of finding suitable facilities for firing the on-glaze enamels. Kilns were expensive to purchase, install and operate. When the School's kiln was again in use in 1907, records show that work produced by china painters outside the School was once more accepted for firing as had been the earlier practice. Fiveash was no longer the teacher in the School when china painting was revived, but records show that she sent work to be fired in the School kiln in 1907-09.¹³⁶

Federation and Rosa Fiveash's Drive to Paint Australian Subject Matter

Although white Australian culture was predominantly based on the Anglo/Celtic model, by the last decades of the nineteenth century when Federation issues were widely discussed, there was a growing concern to create an Australian identity. Within the Australian art world, 'The Bush' and Australian life became of increasing interest. Juliet Peers discussed the move towards *plein air* painting in Victoria at the time of the Heidelberg School, how it celebrated the uniquely Australian atmosphere and how women artists at the National Gallery School diversely acquired the necessary knowledge in the 1880-90s.¹³⁷

When Fiveash studied in the School of Painting under Louis Tannert in 1881-82, she was also exposed to the increasing interest in the Australian landscape. In 1881 Tannert inspected the School about to be vacated by teacher Charles Hill, and noted the parlous state of the stock and in a request to the Board of Governors Tannert wrote:

For landscapes I would recommend good copies in watercolors (sic) and oils, as well as drawings and I would advise the Board to give preference to Australian landscapes, to enable the scholars to study and realise the character and beauties of the surrounding landscape.¹³⁸

One of the characteristic features of the Australian landscape was the ubiquitous eucalypt that featured in so many paintings by Australian male artists during the last decades of the nineteenth century and in the nationalistic fervour of the Federation period. But it was not only artists who were interested in native vegetation. Scientists were interested in an even closer, scientific look at 'The Bush,' and this required collaboration with artists to illustrate their research. In the nineteenth century, botanical illustration was an acceptable area in which women artists could excel and even earn a little money.¹³⁹ In South Australia in the 1880s there was a need for such an artist. To locate one with the necessary skills, what better person to contact than Louis Tannert, Master of the recently established School of Painting?

Tannert was instrumental in Fiveash's first important award as he was approached in 1882 by J. E. Dnie Brown, Conservator of Forests, regarding a commission to do the botanical illustrations for Brown's *Forest Flora of South Australia*. Tannert recommended that six of his best pupils be sent to compete for the task.¹⁴⁰ Fiveash won.¹⁴¹ This was an exacting commission and established her reputation as a botanical illustrator.¹⁴² It was also an era in which there was increasing interest in science. Art and science went hand-in-hand with scientists studying uniquely Australian flora and fauna, and they required artists with observational skills, patience and manual dexterity to accurately draw and paint details of various plants, insects and other small objects of research. Brown provided the impetus for Fiveash's lifelong interest in Australian flora. This, in turn, provided her with subject matter

that proved useful for public recognition of her paintings on paper and china painting as reviews of the 1890s show.

She was one of the first china painters in Australia in the 1890s to concentrate on painting naturalistic, accurate images of Australian flowers and insects on china and exhibit her work, as her entries in the 1895 South Australian Chamber of Manufactures Exhibition of orchids, blumonia, e pacris, e ucalyptus and a green frog show (no. 569).¹⁴³ Fiveash also exhibited watercolour and gouache paintings in that exhibition and received a 'Special Prize' for her entry of sixty-four studies of native flowers (no. 625).¹⁴⁴ Her use of native Australian flora reflected the rising Australian interest in Indigenous material in the decorative arts, including designs on china, espoused by Lucien Henri and Richard Baker in Sydney in the 1880s.¹⁴⁵

Fiveash continued to paint studies of Australian wildflowers in her home studio during the 1890s and taught art at various private schools around Adelaide to support herself. For example in 1895 at the time when she taught china painting once a week in the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art, she was also teaching art at Inglewood School and Miss Thompson's School for the local Science and Art examinations.¹⁴⁶ In 1898 a list of successful students in art examinations show that she taught at Miss Ayliffe's School and Miss Jacob's School.¹⁴⁷ In the 1890s, as will be discussed in a later chapter, Fiveash also joined the South Australian Society of Arts, continued her active membership for many years, but gradually became less active and resigned in 1912.¹⁴⁸

Family fortunes changed in 1898 when Fiveash and her sister were beneficiaries of one thousand pounds each from Thomas Martin's will.¹⁴⁹ In 1900 they visited relatives in England and were away for a year. Just before they left South Australia, Robert Barr Smith, then a member of the Board of Governors of the Art Gallery, heard that Fiveash intended to

take many of her South Australian wildflower paintings with her, and approached His Excellency the Governor of South Australia, Lord Tennyson about keeping her work in the colony.¹⁵⁰ Fiveash was invited to take her painting collection to be viewed by His Excellency. The Governor's wife Audrey Lady Tennyson was especially impressed by the paintings as she wrote in a letter to her mother in England:

We have just had the two Miss Fiveashes up to show us the most lovely collection of Australian flowers which one has done. I do not know anything about them but they are more or less ladies and well read, and kind little old maids. She would sell the whole of her collection for £200 which seems to me very little and I would give anything to have them!¹⁵¹

Barr Smith and the Governor decided to purchase the whole collection and gift it to the Art Gallery of South Australia. Lady Tennyson commented in a subsequent letter:

I am afraid you won't see Miss Fiveash's collection of flowers for just before she sailed Hallam, thinking it was a very great pity they should be lost to the colony, with the help of a rich colonist who entered into the scheme with him, bought the whole collection to present it to one of the public institutions in Adelaide. I only hope they will appreciate the gift for H has had to give a good round sum!!¹⁵²

In a subsequent letter written in England and published in the *Advertiser*, Fiveash made it clear that the purchased paintings were not those done for Brown's *Forest Flora of South Australia* but, 'were the illustrations for a work it was intended to publish some time ago'.¹⁵³

The Annual report of the Curator, 30 June 1900, noted the presentation of Miss Rosa C Fiveash's *Studies of Australian Flora* to the Art Gallery of South Australia. In 1957 the collection was sent from the Art Gallery to the Museum as part of changing notions of art, with Fiveash's wildflower paintings considered more 'useful for identification purposes'.¹⁵⁴

Then in 1979 this collection was re-located to the herbarium in the Botanic Gardens, Adelaide.¹⁵⁵ Some of the paintings such as *Callistemon coccineus* in the collection were originally exhibited in the 1895 Chamber of Manufactures Exhibition before they entered the Art Gallery's collection in 1900 (figure 4).¹⁵⁶

Fiveash returned from England in 1901 and maintained contact with some of her former Art School friends through the *School of Design Art Club Magazine*. The December 1902 issue featured Fiveash's article 'A little Trip Abroad – To Italy' in which she described how, with her sister, she left England 13 March 1901 and travelled to Rome where they visited many famous places including St. Peter's and the Vatican, to view sculptures and artwork.¹⁵⁷ Although Fiveash recorded impressions of scenery and buildings in small sketchbooks during her overseas trip, and viewed artwork in Rome, it did not influence her own art practice. On her return to Australia she resumed painting Australian flora and fauna in her chosen career as a professional artist specialising in botanical paintings and scientific illustration.¹⁵⁸

By 1908 Fiveash was commissioned to paint scientifically accurate botanical paintings of native orchids for Dr. Richard Sanders Rogers who was a leading authority in the Southern Hemisphere on Australian orchids. Her work for Rogers continued over many years. Following his death, Rogers' valuable scientific library on orchids, including eight volumes of Fiveash's paintings, were left to the University of Adelaide, housed in the Botany Department, then relocated in 1959 to the Barr Smith Library where they are now in the Special Collection.¹⁵⁹ Fiveash's orchid watercolour paintings include annotated sections of the specimens that show a more scientific approach than her botanical illustrative work. Another collection of Fiveash's original scientific paintings of Australian orchids reproduced in the publication *Rosa Fiveash's Australian Orchids*, is currently located in the Herbarium library of the Botanic Gardens.¹⁶⁰

Fiveash also did freelance illustration work for Museum personnel such as Professor E. C. Stirling for whom she painted various colour studies of Australian fauna species such as the burrowing marsupial *Notoryctes typhlops*. Alison Mackinnon researched problems facing educated women, including antagonisms of some men in positions of authority towards single

women seeking remunerative professional careers, but noted that Professor Stirling was a 'staunch campaigner for women'.¹⁶¹ In 1885 Stirling, who was a friend of Catherine Helen Spence, introduced a motion into the House of Assembly for women to be admitted to the franchise for both Houses of Parliament.¹⁶² Stirling's work on *Notoxyctes* was a well-publicised, important part of his scientific research and his use of Fiveash's expertise for the illustrative work was a public acknowledgment of her expertise and standing as a scientific illustrator.¹⁶³ Illustration work for the museum could occur at a short notice because of the necessity of painting some (dead) specimens such as insects and crabs before the bodies decomposed and the natural colour disappeared, whereas other illustrative work such as painting a collection of Aboriginal toas, did not require such urgency. In 1913, as a result of her freelance work for Stirling, Fiveash received a commission from the Museum Committee to do a specified artwork surrounding an illuminated address to be presented to the Hon. Museum Director Professor Stirling in recognition of his service.

To forge a career as a professional freelance artist specialising in scientific illustration of fauna and flora, necessitated that Fiveash acquire knowledge of taxonomy and plant structures in addition to her art training. It is therefore not surprising that she had little time in which to pursue the more popular genre of landscape and figure painting. Her reputation as a scientific illustrator often depended on dissecting skills, keen observational powers under a microscope, drawing skills and meticulously detailed work of use within scientific circles but of only passing interest to the general public. Little of her art, except that in the afore-mentioned institutions, seems to have survived.

Likewise very few pieces of her signed china painting can be located. She did not sell much china painting and most of it, such as her hand-painted teaset featuring seahorses, remained in her home with the family collection of china.¹⁶⁴ After Fiveash died in 1938 the entire china

collection was dispersed by her distant relative Joan Davis, who cared for the Fiveash sisters in their old age.¹⁶⁵

A signed but undated plate depicting epacris, native grasses and insects is in the collection of a distant relative in Victoria (figure 1). Another plate with Sturt Peas painted on it and signed both on the front with her initials and on the back with her name and date of 1920 was donated by Davis to the Historical Collection of the Porcelain Art Centre (figure 2).¹⁶⁶ The plates show that Fiveash continued to paint Australian flora and insects in the same painstaking naturalistic style that she enjoyed in the 1880s and which reflected the National desire for Australian-ness.

Fiveash was not interested in diversifying her approach to china painting or to art generally. In 1932 she was dismissive of the 'modern' style of painting and in an interview she briskly commented, 'Modern young artists are far too slapdash. They have not the love of detail necessary to the good painter'.¹⁶⁷ Although in the 1890s Fiveash's style of naturalistic, detailed watercolour paintings of Australian flora was fashionable and attracted notice in exhibitions, by the 1920-30s Modernism was in vogue, appealed to many rising Australian artists and drew public attention.¹⁶⁸ Fiveash's realistic, detailed paintings of Australian flora were outmoded and no longer had popular appeal. In 1937, shortly before her death in 1938, she could not sell a collection of her watercolour paintings of wildflowers, and consequently donated them to the State Library.¹⁶⁹ Paintings in the State Library collection are not in the scientific dissection style of many of her orchid paintings, but are in a botanical illustrative style such as one might observe the plant in the bush, so would have more popular appeal (figure 3).

Nevertheless, Fiveash's influence and enthusiasm for wildflowers as subject matter for china painting extended into the twentieth century when her former School of Design student Laurence Hotham Howie taught china painting in the School of Design in 1908, approximately twelve years after Fiveash's classes ceased. However, as I point out in the next chapter, china painting tuition remained available through a few private practitioners in Adelaide between the time Fiveash ended her classes in the School of Design and Howie finally took over the classes in 1908. Howie taught the subject until he enlisted for service in the 1914-18 war, but his own style of china painting differed from that of Fiveash as I will discuss later. The style of china painting underwent changes following Howie's appointment as principal in 1921, and by the time of Fiveash's outburst against modernism in 1932, some china painters were indeed borrowing elements of modernism as will be explained in the next chapter.

¹ When Fiveash commenced her formal art training the School of Painting was under Louis Tannert and the School of Design was under Harry Pelling Gill. In 1892 after Tannert's resignation both schools came under Gill's control and renamed the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art.

² Fiveash was not the first china painter in South Australia. In the biography of James Ashton written by Allan Sierp in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Volume 7, A-Ch, 1891 p. 109, he states that Ashton taught 'sketching, china painting and painting in oils and watercolours' in his newly established Norwood School of Art in Norwood Town Hall in 1886, however there is no further evidence to date that Ashton's china painting classes ever eventuated.

³ Throughout this thesis, the author has attempted to include the years of birth and death of the main people mentioned, but this has not always been possible, especially for the years of birth. Many interviewees mentioned in later chapters were reluctant to reveal their age.

⁴ Prior to this it was simply called the School of Design under Charles Hill.

⁵ Jenny Aland, 'Art and Design Education in South Australian Schools, from the early 1880s to the early 1920s: the Influence of South Kensington and Harry Pelling Gill', M. Ed. Thesis, University of Canberra 1992, pp. 3, 87. Aland noted the emphasis on drawing as an employable skill of benefit to industry and therefore to the economy of the state.

⁶ The title varied over the years, sometimes 'Manufacturers' and sometimes 'Manufactures'.

⁷ Deryck Skinner, *Rosa Catherine Fiveash; A Brief Biographical Account of her Life and Work*, unpublished biography, 2005, p. 1. Skinner, who is Rosa Fiveash's first cousin three times removed, donated the copy from which this is quoted, to Avis Smith in April 2005. Skinner donated an almost similar biography on Rosa Fiveash to the University of Adelaide's Barr Smith Library Special Collection in 2004. However the Barr Smith copy does not have identical page numbers to Smith's copy. Reference page numbers are from Smith's copy.

⁸ Joan Davis Research Papers, D 65, 'Fiveash' p. 4. These papers are lodged with a plate hand painted by Rosa Fiveash in the Historical Collection of the South Australian China Painters Association Inc. Robert Fiveash came from an English family of millers, worked briefly in Adelaide as a clerk, then ran a wholesale butchering business for many years. By 1857 he was the licensee of the Queens Arms Hotel in Morphett Street. Four of Robert and Margaret Fiveash's nine children died in infancy.

- ⁹ John Christie, 'Antiques in a Victorian Setting', *South Australian Homes & Gardens*, 2 July 1934, pp. 28, 29, 86.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ¹¹ Bevis Hillier, *Pottery and Porcelain 1700-1914*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1968, pp. 294-96. Hillier described the popularity of collecting china in Chapter 12, commenting that it was popular with notable people such as Lady Charlotte Schreiber and Prime Minister Gladstone during the latter half of the 19th century and by the end of the century china collections were in 'almost every suburban villa'.
- ¹² Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, The Women's Press, London, 1987, p. 29. The article was titled 'Art work for women' in an issue of *Art Journal*.
- ¹³ Ann Toy, Margot Riley, Patricia R. McDonald, James Broadbent, Wendy Hucker, Joan Kerr, Kylie Winkworth, *Hearth & Home: Women's Decorative Arts & Crafts 1800-1930*, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1988, p. 32. The authors pointed out that towards the end of the nineteenth century the accomplishments were decidedly artistic and reflected the mistress's fashionable taste and artistry.
- ¹⁴ Caroline Jordan, *Picturesque Pursuits*, Melbourne University Press, 2005, p. 13.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
- ¹⁶ Catherine Speck, 'Public and Private Amateurs' review of Caroline Jordan's book (*Picturesque Pursuits: Colonial Women Artists and the Amateur Tradition*, Melbourne University Press, 2005), in *Hecate: Australian Women's Book Review*, Vol. 17, no.2, 2005, <http://emsah.uq.edu.au/awsr/awbr/issues/140/contents.html>
- ¹⁷ Skinner, phone conversation 13 April 2005. He considered Mary Fiveash to be the better artist of the two. Their mother died in 1885 and Mary gave up most of her own art in order to take over the running of the household. That enabled Rosa to concentrate full-time on becoming a professional artist; Skinner, p. 21 stated that Fiveash won a prize when 11 years of age.
- ¹⁸ Skinner, p. 5. He added that a lot of her early work when a teenager is in private hands.
- ¹⁹ Muriel E. Parr, 'Miss R. C. Fiveash', *Lone Hand*, 1 May 1915, p. 392. Nevertheless Annie Benham and Rosa Fiveash were both students in the School of Painting in the 1880s so Benham played a minor role in Rosa's total art tuition.
- ²⁰ Jordan, pp. 27-29.
- ²¹ Davis Research Papers, p. 4. The copper mine in the Flinders Ranges with which Robert Fiveash was associated was declared bankrupt in 1874. The family kept quiet about the loss, the women only spoke vaguely about Robert's loss in mining venture shares.
- ²² Skinner, p.23.
- ²³ Catherine Speck, 'The Negotiations of Career: Women as Artists and Teachers at the South Australian School of Art 1888-1968', Conference Proceedings containing a paper presented to the 7th Australian Women's Studies Association Conference, Adelaide, South Australia, 16-18 April 1998, p. 142.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 144.
- ²⁵ Fiveash's studio was mentioned in two Adelaide newspapers. 'Wildflower beauty that Never Fades', *Mail*, Saturday 8 October 1932, p. 10: 'Veteran Artist's Gift to Library', *News*, Monday 23 August 1937, p. 3. However I can not ascertain if she taught within her own studio in her early days or visited and taught pupils in their own homes.
- ²⁶ Nancy Gemmell, *The Hambidge Sisters*, Nancy Gemmell of Strathalbyn and Judy Dutton of Burnside, South Australia, 1995, p. 9.
- ²⁷ Education. 'South Australian Institute', *Register*, Monday 6 January 1873, p. 1.
- ²⁸ 'The Education of Females', *Register*, 15 January 1874, p. 5. The article was not signed.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ Susan Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1985, pp. 181-183. Spence's early interests were in education, but she later became involved in the suffrage movement in S.A.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 167. The book included a considerable amount of information regarding Spence's battles to earn a living and her subsequent push for the rights of women. Chapter 5 'Learning for the future' discussed her numerous involvements with the state education system during the 1870-80s. From 17 to 20 years of age, Spence worked as a governess at very low pay. After the *Education Act* of 1875, Spence was appointed to the Board of Advice for the School District of East Torrens.
- ³² Susan Magarey, *Ever Yours*, C. H. Spence, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, South Australia, 2005, pp. 113, 114.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- ³⁴ 'Some Social Aspects of Early Colonial Life', *Register*, Saturday 26 October 1878, p. 5.
- ³⁵ Alison Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 1997, p. 95.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116.
- ³⁷ Magarey, *Ever Yours*, C. H. Spence, p. 45.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 178.
- ³⁹ Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*. Chapter 2 details her successes and failures in her novel writings and it would have been hard for Spence to survive solely on novel publications.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 121, 125, 127.

- ⁴¹ Judith Godden, 'Portrait of a lady: A decade in the life of Helen Fell (1849-1935)', in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James, Carmel Shute (eds), *Worth her Salt*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1982, p. 37.
- ⁴² 'Education' column, *Register*, Saturday 18 January 1879, p. 2. The Young Ladies' College, Hardwicke House, Kent Town, conducted by Mrs Shuttleworth, offered music, singing, languages and mathematics. Downshire House, Norwood, was 'An Establishment for Young Ladies' conducted by the Misses Caterer and offered music, singing, languages and drawing.
- ⁴³ Education section, 'Educational Classes', *Register*, Thursday 22 July 1869, p. 1. Circulars and details of terms could be obtained from Mr. E. Wigg, 12 Rundle Street.
- ⁴⁴ Cheryl Buckley, *Potters and Paintresses*, Women's Press, London, 1990, pp. 64, 65.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.
- ⁴⁶ State Records of South Australia. Parliamentary Debates House of Assembly Tuesday 16 September 1879, 987-991.
- ⁴⁷ Alison Mackinnon, 'Educating the mothers of the nation', in Bevege et al, *Worth her Salt*, p. 63.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62. Rosemary Deem argued that secondary and further education of women during the last decades of the nineteenth century confirmed the position of women regarding what jobs were appropriate for them.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70. Dr. Helen Mayo for example was influential in advocating instruction for mothers on how to care for their children and the teaching of domestic science in girls' schools.
- ⁵⁰ State Records of South Australia. Parliamentary Debates House of Assembly, Tuesday 16 September 1879, 987-991.
- ⁵¹ Her lengthy letter is printed in the 'To the Editor' section, *Register*, 18 September, 1879 p. 6.
- ⁵² Clarissa Campbell Orr (ed.), *Women in the Victorian Art World*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, England, 1995, p.192. In chapter 9 Sara Dodd, writing on art education for English women as far back as the 1860s, stated that middle-class women intending to work as governesses, were aware of the benefits of formal training. Studying at the South Kensington in 1864 were four governesses, one school mistress and six female pupil-teachers.
- ⁵³ Buckley, pp. 5, 6. From 1870s many women with formal art school training were able to gain employment as artists and designers within the pottery or porcelain industry in England. Middle-class women such as Hannah Barlow worked in segregated 'art pottery' studios such as those provided by Minton and later at Doulton's factory.
- ⁵⁴ SRSA. GRG 19/289. Report from the Master of the Art School on progress during the previous quarter 1882:6. His list of pupils in December, which was at the end of the quarter, included Benham and Fiveash.
- ⁵⁵ SRSA. GRG 19/289. Report from the Master of the School of Painting 1881:3. On 21 October 1881 Tannert reported that he commenced the 'Academy of Art' on 10 October with 28 scholars and now had 72 scholars. Charles Hill resigned in 1881 and the former art school changed structure. Tannert trained in Germany and had been associated with the National Gallery Art School in Melbourne.
- ⁵⁶ SRSA GRG 19/289 Report from Master of Art School on progress during the previous quarter 1881:6. In this report on the quarter from October to December in 1881, written on 28 January 1882 he commented on the lack of discipline in male students whom he 'had to censure them severely to maintain authority'. He then mentioned the good work and enthusiasm by female students and those women who worked over the holiday period.
- ⁵⁷ SRSA GRG 19/289 Report from the Master of the School of Painting 1882: 6 July. Tannert requested the Board to provide a definition of duties and also wanted charge of the School of Painting and the premier position in relation to the School of Art due to 'the anticipated early arrival of the Master of the School of Design'.
- ⁵⁸ SRSA GRG 19/289 Reports from the Master of the School of Painting and the School of Design 1882:30 November.
- ⁵⁹ SRSA GRG 19/289 Reports from the Masters of the School of Painting and the School of Design 1883:7 March. It was to the Fine Arts Committee, Board of Governors of the South Australian Institute.
- ⁶⁰ SRSA GRG 19/289 Reports from Masters of School of Painting and School of Design 1883:31 January
- ⁶¹ Appendix 2. SRSA GRG 19/248 Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery of South Australia. Art Schools 1887:17 May.
- ⁶² Appendix 3. SRSA GRG 19/248 South Australian Art Schools 1888. The prospectus has four pages and indicates the wide range of tuition available, also the Regulations of the Art Schools.
- ⁶³ Marissa Beverley Young, 'A History of Art and Design Education in South Australia 1836-1887', M. Ed. Thesis, Flinders University of South Australia, March 1985, pp. 53, 54, 529, 530.
- ⁶⁴ GRG 19/361 Fine Arts Committee Minutes, Vol. 2, p. 39. A letter on 10 April 1891 from Miss Alice Tite requested permission to copy *Evening Shadows*. The reply stated that she must get Tannert's certification that she was competent to copy and that paintings could only be copied in the Art Gallery from 10 a.m. till 12 noon and must not be more than $\frac{3}{4}$ the size of the original.
- ⁶⁵ 'Fine Arts. Oil and Watercolour Paintings The School of Painting', *Adelaide Observer*, 20 June, 1885, p. 42.
- ⁶⁶ A review 'Exhibition of Art', *Advertiser*, Friday 26 January 1883, p. 6 noted works exhibited by some of Tannert's students and commented on the originality of Fiveash's studies from native trees; Tannert, unlike many colonial artists, also painted genre scenes, see Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Image*, Australian National

Gallery Ellsyd Press, 1987, p. 100 and a lengthy review 'The Society of Arts Exhibition' *Advertiser* 20 June 1885, p.6 commented on Fiveash's painting *A scene in a kitchen*, awarded first prize in the genre class.

⁶⁷ Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, The Women's press, London, 1987, p. 127.

⁶⁸ See Appendix 3, for details of the Machine Construction classes, also the Building Construction classes. A sound knowledge of geometry was a prerequisite for the construction classes, p. 2.

⁶⁹ Appendix 3, p. 4.

⁷⁰ SRSA GRG 19/109 Register of Subscriptions paid to School of Design 1881-1892. On p.1 Fiveash was listed as a student in the sections dealing with Oct. 1881 and also in 1882, 1885, 1888, 1889, 1890. In SRSA GRG 19/110 Register of Subscriptions paid to the School of Painting 1883-1892, Fiveash was listed as a student in 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886, 1888, 1890.

⁷¹ Aland, p. 119.

⁷² SRSA GRG 19/106 South Australian and South Kensington exam results 1886 to 1905. In the list of the 1888 South Kensington results, she obtained excellent for Freehand Drawing, a pass in Geometry and excellent in Perspective Drawing. Helen Hambidge did not sit for the 1888 South Kensington exams but her younger sister Alice Hambidge sat for one exam. Elizabeth Armstrong, Florence Kay and Ellen Hinde, all of whom had received First Class Certificates with Fiveash in 1883, also sat for the 1888 exams.

⁷³ SRSA GRG 19/106 South Australian and South Kensington exam results 1886 to 1905. The results were dated 10 August 1891, results of examinations of works submitted from Adelaide. Written on this page in a fine pen, 'This was entered in S.K. Advanced Students' register on 29 December 1891'.

⁷⁴ Skinner, pp. 24, 25.

⁷⁵ SRSA GRG 19/361 Vol. 1 for 1886. p.141. On 5 July 1886 Gill reported to the Fine Arts Committee that students had modelled flower pots and that Shearings of Hindmarsh 'burnt' from these plaster moulds.

⁷⁶ 'Technical Education', *Register*, 24 July 1886, p. 6. Much discussion took place regarding teaching children technical skills based on suitable drawing instruction, but matters of suitable evening classes for men were discussed, also the fact that technical education should be given to females as well as males. (Cookery and domestic economy were mentioned for females.)

⁷⁷ 'The School of Design and Technical Instruction', *Register*, Tuesday 10 August 1886, p. 4. The article was unsigned.

⁷⁸ op. cit.

⁷⁹ op. cit. The writer obviously had knowledge of the collaboration between the Lambeth School of Art and the Minton pottery, also the Doulton pottery; Buckley mentions collaborations between art schools and potteries, and noted that Henry Doulton joined the management of the Lambeth Art School in 1863, pp. 50-55.

⁸⁰ 'School of Design' *Register* Thursday 12 August 1886, p. 7, column 7. It was written to the editor by Jno. Fairfax Conigrave who occupied an influential position in the manufacturing industry. Conigrave also pointed out the attempts to advance technical and manual education in the colony during 1877 before Gill arrived.

⁸¹ Henry Sandon, *Royal Worcester Porcelain from 1862 to the Present Day*, Barrie & Jenkins, London, 1978 reprint, p. 24.

⁸² Paul Atterbury, *The Story of Minton from 1793 to the Present Day*, Royal Doulton Tableware Ltd., Stoke-on-Trent, England, p. 13. No date of publication but the last date mentioned in the book is 1968. Atterbury was Historical Adviser to the Minton Museum

⁸³ Hillier, pp. 258, 259. Director John Sparkes gave tiles to the pupils on which they painted in enamels; Buckley, p. 62. Florence Lewis, who studied at the Lambeth School of Art in the 1870s, gained employment at Doulton till 1897

⁸⁴ 'Public Notices', *Register*, 11 September 1896, p. 2. Gill introduced art needlework classes before the china painting classes of 1894 and by 1896 tuition in woodcarving, copper repousse and modelling were also offered in the School.

⁸⁵ 'The School of Design', *Register*, Tuesday 10 August 1886, p. 7, columns 7, 8. The report was headed by a short letter to the editor from Rowland Rees, Chairman Fine Arts Committee, Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery. Rees stated the report was to correct any misconceptions in the direction of technical education in the School of Design.

⁸⁶ Appendix 3, p. 3.

⁸⁷ Skinner, p. 10. In a subsequent phone conversation with Skinner, 13 April 2005, he informed me that she went to Melbourne but he was not sure of the exact date, nor her teacher.

⁸⁸ Skinner, p. 10.

⁸⁹ SRSA GRG 19/248 Report to the Fine Arts Committee, 10 August 1892:216. Gill signed this as the Director for Technical Art.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ In that report he stated that the estimated cost of the kiln, including installation, would be fifteen pounds and that money for it be drawn from a Government grant made 5 years previously.

⁹² SRSA GRG 19/248 report to the Fine Arts Committee, 1 December 1892: 222.

⁹³ SRSA GRG 19/248 report to the Fine Arts Committee, 4 August 1893: 241. Gill notified that it had arrived and he was arranging a gas supply to it.

- ⁹⁴ SRSA GRG 19/248 report to the Fine Arts Committee, 6 February 1894: 258.
- ⁹⁵ SRSA GRG 19/95 Finance – Return of fees paid by students for attendances at the School of Painting and Technical Art Vol. 2 1892-1897. P. 52. There were three sessions a year and Miss Lama Barker was the first student to enrol in china painting in February 1894, which was the Autumn Session. There were ten definite enrolments marked for the china painting classes in 1894, but many students' entries in this cash book often lacked notation regarding the name of the class for which they paid a fee.
- ⁹⁶ Grace Cochrane, *The Craft Movement in Australia: A History*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, NSW, 1992, p. 19; Ibid. p. 17; Kerr, J. (ed.), *Heritage The National Women's Art Book*, G+B Arts International Ltd., Australia 1995, p. 392
- ⁹⁷ SRSA GRG 19/248 report to the Fine Arts Committee, 8 March 1894: 263. (Dr. Cockburn was the Minister of Education.)
- ⁹⁸ The 'biscuits' were pieces of fired but unglazed ware and were what is now called 'bisque'.
- ⁹⁹ SRSA GRG 19/248 to the Fine Arts Committee, 12 March 1894: 264.
- ¹⁰⁰ SRSA GRG 19/330. Record of commissions executed by Art Needlework branch 18 May 1900-8 April 1907. These records show that not only were designs commissioned for art needlework but also for woodcarving. However the records are not complete; art needlework commissions occurred throughout the 1890s; GRG 19/248. 347. 11 September 1896. Gill advised the Fine Arts Committee that Lady Victoria Buxton attended the school's exhibition and commissioned some needlework and woodcarving.
- ¹⁰¹ SRSA GRG 19/248 to the Fine Arts Committee, 10 May 1894: 271.
- ¹⁰² SRSA GRG 19/248 to the Fine Arts Committee, 14 May 1894: 270. (there appears to be a mix-up of the numbers 270 and 271 with the relevant dates, but that is what the original reports state.)
- ¹⁰³ SRSA GRG 19/248 to the Fine Arts Committee, 11 October 1894: 287.
- ¹⁰⁴ Gill attached a separate 'cost for china firing' to this report and it stated the charges were for 'firing overglaze', e.g. the firing charge for a six inch tall jug was to be one shilling, but the same item for students would be six pence. His use of the term 'overglaze' is interesting as it indicates his knowledge that some china paints could also be painted as underglaze and inglaze for which higher firing temperatures would be needed.
- ¹⁰⁵ 'School of Design Art Club', *Register* 28 May 1894, p. 3
- ¹⁰⁶ 'S.A. Society of Arts', *Quiz and The Lantern* 28 June 1894, p. 15. The popular name of the newspaper was shortened to *Quiz*.
- ¹⁰⁷ 'The Society of Arts Annual Exhibition', *Advertiser* Friday 15 June 1894, p. 5 dealt only with the address given by the Governor His Excellency the Earl of Kintore. Another article 'The Society of Arts Annual Exhibition. Some of the Pictures', on p. 6 of the same issue of the *Advertiser* critiqued at some length many hung paintings but did not mention the china painting exhibits.
- ¹⁰⁸ Viewed in 2006 in the Royal South Australian Society of Arts catalogue archives.
- ¹⁰⁹ 'Exhibition of Art and Industry', The Art Section *Advertiser* 19 March 1895, p. 5. (Vitrines were glass sided cabinets. The comments by the writer showed his/her lack of knowledge. The painting had not been applied to greenware and fired as the words indicated, but had been painted onto glazed, fired china and refired.)
- ¹¹⁰ SLSA Z Per 607.34I 42(a) Chamber of Manufacturers Official Guide to the Exhibition of Art and Industry 1895, 14 March to 15 April. Final Edition, p. 18. Items in this entry included afternoon tea trays, a teapot, plates, teacups and saucers. Mention was made that the exhibitor did all the burning.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 20, 19.
- ¹¹² SRSA GRG 19/95 Finance – Return of fees paid by students for attendances at the School of Painting and Technical Art Vol. 2 1892-1897. It is not possible to accurately state the number and names of all pupils who paid fees for the china painting classes as many student name entries were followed only by the fee paid and hours of attendance without the additional title of the class. However the names of Howie, Barker and Johnson were documented as in the china painting classes. I am unable to locate any of the mentioned pieces of china painting.
- ¹¹³ Ibid., No. 28 p. 26.
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid., No. 489 p. 16.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid., No. 486 p. 15
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 60.
- ¹¹⁷ 'School of Design', *Register*, 10 February 1896, p.6.
- ¹¹⁸ 'Education', *Advertiser*, 10 February 1896, p. 2. The special classes were solid geometry, elementary perspective, principles of elementary conventional design, and modelling. They could be taken consecutively and would run from February to August. Fees varied from five shillings for a course of six lectures to ten shillings a course and could include examinations.
- ¹¹⁹ SRSA SAPD 1895 House of Assembly 10 September 'Service reductions', indicated that many departments were already altering pay sheets. Also 'Public salaries bill' with mention that the first reading relating to public salaries showed the 'grave importance' of the bill. Protests were warranted 'unless the Government intended to make other classes of the community besides civil servants bear a portion of the burdens of the state'.

¹²⁰ ‘Deputation The Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery’, *Register* 19 September 1895 p.3. It was proposed that opening hours of some Institutions could be shortened and salary cuts made. So far I can not find official records of deputations to Ministers.

¹²¹ ‘The Public Library and Museum The Proposed Restrictions Deputation from the Board’, *Advertiser*, 19 September 1895, p. 7.

¹²² ‘Public Notices’, *Advertiser*, 15 February 1896, p. 2.

¹²³ SRSA GRG 19/95/2 (1896). P. 118 Miss Charlotte Murray paid thirty shillings for the Autumn Session. P.139 she paid thirty shillings for the Winter session. There were no entries listed for china painting in the Spring Session that started in September and ended in December 1896.

¹²⁴ ‘Public Notices’, *Register*, 11 September 1896, p. 2.

¹²⁵ ‘The School of Design Annual Exhibition’, *Register*, 10 September 1896, p. 6.

¹²⁶ ‘School of Design. Students’ Exhibition’, *Advertiser*, 10 September 1896, p. 7.

¹²⁷ ‘School of Design. Students’ Exhibition’, *Advertiser*, 9 September 1897, p. 6.

¹²⁸ University of South Australia, City West Library SP 709.9423 S372 School of Design Art Club Magazine June 1898. The article showed Fiveash’s good understanding of the manufacturing process in potteries and the properties of various English clays and their characteristics used for example, by Doulton’s. Although written some time after lessons ceased, Fiveash’s descriptions of china painting techniques and her own admission of the difficulty of the medium, indicate that it was not an easy subject for beginners to master.

¹²⁹ Brian Chapman, *Depression in South Australia: The Late Nineteenth Century*, BA Hons. thesis, University of Adelaide, 1967, p. 138. The financial crisis was Australia wide in the early 1890s. In South Australia, two banks closed in 1891 and in 1893 five banks with branches in South Australia either failed or suspended payment. P. 55 mentions the start of the dry summers in the pastoral areas and which led into the drought that lasted till the end of the century in South Australia.

¹³⁰ Chapman, p. 15, the wheat yield, previously ranging around five to six bushels per acre, dropped to 1.7 bushels per acre in 1896-7 and remained low till 1900. Many wheat farmers could not financially survive. P. 58, stock losses, especially sheep on large pastoral holdings were high, and some stations such as Callabonna Station in 1896, were abandoned.

¹³¹ Chapman, pp. 82-86. The building industry was affected and that included brick making, pipes etc so potteries such as Shearings would have been affected. Women in textile industries and retail trade were affected as demand lessened.

¹³² Magarey, *Ever Yours C.H. Spence*, p. 315. Spence had spent 20 months overseas visiting Britain and Europe.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 166. No date was given for this piece of Spence’s writing.

¹³⁴ In the commercial advertising section, *Advertiser*, 8 September 1898, p. 3. Available from R. A. Matters an importer at Sheffield House, 72 Rundle Street. The advertisement also contained an illustration of a large ewer and basin decorated with an elaborate printed floral design.

¹³⁵ Archives of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts, Exhibition Catalogues section.

¹³⁶ SRSA GRG 19/329 Cashbook of the School of Painting Design and Technical Art 1896-1909. Within pp. 10-22 entries show that Fiveash was most active in her china painting outside the school from October to December, 1907.

¹³⁷ Victoria Hammond, Juliet Peers, *Completing the Picture: Women Artists and the Heidelberg Era*, Artmoves, Hawthorn East Victoria, 1992, pp. 17-18.

¹³⁸ SRSA GRG 19/289. Report from Mr. L. Tannert, Master of the Art School 1881:1. Accompanied by Mr. Abrahams he inspected the School on 23 September 1881 and noted the state of disorder it was in. He also noted that Mr. Hill would not be finishing his duties for another few days.

¹³⁹ Jordan, pp. 133-138.

¹⁴⁰ Skinner, p. 21.

¹⁴¹ ‘Wildflower Beauty that Never Fades’, *Mail*, Saturday 8 October 1932, Women’s Section, p. 10.

¹⁴² In 2006 it is difficult to find where Fiveash’s original paintings for this commission are located. The Mortlock library is not able to establish if their collection of Fiveash’s work includes any of her original *Forest Flora* commissioned paintings or whether the collection consists solely of Fiveash’s donation towards the end of her life. (The latter is most likely). The State Herbarium’s Fiveash collection consists predominantly of works first held by the Art Gallery of South Australia and subsequently transferred to the Museum, then to the Herbarium.

¹⁴³ Joan Kerr (ed.), *Heritage, The National Women’s Art Book*, pp. 171, 174. Although other artists in Australia such as Margaret Forrest of Western Australia and Margaret Hope in Tasmania, also painted Australian flora and fauna around the same period as Fiveash, their work was in watercolours, gouache or oils and not painted on china. P. 176 mentions Fiveash’s china painting. However that article does not make the distinction that Fiveash’s china painting pre-dated that of Ellis Rowan, whose flower paintings were reproduced on china by artists employed in the Royal Worcester Porcelain Company after 1912.

¹⁴⁴ SLSA Z Per 607.34I 42(a) Chamber of Manufacturers official Guide to the Exhibition of Art and Industry 1895, 14 March to 15 April, p. 20. It was for sale at one hundred and sixty pounds.

¹⁴⁵ Ann Stephen (ed.), *Visions of a Republic: the Work of Lucien Henri*, Powerhouse Publishing, Sydney, 2001, Preface; Baker's later visit to Adelaide to lecture on Indigenous flora will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁶ 'Local Science and Art Examinations', *Advertiser*, 18 December 1895, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ 'Art Examinations', *Register*, 11 November 1898, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ Skinner, p. 7. It is recorded in the 1912/13 Annual report of the Society. Rosa resigned from and rejoined the Society several times during her lifetime.

¹⁴⁹ 'Mr. Thomas Martin's Will', *Advertiser*, 15 July 1898, p. 4. Martin was Fiveash's uncle and he also left a legacy to Fiveash's mother.

¹⁵⁰ Skinner, p. 27. Rosa and other Australian artists had work sent to the Grafton Galleries in London for an Australian artists' exhibition held in 1898 and from which dealer Seidelmeyer from Paris had purchased one of her paintings. It was likely that Fiveash intended to exhibit and sell her paintings in England and Paris.

¹⁵¹ Alexandra Hasluck, *Audrey Tennyson's Vice-Regal Days: the Australian letters of Audrey Lady Tennyson 1899-1903*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1978, p. 91. The letter was written on Sunday 4 March 1900 when Lady Tennyson was at Marble Hill, the Vice-Regal summer residence in the Adelaide Hills. Two hundred pounds was quite a sum for the times.

¹⁵² Hasluck, p. 94. This letter was written on Sunday 25 March 1900. Hallam was the Christian name of the Governor.

¹⁵³ 'South Australian Wildflowers', *Advertiser*, 23 July 1900, p. 6.

¹⁵⁴ SLSA. SAPP 1957 pp. 8, 12. The Fiveash watercolour botanical drawings housed at the Art Gallery and transferred to the Museum totalled over 200 separate paintings.

¹⁵⁵ 24th Annual Report of the Board of the Botanic Gardens, Adelaide, for the year ended 30th June 1979.

¹⁵⁶ Herbarium Collection, Botanic Gardens. Folder 582 (91.306) Myrtaceae. On the back of this painting is the stamp of the National gallery of South Australia with 'transferred to Museum department AGB 27/5/1957. Also written on the back, a note 'Exhibited C of M 1895'.

¹⁵⁷ University of South Australia, City West Library SP 709.9423 S372 School of Design Art Club Magazine December 1902. Fiveash's article occupied 29 pages – most of that issue – and also included descriptions of landscape with peasants working in the fields, as seen through the train's windows. She commented also on the VERY thick earthenware cups and plates on which they were served breakfast at the French/Italian border.

¹⁵⁸ Skinner, p. 1. The sketch books were dispersed after her death, are now evidently in private hands and can not be located. However the SAART Database shows that in the July 1902 South Australian Society of Arts Annual Exhibition Fiveash exhibited three sketches from her trip.

¹⁵⁹ Barr Smith Library Archives LS 10: Correspondence. Several letters from 20 March 1959 to 22 April 1959 between J. G. Wood Professor of Botany and W. A. Cowan Librarian, document the transfer of the eight volumes of Fiveash's scientifically accurate artwork into the special care of the Barr Smith Library where they would be available to researchers.

¹⁶⁰ Herbarium, Botanic Gardens of Adelaide, Department for Environment and Heritage. Box F 582 (91.514) Orchids A –D and Box F 582 (91.514) Orchids E-Z. The book was published by Rigby, 1974, with text by Mr. T. Lothian. The date 1906 is on the back of some paintings.

¹⁶¹ Mackinnon, p. 81.

¹⁶² Magarey, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, p. 174.

¹⁶³ Herbert Hale, *The first hundred years of the South Australian Museum 1856-1956*. Records of the South Australian Museum, Vol. XII. Published by the Museum Board, Adelaide, 1956, p. 54.

¹⁶⁴ Skinner, p. 16. Fiveash kept a personal scrap book and this contained a newspaper clipping, c. 1937 that mentioned her seahorse teaset. In a telephone conversation 13 April 2005 Skinner stated that Rosa did not sell very much, if any, of her china painting but gave some away to relatives in her lifetime.

¹⁶⁵ Personal letter to the author from a Fiveash relative, Sue Shippers, Victoria, 25 May 2005.

¹⁶⁶ The Porcelain Art Centre is currently situated in a building in Buttery reserve, Norwood and is run jointly by the South Australian China Painters' Association and the Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers S. A. Inc. They do not own the premises and have changed location several times over the years. Their Historical Collection concentrates on the work of South Australian china painters and is quite extensive, though poorly documented. Joan Davis, a relative of Fiveash's, allegedly donated the Sturt Pea plate to this collection.

¹⁶⁷ 'Women's Section', *Mail*, Saturday 8 October 1932, p. 10

¹⁶⁸ Jane Hylton, *Modern Australian Women: Paintings and Prints 1925-1945*, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2000, p. 9, Introduction by Ron Radford, mentioned that Adelaide produced more than its share of important modern women artists of the 1920-30s. Hylton noted that in 1927 a whole issue of *Art in Australia* was devoted to Preston's work, p.70.

¹⁶⁹ 'Artists valuable gift to public library', *News* 23 August 1937 p.6; Skinner, p. 17 quotes a report 6 Aug 1937 by Library and Archives Committee to the Directors of the Public Library that she wanted to sell them for 200 pounds at first.

Introduction

In this chapter I will trace the changing status in South Australia of china painting from 1896 to the end of the Second World War, which saw a final drop in the popularity of this art form.

China painting did not prove to be a skill of use for employment in the pottery industry as had originally been envisaged by Gill in the 1880s. It was nevertheless a useful subject for some women artists to include in curricula taught in their own studios in the late 1890s and early 1900s. China painting classes were re-introduced into the School of Design Painting and Technical Art in 1906, and in this chapter I will discuss why this occurred. Classes were taught at first by Edith Palmer (1875-1970) and subsequently by Laurence Hotham Howie (1876-1963) as an artistic pursuit until Howie's departure overseas as a member of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in 1915.

Following Howie's return after the war he became Principal of the School of Arts and Crafts and re-introduced china painting into the syllabus. I explore factors that contributed to the increasing popularity of the china painting classes. I will argue that it was Howie who was most influential in the rise of china painting in the 1920-30s. He saw it not as a form of training for full-time employment in industry, but as a form of applied art/craft practice for professional artists to acquire. They also gained a certificated skill.¹ Howie's influence was helped by his own skills as an exhibitor and teacher as well as his recognised proficiency in the crafts. His early training and teaching opportunities in the School of Design under Gill were factors that enabled him to gain a public profile that proved useful in his subsequent role as an influential Principal in the 1920-30s. The 1920s also saw the emergence of Art Deco and I will discuss how this movement modified the more conservative floral approach to china painting in the School.

Establishing a Professional Career

By the end of the nineteenth century, and in the first decade of the twentieth century, numerous women who had received formal art training at the School established themselves as professional artists and art teachers and operated city studios, even though some were still engaged in part-time studies at the School.²

China painting tuition in the School of Design was dropped from the syllabus in 1897, but Lama Barker, a student in Fiveash's china painting class in 1894, continued with other studies in the School till at least 1898.³ While Barker and Eva Tapson were still part-time students at the School, they shared a city studio in 1897 and advertised tuition in drawing, oils, watercolours and china painting.⁴ Suitable china blanks and china paints were available in 1897 from the nearby Rigby's store, King William Street, Adelaide.⁵ Other women students began teaching art within a short time after finishing their studies at the School. Rose McPherson (later Margaret Preston) for instance, was a student in the Life class in the School in 1898, and in 1899 she placed a notice in the *Advertiser* that she would resume teaching drawing and painting on 14 January at the Studio No. 12, A.M.P. Buildings, King William Street Adelaide, and she advertised again in 1907.⁶ Some women maintained a city studio for many years after finishing their studies at the School. In 1900 the Misses Hambidge, who had studied in the Schools of Design and Painting in the 1880s, advertised that they were artists and portrait painters who would resume classes on 27 February.⁷ Miss Jean Wilson, who had also studied at the School, established the Central Art Studio where she taught all branches of art and advertised the fact from 1894 to at least 1908.⁸ Miss E. Barringer advertised that her classes for drawing and painting would resume 11 February 1907.⁹ In 1907 china painting tuition was again advertised by women such as Miss R. Holder in their city studios. Holder studied in the School of Design in 1898-1900 and advertised

that she would receive pupils for Drawing and Painting, including china painting, at the Studio in Commercial Chambers, Currie Street Adelaide, with classes commencing on 11 February 1907.¹⁰

The cessation of the teaching of china painting was apparent when it did not feature in the School of Design's display in the *Century Exhibition of Arts and Industries* organised by Chamber of Manufactures in 1900. This was despite Gill's efforts to liaise with the pottery industry about the inclusion of china painting in work shown by the School of Design in the 1895 *Chamber of Manufactures Exhibition of Art and Industry*. In an 1899 report to the Fine Arts Committee of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of South Australia, Gill suggested that the School take part in the 1900 *Century Exhibition of Arts and Industries*, because he was of the opinion 'that this school is able to assist the manufacturers quite beyond the thoughts of any manufacturer'.¹¹ He said a number of classes, including pottery painting, from the School could 'get up good exhibits'. 'Pottery painting' is rather a loose term, but in an attached supplement to that report, he described it as 'modelled, coloured, glazed and burnt, suitable for insertion as plaques and panels in buildings'.¹² Clearly this was not china painting, rather it suggests the use of coloured glazes or slip work with different coloured clays.¹³

Despite the cessation of china painting classes at the School of Design, there remained some interest in it within the South Australian community. For instance Miss Edith Faith Palmer exhibited china painting in the 1905 *South Australian Chamber of Manufactures' Exhibition*.¹⁴ Fiveash was the only other exhibitor of china painting in this exhibition, entering eleven pieces.¹⁵ Public interest in the art form also increased in several Australian states during the first decade of the twentieth century. The Hobart Arts and Crafts Guild held an exhibition in 1903 in which china painting was included in the wide range of categories.¹⁶ It also became increasingly popular in Victoria during this time, where there was a widespread practice of private studio

teaching of china painting.¹⁷ By 1910 Melbourne china painter Miss Rose Patterson had an exhibition in her city studio of her china painting in which the *Argus* reviewer commented, 'The art of painting on china, when carried out in something more than a mere decorative manner, is always an attractive one to connoisseurs.'¹⁸ At the Sydney Technical College where J. Arthur Peach had taught china painting since 1896, his classes were still popular by 1908.¹⁹ It seems that, despite initial enthusiasm in 1894, china painting in South Australia was falling behind other states. Gill was aware of courses offered in technical colleges in other states, and thought it timely once again to offer china painting as a subject in the School of Design.

In Adelaide, the School's records indicate that at least one pupil sought tuition in china painting in the Autumn Session in 1906, and in the latter half of the Spring Session in 1906 the School offered weekly classes in china painting.²⁰ A notice inserted by Gill in the *Advertiser* on 21 September 1906 specifically mentioned 'china painting class' under supervision of Miss E. F. Palmer and requested intending students to forward their names to the Registrar.²¹

Although Miss Edith Faith Palmer was engaged to teach china painting, she was not on the full-time staff, and she also continued to teach art and china painting privately. This is evident from her advertisement headed 'china painting' she placed in the *Register* in February 1907, with her address as Glenelg.²² It stated that drawing and painting terms could begin on any date, and that china for painting was for sale, including 'Orders taken for Wedding Presents etc.'²³ The fact that she carried stocks of suitable china blanks reveals an entrepreneurial business attitude, and that she was sufficiently experienced in china painting, and firing, to be aware of the importance of the quality of the china blank to achieve good results, since several firings are often necessary when painting with on-glaze enamels.

Earlier accounts such as that by Noris Ioannou suggest that Palmer began her china painting in Sydney, probably under Peach in 1898.²⁴ However Palmer's formal art education was firmly based in Adelaide in the early 1890s, where records show that she sat for several South Kensington exams in 1893 when she was 18 years of age and she took further exams in 1894 and 1895.²⁵ In 1893 and 1894 she was listed as a student at J. Ashton's Norwood Art School. During 1894 she was also listed as one of Gill's students in the School of Design and she continued to sit for the South Kensington exams under Gill in 1895. However she was not successful in her first attempt in 1895 to gain her Art Class Teacher's Certificate under the South Kensington system.²⁶ It was a difficult financial year for Palmer, but she was fortunate that Gill was a man who took an interest in his students who tried hard under difficult circumstances. He took the unusual step, in February 1896, of writing to the Fine Arts Committee to recommend that half the fee due from Miss E. Faith Palmer for one session in 1895 be remitted, as 'she was in straitened circumstances'.²⁷ Palmer also taught art privately in 1895, as her student Eleanor Palmer gained an excellent grade in exams conducted under the auspices of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery.²⁸ Gill was thus in a position to know of Palmer's abilities when he engaged her as the part-time teacher of china painting in the School in 1906-07.

In February 1907 the School again included china painting classes in the curriculum.²⁹ The advertised fee for the three-hour china painting class was one pound ten shillings a term, which was expensive compared to one guinea a term for the three-hour woodcarving class and fifteen shillings and nine pence a term for a weekly three-hour painting class. Ten students enrolled in china painting during that year, some for one term only, others for three terms.³⁰ A pencilled notation in Gill's writing on his report to the Fine Arts Committee in September 1907 noted that Miss Palmer had received ten pounds six shillings in fees from students of china painting last term, and that the work of those students, plus work of some outsiders, had been burnt in the

School's kiln for which there was a scale of charges for 'burning china'.³¹

However queries were raised by the Fine Arts Committee regarding the supply of china blanks for students in Miss Palmer's china painting class, and Gill was asked to explain why Miss Palmer the teacher should sell porcelain, as it was the Board's decision that the Registrar should sell school requisites. In his reply to the Committee, Gill stated that he did not know why Miss Palmer was permitted to sell porcelain, as that was 'covered by a Board minute which was not created through any request of mine'.³² At the close of that report, Gill pointed out that the Registrar should not sell white porcelain, because it was subject to breakage and a large stock would be required to cover students' requirements. He further cautioned that since china painting had not proved a continuing subject, the Board could find itself left with unsaleable stock. In a pencilled notation Gill wrote 'Why does Miss Prosser sell Doulton and other similar ware'. Gill added that Miss Prosser was also employed by the Board on a part-time basis, and she also taught elsewhere and therefore 'can hardly be dealt with as a member of the staff, the whole of whose time is paid for by the Board'.³³ Miss Maud Prosser and Palmer knew each other as they had both been in the same class under Gill in 1895.³⁴ By 1907 Prosser taught art needlework in the School, and may well have helped her friend Palmer out at a busy time when china painting enrolments increased during the last term of 1907.

Palmer not only taught china painting and sold blanks within the School, but she also did the School firing for students and non-enrolled people.³⁵ However the Wilkie kiln imported from America by the Board in 1893-4 for china painting was nearing the end of its life. Gill reported to the Board that the recently repaired kiln was in a very weak condition, and could probably be only used a few more times. He recommended that it be replaced by a new one, with firing charges worked out to ensure a return of the kiln cost and the gas used in the future.³⁶ A new kiln

arrived from Melbourne in November, but when unpacked, was found to be broken in certain parts and required mending.³⁷

Firing records indicate that china painting by students in the School and from outsiders increased during November and December in 1907.³⁸ Class numbers in the School's china painting class increased from initially one student in the half-session of the third term in 1906, to seven students in the second term of 1907, to ten students in the last term of 1907. However, due to her impending marriage, Palmer resigned from her teaching position in the School, and Gill notified the Fine Arts Committee of her resignation as Mistress of the China Painting Class in December 1907.³⁹ This came at a critical time as class numbers had steadily increased and it was a financially successful venture. Exact reasons for the increase in popularity are not clear, but publicity about the Women's Work Exhibition in Melbourne, which had School entries, could have been one impetus for the rising interest in china painting in South Australia. It was viewed as 'women's work' that was especially useful as an artistic pursuit for women who enjoyed decorating their homes with their own hand-painted, dainty, useful objects.

The First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work, 1907.

Prior to 1907 there were various exhibitions in which women exhibited their art and craftwork in Australia.⁴⁰ But nevertheless 1907 was an important year for show-casing women's work and exhibits were deliberately sought in all Australian states for the *First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work* held in the Exhibition Building, Melbourne, 23 October to 30 November. Her Excellency the Lady Alice Northcote, wife of the Governor-General of Australia, was the moving force behind the exhibition and was President, with Queen Alexandra as Patroness. The viceregal ladies in each state were Vice-Presidents and each state had a working committee

responsible for organising preliminary displays from which the best items would be selected for the exhibition in Melbourne.⁴¹ The social as well as artistic prestige for exhibiting in such an exhibition was considerable. There was good newspaper coverage, both of events leading up to the selection of work and of the actual Melbourne event.

The initial meeting in South Australia of the committee took place in Adelaide on 4 January 1907, so it was highly likely that Gill received early notification of the Melbourne Exhibition and certain schools were notified. The School of Design sent a needlework exhibit, for which a medal and certificate were awarded at the Women's Work Exhibition.⁴² Gill encouraged china painting students to enter their work and even though no awards were made to the thirteen South Australian china painters in the Melbourne Exhibition, the School of Design was well represented. Palmer exhibited several china-painting pieces, as did her 1907 students Dorothy Lungley, Maud Wholohan, Helen F Stewart, Mabel Dean, J Legoe and L Downer.⁴³ Rhoda Holder, who taught china painting privately in South Australia, exhibited one item. Victorian china painters were overwhelmingly represented. For example in Class 52 -Open Class 'Best Single Specimen', there were only four South Australian exhibits, three from New South Wales but fifty-seven exhibits by Victorian women.

At a meeting called in Government House Adelaide in July 1907, The South Australian Governor's wife Lady Le Hunte, remarked that the idea of the exhibition was to benefit women of a recently Federated Australia:

Among the aims of the exhibition the one most emphasised by the promoters is the purely Federal nature of the undertaking ... all women will cooperate in one great band, and make a concerted effort as Australians ... chief of (the results) is the cementing of Australia's federation among her women.⁴⁴

After reiterating that there was to be a local display in Adelaide from which the selection

committee would choose the exhibits to go to the Melbourne, Lady Le Hunte commented:

It was to be an opportunity for one grand united effort of women to bring about a certain good. By logical sequence of cause and effect, and by many uncalculated and indirect ways this exhibition is bound to leave its mark on Australian history ... This great effort we are now making will go to show the world that the women of Australia are a federated power, able and willing to do all that women can do in art, physical culture, needlework, and in the more homely but equally necessary ways of household duties...⁴⁵

Interest in the coming exhibition was high, with a wide variety of competitive classes. For example architectural design included Class 48 Best Design for a Suburban Residence, Class 53 for Best Carved Useful Article of Furniture. The Melbourne committee found:

it was often difficult to decide, too, which was women's work and which men's, for by degrees women are taking a share in most professions and industries formerly considered suitable for men only ... in the Arts section women have for years been making great advance, and more particularly in Applied Arts, where finish and delicacy of manipulation are desirable.⁴⁶

Although the aims of the exhibition were not to be political, Caroline Miley disagreed. She quoted McWhirter as saying that 'it was done in order to force the acknowledgment of the contribution of their skill from the other sex ...'.⁴⁷ Miley commented on the popularity and success of the Women's Work 1907 Exhibition, pointing out that it indicated the position of women was linked to the general progress of the times. She noted that Lady Northcote, in her speech at the opening ceremony, stated that women were, like Australian industry and education, 'in a transition stage'.⁴⁸

The Exhibition was an example of feminism of the times and an acknowledgment of the contribution Australian women were making to Australian culture following Federation. It was envisaged that the exhibition would open up new avenues for employment for women and entice them out of the domestic sphere into the world of business and industry. In South Australia there was no industrial employment within the pottery industry for women as painters and decorators

along the lines of English industry, but china painting did receive a boost in popularity and recognition through the Women's Work 1907 Exhibition.

Howie: A China Painting Teacher and Practitioner until World War I

By the end of 1907, Howie had been involved with the School of Design under Gill for about fifteen years as a student, then teacher. In 1892 when he was 15 years of age, Howie was already a student at the school and sat for South Kensington exams then and for several years thereafter.⁴⁹ He worked hard and in February 1897 was appointed as Assistant Master School of Design.⁵⁰ Gill noted Howie's ability to teach Technical Handicrafts such as woodcarving and gave him those areas to teach as early as 1897.⁵¹ He was promoted to First Assistant Master 1 February 1906 (figure 5).⁵² His skill at china painting was known to Gill since Howie was in Fiveash's china painting classes in 1894 and Howie gained awards in the 1895 *Chamber of Manufactures Exhibition*.

After Palmer's resignation in 1907, Gill decided to continue the china painting class and recommended that Howie fill her position, and be sent to Melbourne, 'that he may to the knowledge he already possesses add some later knowledge that he may conduct this work at the School'.⁵³ In January 1908 Gill reported on Howie's trip to Melbourne 'to obtain lessons in China Painting and Firing' from Miss Grist. Nellie Grist was a Melbourne china painter and teacher and the charge of two guineas for lessons indicates that she taught additional painting skills to Howie.⁵⁴ Gill noted the cost of two guineas for lessons but commented, regarding Miss Grist's further charge of five guineas for firing tuition:

Your Committee will notice that the fee charged by Miss Grist for firing is five pounds five shillings. This is a heavy fee but 'firers' charge highly for this purely technical instruction which they never impart to their ordinary students. If your Committee could recoup Mr. Howie his expenses out of pocket I feel that he would appreciate it.⁵⁵

It may seem odd that Howie should need lessons in firing in Melbourne, and not from Palmer herself, who had fired the School's work quite satisfactorily in 1906-7. One clue may lie in the kiln the School purchased in November 1907 from Melbourne. The kiln had arrived broken and in his report to the Fine Arts Committee, Gill added in pencil on 2 December 1907, 'Who pays for the repairs?' and further added in ink that he appended a letter from Miss Grist on the breakage.⁵⁶ It indicates that Miss Grist was involved with the sale/purchase of the kiln in some way. Firing might be purely a technical skill, but it was certainly a very necessary skill for the success of china painting, as Gill had noted to Fiveash in 1893.

In 1908-9 Howie maintained the School's policy of providing a china firing service for china painters outside the School, including Fiveash and some of Palmer's previous students. Classes under Howie's instruction produced china painting which, when exhibited in the School's Annual Exhibition in 1908, received good media reports in the *Register* and *Advertiser* (figure 6). Oil and watercolour paintings and drawings were considered 'fine art' and reviewers usually commented at some length on those sections first, as they did for that exhibition. However rising interest in the School's classes in 'the crafts' or 'applied arts' was indicated by the fact that, in exhibition reviews in newspapers, instead of a brief few comments within one or two short paragraphs on any craftwork exhibited, subheadings were used by the *Register* to describe exhibits in the 1908 exhibition in such areas as Wood Carving, Ceramic Painting, Leatherwork, Copper and Clay.

Under the subheading 'Ceramic Painting' the *Register's* reviewer commented, 'There is a beautiful collection of hand-painted china ...'.⁵⁷ Some of the pieces were the work of Miss Palmer who, as the newspaper commented, 'resigned her charge of the class prior to her marriage a few months ago and was succeeded by Mr. Howie'.⁵⁸ The article described some of the

exhibited work. Floral images were overwhelmingly popular and although cottage-garden types of blooms such as roses, plumbago, nasturtiums, tecoma and wisteria featured, native flora was not ignored as Miss Palmer's featured item was a 'beautiful vase treated ... in a chaste design of eucalyptus foliage and flowers'.⁵⁹ Women from the Downer family enjoyed tuition in several applied arts subjects, including china painting, in the School. Mrs Frank Downer and Miss Marion Downer's china painting instruction under Palmer in 1907 continued under Howie in 1908, and Mrs Frank Downer exhibited a full dessert set 'decorated with Australian flowers'. Howie also exhibited some china painting in the School's 1908 exhibition, but there was no mention of the subject matter that he used within his designs.

The Change in Control of the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art

After 30 June 1909, control of the School of Design Painting and Technical Art was transferred from the Board of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery to the South Australian Education Department. Teaching staff in the School had to resign their positions and were then re-employed by the Education Department. Gill received notice of termination of his services under the Board on 30 June 1909, and was then offered the position of continuing as Principal of the School. After some hesitation, he accepted.⁶⁰ The name of the School was changed to the Adelaide School of Art, commonly shortened to the 'School of Art', whereas prior July 1909 it was commonly called the 'School of Design'.

In September 1909 just after the transfer, china painting classes taught by Howie for the third term were still advertised at the previous fee of one pound ten shillings. Other 'special classes' such as woodcarving, copper repousse work, art needlework and modelling classes in which some student teachers were enrolled, continued. Such classes indicated an increasing

groundswell of interest in South Australia in the applied arts/handicrafts.

The growing interest in china painting also reflected the influence of the English nineteenth century Arts and Crafts Movement that spread to most Australian states and espoused the value of a ‘hands-on’ approach to producing useful arts/handicrafts. Flower painting, which had the reputation of being a suitable subject for women to tackle, reflected the feminine culture of Victorian England, while the sinuous curves used to depict floral forms in the Art Nouveau style were well suited to floral designs for china painting. Additionally, the impetus to develop an Australian-ness in art that was aroused around the time of Federation, increased the popularity of depicting Australian flora, and was subject matter that Howie used in some of his own china painting, as will be discussed later. Furthermore, Howie was interested in the crafts, and was an experienced teacher in subjects such as woodcarving that had many uses within domestic and church interiors, and for which he sometimes used floral subject matter. He was the right man, in the right place at the right time, to popularise South Australian china painting as an acceptable applied art pursuit.

Although Annual Exhibitions of work produced at the School of Art continued to showcase the skills of teachers and students, there were other exhibitions through which individuals could gain some public recognition. Howie, for example, exhibited some of his china painting in the 1910 *Annual Exhibition of the Society of Arts*, and within a few years china painting by some of his students was also exhibited in Society of Art’s exhibitions. This will be discussed in the next chapter. Another exhibiting venue was the exhibition organised approximately every five years by the Chamber of Manufactures. The Chamber’s 1910 *Exhibition of South Australian Products, Manufactures, Arts and Industries* attracted a greater number of china painting exhibits than did its 1905 Exhibition. Neither Fiveash, Palmer nor Howie exhibited china painting in that 1910

exhibition, but Miss Maida Wright who had been a part-time student at the School for several years, exhibited a total of thirty-nine pieces of hand painted china.⁶¹

Inevitably there were changes once the School of Design became the Adelaide School of Art and it was under the Education Department. Newspaper advertisements show that the fees for the three-hour china painting class taken by Mr. Howie dropped from one pound ten shillings a session, in September 1909 just after the move to the Education Department, to a mere ten shillings and sixpence a session in 1912.⁶²

The increase in popularity of china painting could be partly attributed to the fact that good tuition under Howie was now more affordable, at one-third the former fee. Moreover students like Ethel Barringer, who enrolled in china painting, also studied in other classes at the School, and thus their applied arts skills became just one of a range of other arts skills for a professional artist. Multi-skilling of students would also improve the quality of work they painted on china, and this in turn would improve critical evaluation in the Annual Exhibition reviews. The work of Howie's china painting class did indeed receive favourable reviews in the media after each Annual Exhibition of the School of Art, and his own work, including pieces of his china painting, when exhibited in the more prestigious environment of the South Australian Society of Art Exhibitions also attracted notice. Maida Wright's thirty-nine pieces of china painting shown in the 1910 Chamber of Manufactures Exhibition would also have been noticeable.

Newspaper reports of the May 1912 annual exhibition of the School of Art were favourable, and all mentioned the excellence of the china painting exhibits produced under the instruction of Mr. Howie. About seventy pieces of china painting were exhibited, including the work of Miss F

[Floy] Hubble and Miss Maida Wright.⁶³ The *Advertiser* dwelt at some length on the china painting, stating:

One of the most interesting sections of the exhibition was that devoted to the porcelain coloring (sic) work, and some beautiful articles were on view in this branch. The instructor in this work is Mr. Howie, and the whole of the work from the design to the burning of the enamel colors into the porcelain is done under his supervision. The students first draw a sketch from nature, then evolve a design on that base, and having chosen an harmonious combination of colours, copy it off onto the cup or saucer or vase that is to be decorated. Some particularly dainty pieces of work were shown by Miss Hubble, the design being of pink gum blossom on a blue ground ... Miss Maida Wright and Miss Ethel Barringer had on view some fine pieces, and there were other exhibitors, all of whom deserve commendation.⁶⁴

The reviewer also commented favourably on the School's over-all performance, which made good publicity. Such was the case for the 1912 Annual Exhibition when the *Advertiser* review stated:

That the Adelaide School of Art, of which Mr. H. P. Gill, A.R.C.A., is principal and examiner, is a successful and efficient institution was clearly shown by the display of work done by the students which was made on the occasion of the annual exhibition on Monday. A finer display of applied arts had never been made by the students, and the teachers had every right to be gratified by the results of their tuition. From the elementary courses of drawing to oil painting, and water colors, portrait sketching, wood carving, stencilling, porcelain work, copper work and clay modelling, every class of art was represented, and the whole display was attractive and effective. There are over 850 students at the school, of whom over 200 are teachers in course of training.⁶⁵

At the end of 1912, due to Gill's absence on leave, Howie gained increased experience in the administrative duties of running an Art School. The Annual Report for the year of 1912 was written and signed by Howie as 'Chief Assistant for the Principal and Examiner absent on leave'. In that report Howie mentioned the School's good 1912 Exhibition and the various types of work exhibited, including the china painting.⁶⁶ Howie also signed the 1913 Annual Report 'for the Principal on leave' and again mentioned the successful May 1913 School Exhibition in which were exhibits of china painting. Gill returned to duty in 1914 and wrote the Annual 1914 report, with mention of china painting in the School's Annual Exhibition. In that report he also stated

that from the end of 1913 he was in England due to ill-health, returned in October 1914 and was pleased with the job Howie did when he took over in Gill's absence.⁶⁷

In a review of the May 1914 School of Art Annual Exhibition, Howie's china painting class received even more critical acclaim with the writer commenting under 'China Painting':

Perhaps no section affords a better idea of the scope of the training than does that in which the china painting is comprised. The aim is clearly to adapt natural objects, and particularly the Australian flora, to decorative uses, and a high degree of success is achieved. The drawings are first worked out on paper in the classes, the natural plant beings sketched and afterwards the several details of foliage, fruit and flowers and buds elaborated separately in conventional form before being united into the design finally selected.⁶⁸

The description of 'conventionalisation' of Australian flora shows some influence of the Art Nouveau movement that Howie adapted within his own work. It also shows a shift from the naturalistic style of painting Australian flora on china so favoured by Fiveash. The review continued with descriptions of various pieces of hand painted china and commented that Miss Maida Wright was the chief exhibitor, using floral forms of *stercularia*, *tetratheca* and *hakeas*. Peacock feathers were utilised in the designs of Wright and also of Miss Gow. Hubble's fruit set with apple decoration was noticed, as was Mr. J. Butler's 'teacups in which the sweet pea provides the motif'. Not all students used floral motifs, Miss Houison had 'gone back a century or two for her subjects' and painted 'link boys carrying torches in the night' on a pair of candlesticks and painted a 'quaint illustration of a dame in a crinoline dress' on a plaque.⁶⁹

China painting classes ceased after Howie went overseas on active service in 1915 and were not resumed until 1923, well after he returned. In December 1914 Howie sat for what was to be his last exam in the School of Art and qualified for the Teacher's Advanced Full Certificate.⁷⁰ The Adelaide School of Art experienced difficulties in 1914 after the start of First World War, as did many other establishments with men enlisting and being sent overseas on active service. The

School's Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 1915 was written by the new Principal J. Christie Wright and dated 11 February 1916.⁷¹ Wright reported that H. P. Gill resigned his position in 1915 owing to ill health, and that the First Assistant Mr. Howie enlisted at the end of August 1915, and was currently away on leave.⁷²

Wright, who left the Sydney Teachers' College, was appointed Principal of the Adelaide School of Art in February 1916, but stayed for only six weeks, as he had already enlisted.⁷³ The School's 1916 Annual Report was duly written by Charles J Pavia who had a long association with the School as a student, then as an assistant teacher, and in 1916 he was appointed Acting Principal while Wright was on active service. In the 1916 Report, Pavia commented that Howie was still on active service in France. In March 1916, the name of the School was again changed – this time to the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts.⁷⁴

Pavia wrote a chatty letter dated 19 December 1916 to Wright informing him of news of events at the School.⁷⁵ (See Appendix 4.) In the letter Pavia described how the Public Schools set up a large fair called 'Wonderland' to raise money for the Repatriation Fund. The School of Arts had a successful arts and crafts stall in the shape of a mushroom, and china painting was one of the crafts included on the stall (figure 7). Pavia also mentioned the difficulty in getting applicants to take up studentships at the School during the year. He stated that 'We can only put it down to the bad times and the many avenues of employment opened to girls at the present'. The Director had made Pavia 'absolutely in charge till you or Howie return', but Pavia assured Wright that he intended to do everything he could to 'carry out your wishes in the manner you desire', and intended to write to Wright every month to let him know how things were going. In a subsequent letter to Wright on 6 March 1917, Pavia commented that the School badly needed more day-time paying students.⁷⁶ Sadly, Wright was killed in action in May 1917.

Although china painting was no longer taught at the School of Arts and Crafts during the war years, it remained part of the art practice exhibited by former students of the School, as will be discussed in the next chapter. The 1916 Annual report of the School, signed by Pavia, was the last of the more informative Annual Reports. The 1917 Annual report was titled ‘Extracts from the Report of the School of Arts and Crafts’ and carried no signature. It stated that a new school prospectus was issued in November 1917. That report also commented on the cost of the School to the State, since there were a number of students who paid no fees, including 500 Education Department Teachers who received free instruction, in contrast to the situation prior to 1909 when the Education Department paid the School one pound four shillings per annum for each such student.⁷⁷ In the 1920 Annual Report there was a statement that Senior Master Mr. Pavia continued in charge of the School for most of 1920.⁷⁸

Howie’s Return as Principal of the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts

Howie did not return to Australia immediately after the end of the war. In 1919 while in London he married a South Australian girl and was involved with making topographical records for the War Records Section of the Australian Infantry Forces.⁷⁹ David Dolan discussed the wartime sketches made by Howie and noted that Howie made no contact with the European or British modern artists of the day when he was overseas.⁸⁰ Dolan believed that Howie’s lack of engagement with international modernism contributed to the conservative direction of the School of Arts and Crafts. However a publication in 2007 by Howie’s daughter Mary, indicates that opportunities for Howie to contact modern artists in 1919 would have been minimal. Following the cessation of hostilities, he had further war duties to perform, albeit of a more artistic nature.⁸¹

The art teachers at the School in this era seemed unaware of the new ways of looking and the emerging revolt against naturalistic painting that was occurring in International art circles in the first decades of the twentieth century.⁸² This lack of focus on the new directions in art was due partly to the dual role of the School of Arts and Crafts in the 1920-30s, as had been the case when Gill and Tannert were engaged in the 1880s. Throughout the School's history, it always had the twin roles of teaching those aspiring to a career in the fine arts, and of teaching technical skills for wider use within industry. For both purposes a wide range of drawing skills was taught. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Education Department, a separate entity at the time, placed increasing importance on Gill's training of school teachers in various drawing skills. After the transfer of the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art to the Education Department in 1909, the Education Department gained more control of the School and the training of school teachers within the School of Art gradually gained momentum.

After Howie became Principal in 1920, his annual reports on the School of Arts and Crafts were made to Charles Fenner, the Superintendent of Technical Schools. Fenner then extracted what facts he deemed of sufficient importance to include within his own official report on the School of Arts and Crafts, which were then included in the Technical School Reports that were placed in the bound volumes of annual Education Reports.⁸³ Fenner's Report on the School of Arts and Crafts for the year ending 31 December 1920 mentioned that:

The Senior Master, Mr. C. J. Pavia continued in charge of the School, as Acting Principal, until the return from active service of Mr. L. H. Howie, who was appointed Principal on September 1st. The necessity for a permanent and more suitable building for this school has been pointed out. More space is also required for the development of craft classes, such as jewellery, enamelling, wood-carving and repousse work, china painting and pottery.⁸⁴

After Howie resumed his position as Principal, student teachers from the Teachers' Training College were also able to add some craft training to their skills. Judging by most of Fenner's

Annual Reports, his main interest was with teacher training, and not with Fine Art teaching. It is doubtful if he were concerned with, or would have advocated that art teaching within the School kept pace with such 'avant-garde' overseas trends as Cubism and Fauvism. The conservative style of work produced may well have been as much a result of Fenner's influence, as of Howie's training in his formative years under Gill.

Within limits, Howie had to comply with Fenner's expectations regarding the new syllabus. Most of the teachers were previous students, and this too, tended to reinforce the conservative pre-war attitude to art. In Fenner's 1924 Annual Report, he stated that an Advisory Council was appointed to assist in the work of the Art School, which by then had eleven full-time and four part-time teachers. By the 1930s Fenner reported a growing interest in art and craft education in country areas and stated, 'The School is responsible for training most commercial artists, teachers of art and handicrafts and the cultivation of the 'fine arts' of painting, drawing and modelling for their own sake'.⁸⁵

Howie was active in the South Australian Society of Arts and was a practising artist himself. He would have been aware of the expectations of students that they could train for careers as fine artists, and not just as teachers for the Education Department, and that the two careers were not mutually exclusive. Fortunately for student enrolment numbers, the arts and crafts movement remained popular in South Australian art circles well into the 1930s and budding professional artists also enrolled in craft classes as part of their training. The 'applied arts' in which wood-carving, repousse work, leatherwork, art needlework, and china painting had previously been placed, also fitted neatly within the burgeoning 1920-30s oeuvre of the 'decorative arts'.

In 1920, the *All-Australian Peace Exhibition* of manufactures, products, arts and industries was held and the official catalogue showed work exhibited as either Fine Arts Group 1 or Applied Arts as Group 2.⁸⁶ The five - yearly South Australian Chamber of Manufactures exhibitions had been postponed in 1915 due to the war. The Chamber decided to not hold another till Peace was declared, stating that, ‘Every encouragement should be given to the growing sentiment of Nationhood’.⁸⁷ Several current and former School of Arts and Crafts people, including Gladys Good (1890-1979), exhibited work in both categories (Group 1 and Group 2). The Education Department also mounted an exhibition of work from the School that included work in leather, carving, modelling, art needlework, drawing and design. Although china painting was not taught in the School of Arts and Crafts in 1920, it was a popular practice in the wider community, and the Peace Exhibition listed china painting exhibits by some of Howie’s pre-war students such as Maida Wright and Miss Hubble. Some china painters exhibited large amounts of their work, including Miss M Forwood who exhibited a collection of 60 pieces of china painting, Miss L Barker a collection of 70 pieces and Miss Reynolds a collection of 14 pieces.⁸⁸

Howie set about organising china painting classes in the School of Arts and Crafts, but once more, there was the problem of finding a suitable kiln at an acceptable price. In October 1922 he purchased a second-hand gas kiln from Rhoda Holder, but it needed repairs before it could be used.⁸⁹ China painting classes started in 1923, with Gladys Good (1890-1979) as the teacher, and were popular. Fenner stated in his Annual Report for the year of 1923:

New classes have been held for china painting. Interesting work has been done by the students for these classes under the charge of Miss Good. The popularity of this work is shown by the total of approximately 500 pieces of china fired since April.⁹⁰

Enrolment numbers for 1923 show that the class of China Painting Under Good, had twelve female but no male students.⁹¹ An account ‘School of Arts and Crafts Exhibition of Students’

Work' in the *Advertiser* commented that, 'this is the first year that china painting has been revived and the results are encouraging. So far only small objects are decorated, and there are some charming teacups, bowls, powder boxes and vases'.⁹²

Excellent publicity for the new subjects of enamelling, jewellery designing and china painting was given by an article in the *News*, March 1924.⁹³ Under the heading of 'School of Art, Work that Appeals, Enamelling and China Painting' was a report on the teachers Gladys Good and Ethel Barringer, including their photographs, a brief resumé of their background, and a description of what their classes involved. Readers were informed that, 'For overglaze china painting, French or Czecho-Slovakian china is the most satisfactory material on which to work', and that, 'Miss Good studied under Miss B. Davis, who is a recognised authority on the art of china painting'. Miss Blanche B. Davis was an active, well-known china painter who taught in Melbourne from the turn of the century until the mid 1920s.⁹⁴

The School's enrolment numbers for 1924 showed a marked increase in the china painting classes. Student numbers more than doubled, with a total of 29 students in 1924.⁹⁵ Howie's new plans included two levels of china painting classes; China Painting I was studied first, prior to China Painting II.

Consequently, for China Painting I in 1925 there were 16 students in the first term, 24 students in the second term and 22 students in the third term. A total of 9 students enrolled in the China Painting II class in 1925. The china painting produced was deemed worthy of display in its own right. Correspondence from Howie to Fenner recommended the purchase of a suitable case or cabinet for showing china painting both at exhibitions, and to visitors and students. Howie stated

that, 'Decorated china is too valuable to be exhibited without a glass case and this I consider is an opportunity of securing one for the School at much less the cost of constructing one'.⁹⁶

By 1926, exams in china painting were in place to raise the standing of china painting as a suitable subject for serious practitioners, in contrast to what could have been perceived as a hobbyist approach. This was a departure from the School's previous approach for china painting classes and the results were published in Adelaide newspapers at the end of each year, alongside exam results in the more traditional fine arts subjects such as Artistic Anatomy, Antique Drawing, Landscape Painting and other branches of drawing. Furthermore, the School recommended that students who enrolled in one special subject within a printed list, should also study other recommended subjects that would be of ancillary benefit.⁹⁷ (See Appendix 6.)⁹⁸ China painting was listed in the 'Special Courses of Study' which also included commercial art, showcard and ticket writing, and fine art subjects such as painting in oils and watercolours, figure drawing and painting. Additional subjects such as Freehand Grade I, and Design and Colour were recommended for students enrolling in china painting. Extra study raised the standard of china painting and discouraged hobbyists. A later instruction form setting out criteria for examination stated that china painting, as with other subjects such as art needlework, drawing and painting (Life), required the submission of not less than six pieces of work.⁹⁹

Teachers were expected to play an active part in encouraging further study, as a directive from the Education Department, Technical Schools showed:

The function of the teacher includes not only the teaching of the subject required, the enforcement of strict discipline, and the keeping of all records required by the Department, but he should also be continually active in building up his classes and encouraging students to continue through the full course of work, particularly to the higher grades.¹⁰⁰

The effect of such directives issued when Howie was Principal was the impetus for china painting to be viewed more seriously both within the School and also the wider artistic community. Total student enrolments in the School also continued to increase. Fenner noted in his 1925 annual report there were 979 individual students, in his 1926 annual report he stated that there were now 1107 individual students, 500 male and 607 female. This, he believed was due to the fact they were ‘now feeling good effects of re-organisation of staff, time tables, curriculum, and the proper classification of the staff’. In 1926 the *News* published an article on the School of Arts development, noting the increased enrolments posed an accommodation problem and informing the public:

There is a lack of knowledge of the purpose and usefulness of the School of Arts. To many it is merely an academy where students of drawing and painting may acquire proficiency in the reproduction of scenery, the painting of photographs, the creation of pictures which their imagination suggests, or anything of that sort. That would be a most desirable situation, but South Australia is still in its infancy and must devote itself rather to the useful side of art. Such work the School of Art accomplishes, although the pure art section is also fostered ... The School of Arts and Crafts adds a valuable quota to the technical training of the people of the State, and at the same time is a helpful adjunct in the development of those whose talents come within the designation of what may be termed pure art.¹⁰¹

The *News* stated that increased enrolments were ‘convincing evidence of the popularity of the institution and the progress it is making’.¹⁰² Enrolments in china painting increased in 1926, with the total number of 31 individuals (all female) in China Painting I for the year, most of them attending for all three terms. Ten students enrolled in China Painting II for the year, each attending for the three terms. Not all students wished to be examined - only 16 of the 31 students in China Painting I, sat for the exams. Mollie Coombs and Mareta Fullarton gained Honors, seven students gained Credit, and the other seven a Pass. In China Painting II, seven of the ten students, sat for the exams and only Jessamine Buxton and Mary Catt gained Honors, four students gained Credit and one student a Pass. As with previous years, many pupils did not sit for the exams in China Painting. No reason for this was given by Howie in his Annual Returns

forms sent to Fenner. However it may well have been partly the result on the insistence of a higher standard of originality, drawing, and knowledge of design and colour that the School's examiners demanded in the 1920-30s that deterred the submission of work from students with a hobbyist approach and also no desire for certification. In 1927 an article in the *News* discussed the issues with exams and commented that, if pupils had the idea there was little value in exams, they would not work for them, adding 'the examination system will still be generally regarded as the most effective method of ensuring proficiency and promotion'.¹⁰³ The prospect of exams did not deter students, enrolments in China Painting continuing to rise in 1927 and peaked in 1928, when 43 students enrolled in China Painting I and 14 students in China Painting II.

When Gladys Good was classified as Senior Mistress, a form filled in for the School of Arts and Crafts listed a resumé of her skills, and indicated that she was qualified to teach a wide range of subjects. She was undoubtedly busy as she also did the firing for her china painting classes. By 1928, the old second-hand kiln that had been in constant use since 1923 badly needed repairs. Good obtained a quote of twenty-eight pounds fifteen shillings from Harley and Company, Adelaide, to repair the kiln. In a letter to Fenner, she pointed out that it had also been repaired in 1926 from firing money of over twenty pounds, and that since then, the work of 70 students had been fired in it. This accounted for a further forty-six pounds raised in firing fees, so she argued repair charges were easily covered. Fenner's reply dated 28 February 1928 to Howie regarding Good's letter, was brief and to the point:

I regret to say that it is impossible to have this work done as the Accountant reports that there are at present no further funds available for the School of Arts maintenance requirements.¹⁰⁴

Howie replied to Fenner that the School Council meeting knew that firing with the old kiln was very unsatisfactory and risky for the painted china, pointing out, 'as 47 students are now doing

this work there is need for frequent use of the kiln'. Howie stated that he had been directed to write to Fenner that the new kiln requisitioned in February be procured 'as soon as possible, when funds are available'.¹⁰⁵

China painting was one of Good's favourite subjects and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, she included china painting with her other artwork in the South Australian Society of Arts Exhibitions. A staff record listing her 'Subjects preferred to teach' included Saturday Special Juniors, China Painting, Weaving, Landscape Drawing, Antique.¹⁰⁶ Howie's Annual Return to Fenner for the year of 1929 indicated a slight decrease in student numbers with a total of 29 women enrolled in China Painting I and 14 women in China Painting II.¹⁰⁷ However Good received some relief from her teaching duties when Howie delegated ex-student Lois Laughton, who was already teaching Batik I and II to be Good's assistant teacher of china painting in 1929. In 1930 when Good was on an exchange teaching trip in England, Laughton and another ex-student Jessamine Buxton, by now a teacher, took over teaching China Painting I and II, which by then had a combined total enrolment of 52 women and one male. Forty of those sat for exams but of those who sat, seven failed. The solitary male student in 1930 was Charles Pavia who was still teaching within the School but evidently desired to add to his skills. In the 1930 China Painting I exams, Pavia gained a Pass.¹⁰⁸ He sat for China Painting II in 1931 and was one of only two students to gain a Credit.¹⁰⁹ Student enrolment figures remained fairly constant over the next few years, usually around 18 to 24 students in China Painting I, although enrolments for students continuing further studies in the China Painting II class increased and even exceeded China Painting I in 1938.¹¹⁰

In 1931 after Good returned from her overseas trip, she and Laughton were listed as the teachers of china painting, and Buxton no longer taught that subject.¹¹¹ Good's ideas on suitable designs for china painting changed somewhat after her overseas trip. Although conventional floral designs were still acceptable, some of her students, as will be discussed later in this chapter, found that she advocated simplified geometrical designs as the current mode for china painting.

Laughton, who will be further discussed later, not only taught under Good but also did the firing – a tedious time-consuming process as she mentioned in a letter she later wrote.¹¹² (See Appendix 7.) Despite the firing problems and fluctuations of student enrolments in china painting in the 1920-30s, exhibits of hand-painted china in the annual exhibitions of the School of Arts and Crafts always drew appreciative words in published reviews. Adelaide audiences were used to viewing a wide range of applied art or craft objects alongside the necessary paintings in the School of Arts and Crafts Exhibitions. Applied art attracted potential awards as well as notice in the School's Annual Exhibitions. Of particular interest was the Gill Medal within the School of Arts and Crafts, and the Mamie Venner prize that was usually awarded to the best piece of china painting.

The Gill Medal Awards in the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts

After Harry Pelling Gill died suddenly on-board ship when returning to England in 1916, people interested in establishing a scholarship fund in his memory met in the Town Hall.¹¹³ The committee collected one hundred guineas which was handed to the Education Department for investment. The yearly interest was to cover the Harry P Gill Medal and the prize money, which could be divided between the first and second prize winners. By 1920 the committee had decided on the design of a special bronze medal, to be called the Gill Medal, as first prize, with replicas of

the Gill medal given to Gill's widow and Mr. Grundy, Chairman of the committee.¹¹⁴ In Fenner's 1921 Annual Report, he stated that the first award of the annual Harry P. Gill Medal was made in March, the winner being Miss Rita Loughhead and the prize money was equally divided between her and Miss Mary Catt.¹¹⁵

The medal was offered for the best example of applied art, the design to be based on an Australian motif and the example to be designed and made by the competitor, which in Loughhead's case, was a carved tabletop.¹¹⁶ The winner's name was added to the Gill Medal Award shield (figure 8). The conditions for the Gill Medal were printed in the 1922 prospectus of the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts.¹¹⁷ (See Appendix 5.)

In 1924 the Gill Medal was awarded to Louis Laughton for the cup and saucer on which she china-painted her design of native *Grevillea* flowers that grew in the bush near Adelaide.¹¹⁸ A report of the School of Arts and Crafts Annual Exhibition in the *Register* devoted a section to china painting and design and commented:

One must not forget the really charming collection of china painting by pupils of Miss K Good. All styles are represented, and in colouring and design the work is good all round ... that which won the Gill Medal for 1924, which is awarded for the best example of technical art, must not be overlooked.¹¹⁹

Occasionally the second prize in the Gill Medal attracted notice. In a *News* report on prizes presented in March 1925, First Prize in the Gill Medal was awarded to a waratah design picked out with coloured silks on a stencilled grey fabric background, and a second prize was awarded to Miss Elsie Hoepner for a vase painted with a red heath design.¹²⁰ Although they did not win the Medal with a piece of china painting, several students who had passed exams in china painting, were successful in the Gill Medal awards. For example Audrey Dundas won the Gill Medal in 1928, Miss Beatrice Gerry in 1929 and Phyllis Anthony was successful in 1930.¹²¹

The Girls' Central Art School

In 1928 a full time secondary school was formed within the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts.¹²² Fenner noted in his Annual Report for 1929 that the School had five branches, of which one was a full-time day course that was a super primary with a bias to art and drawing, and in his 1930 report he again mentioned this course was the School's three-year program for girls only. In his 1932 Annual Report he stated that it was now called the Girls' Central Art School, that it had its own report, and was finally established as a separate identity within the larger organisation of the School of Arts and Crafts. He explained that:

The aim of the course is to provide the necessary training for girls who wish to become art teachers or work in commercial or applied art as a profession. It has general art training for the first two years with provision for specialised studies in the third and later years. Miss G. K. Good, the Instructress-in-charge, has taken up her work capably and enthusiastically.¹²³

In Fenner's 1933 Annual Report he advised that the Girls' Central Art School's enrolment was 64 in 1932, but increased to 73 students in 1933.¹²⁴ Fenner concluded with, 'The teacher in charge, Miss G. K. Good, is doing very fine work in moulding and developing the character of this somewhat unusual type of super-primary school'. Good was undoubtedly a very busy woman, as records show that she was still listed as teaching China Painting in the School of Arts and Crafts, although assisted by Miss Laughton in 1930-38.¹²⁵

China painting featured in the curriculum and by the third year, students in the Girls' Central Art School could choose one of several specialised study classes. Melva Maddock (nee Walsh) was a student and chose to do china painting under Good in 1935 as a special class. Maddock remembered Good as a very clever artist and a good teacher, but found that Good's preference for geometrical patterns and conventional drawing 'a bit disappointing'.¹²⁶ Students were not taught to fire, nor saw the kiln, but their work could come back white, with the colour fired out. Maddock, who found techniques of china painting challenging, did not continue with it after she

left school and has only kept a few pieces (figure 9). She stated that Laughton, who also taught china painting, insisted that naturally drawn plant forms such as violets, be conventionalised before a design was made using them. Maddock pointed out that the introduction of all the extra things like china painting was done with ‘the idea of educating girls to earn a living – if we had a living to go to!’¹²⁷ Such a statement shows why women who studied under the umbrella of the School of Arts and Crafts had no hesitation in exhibiting china painting for sale in exhibitions with other forms of painting. Like prints and watercolours, it was a potentially saleable exhibit that might earn a little money in the years following the 1929 Depression.

The Venner Prize for China Painting

Mamie Venner (nee Jemima Fullston) (1882-1974) was well known in circles associated with the South Australian Society of Arts and took a keen interest in china painting at the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts, especially when taught to students in the Girls’ Central Art School.¹²⁸ To encourage girls to take up china painting, in 1936 she donated an annual cash award known as the Venner Prize for the best piece of china painting produced within class.¹²⁹ The Venner Prize was awarded for the first time to Lorraine Ellis.¹³⁰ The following year it went to Dorothy Chivers, as announced in the *News*.¹³¹

The Venner Prize was not necessarily awarded every year, especially after china painting waned as a popular course of study in the 1940s. In 1945 the then Principal F. Millward Grey wrote to Venner and notified her that, as there were insufficient entries, the judging committee did not recommend the awarding of a prize.¹³² Again in 1949 there was no award, with Millward Grey informing Venner that there were no entries for her prize in china painting.

The judging committee for the Venner Prize varied from year to year, though Venner as donor was usually on the judging committee, while Good often acted as a adjudicator.¹³³ The prize money varied each year and was sometimes awarded to more than one entry. Miss Helen Hazeldine won ten shillings and sixpence as first prize in the 1947 competition but there were two equal first prizes of ten shillings and sixpence awarded to Miss Helen Coombe and Miss P Wylde in 1950.¹³⁴ Miss Wylde again won first prize in 1952. In 1954 Miss A Collyer won first prize of ten shillings and sixpence and Lorna Pratt won a second prize of five shillings. By 1955 the money for first prize, won by Mrs M. Biezaitis was increased to one guinea, and Miss L Pratty (sic) won a second prize of ten shillings and sixpence.

The 15 October 1956 *Education Gazette* noted that the Venner Prize for china painting had increased to two guineas. An article ‘Arts and Crafts –Prizes and Competitions’ in the *Education Gazette* of 15 May 1957, stated that the Venner prize for china painting was still available, but there was no further mention however of the prize in the 15 October 1959 issue, so presumably it had ceased by 1958.¹³⁵

China Painting Produced by Students in the School

Newspaper reviews of the School’s exhibitions provide only brief descriptions of subject matter painted on china by the students, although the fact that the designs were predominantly floral or ‘conventionalised’ was sometimes mentioned.¹³⁶ Few publications up to the 1950s include illustrations of students’ work.¹³⁷ Also, examples of signed china painting produced by students who studied at the School when Howie taught the subject or later when he was Principal, are scarce.

Miss Maida Wright was a student in Howie's china painting class in 1912-14, exhibiting work that attracted favourable reviews in the School's annual exhibitions in those years.¹³⁸ She studied part-time at the School and passed exams in Elementary Design in 1911 and Advanced Design in 1913.¹³⁹ However she had been china painting for some years before joining Howie's class, as the School's firing records show charges for her work fired in the School's kiln in 1907-8 and, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, she exhibited work in the 1910 Manufactures, Arts and Industries Exhibition. Her china painting attracted the attention of Mr. R. T. Baker, curator of the Technological Museum in Sydney, who purchased one of Wright's vases as well as Howie's Waratah vase during his visit to Adelaide in 1910.¹⁴⁰

A particularly interesting example of Wright's china painting is a signed but undated lustre vase with a different painting of an Australian bush scene on each side (figure 10). It was unusual subject matter for china painters of her era, and is painted in a loose style, quite different to her later, more tightly controlled, conventional designs on china that will be shown in the next chapter. It is likely that it was one of her 1910-14 experimental pieces, as the gum butts have touches of the deep intense auriferous carmine purple that changes colour considerably during firing.¹⁴¹ Her ability to design is shown by the way the gum tree boughs echo the shape of the handles, pulling the eye out and back into the painting: she also painted a mist drifting through the trees and obscuring the bush track in one painting. During Baker's visit to Adelaide he gave a lecture on gum trees to members of the art community.¹⁴² Howie was a keen member of the School of Design Art Club that encouraged members to go out and draw from nature, and it is possible that Wright listened to Baker's lectures and also went on the School's sketching outings. Her gum tree vase is a unique example of South Australian china painting that sought to establish an Australian-ness beyond the intimate depiction of native wildflowers.

Floy Hubble (1885-1948) was also a part-time student at the Adelaide School of Art and successfully gained certificates in the same classes of Elementary Design in 1911 and Advanced Design in 1913 as Wright.¹⁴³ Her china painting was included in a newspaper review of the School's 1912 annual exhibition as 'particularly dainty' and mention made of her 'three vases, two carrying tasteful rose designs'.¹⁴⁴ It is possible that a signed but undated vase with a rosehip design showing an Art Nouveau influence, was painted at that time (figure 11).¹⁴⁵ Hubble's work was also mentioned favourably in the School's 1914 annual exhibition.¹⁴⁶

Adolf O. Kriehn was another part-time student who studied in the Adelaide School of Art just before World War I, and the 1914 May Exam results show that he gained an excellent mark in First Grade Geometry.¹⁴⁷ In the 1920 Peace Exhibition, Kriehn as an 18-21 year old exhibitor, entered embossed leather work for which he gained a silver medal, and also a stencilled curtain design and an original design for leather work.¹⁴⁸ By 1922 Kriehn was listed as an assistant teacher - presumably for artistic leatherwork.¹⁴⁹ Although there is no record of his enrolment in the School's china painting classes, he may well have picked it up while in the School. China painting was another of his skills, as shown by his signed but undated cup plate and saucer (figure 12).¹⁵⁰ Kriehn's imagery painted on this set shows an international influence with clean angular lines and streamlined basic shapes which read as symbolic iconography suggesting beams of sunlight rising behind skyscrapers with pared-down red hills in the background. As pointed out by Ghislaine Wood, the skyscraper was symbol of the modernity of the 1920-30s and the motif of the sunburst was also associated with the dynamism of the 1920s.¹⁵¹ English designer Clarice Cliff for example, used radiating straight lines in some of her china painting to represent sunbeams.¹⁵² Kriehn's bold use of black lustre with red and cream china paints was also in keeping with the dynamic bright colours that became popular on Cliff's hand painted ceramics in England in the 1920s.¹⁵³

Floral imagery painted in a naturalistic style was still favoured by some students in the School. Jean Beurle for instance was a part-time student who passed china painting I in 1926.¹⁵⁴ Her signed oblong dish has a painted pale yellow background with two sprays of red rose hips and autumnal leaves painted along the sides (figure 13).¹⁵⁵ In keeping with a fashion in late 1920-30s china painting, Beurle painted the rim a dark colour – green in this case.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the art movement now called Art Deco spread widely throughout the world and was interpreted in diverse ways by practitioners in the arts and crafts. China painting students could afford to experiment on small pieces of china at less cost than, say, students in art needlework, leather work, repousse work or oil painting. A small signed but undated dish by part-time student Joyce Kernick featuring what could be a hollyhock flower, shows that students were experimenting with flattening conventionalised floral images and using touches of black as an emphasis behind a limited palette (figure 14).¹⁵⁶ Floral images used in Art Nouveau used sinuous, twisting, naturalistic designs, whereas floral designs influenced by Art Deco tended to be flattened, formalised and ‘mechanised’.¹⁵⁷

The flattening and simplification of nature scenes was also a feature of the modern look. A signed but undated vase by full-time student Phyllis Anthony shows sharp angular lines delineating the hills and trunk of a willow tree, with clean black outlines for clouds and boldly coloured flights of birds leading the eye up the vase (figure 15). Anthony was a brilliant student with a wide range of art and craft skills. Her 1931 results show she topped third year, passing in twelve subjects, with three honours and four credits, including a credit in China Painting I.¹⁵⁸ In 1932 she gained honours in China Painting II.¹⁵⁹

In 1932, another Girls' Central School of Art student, Laurel Sterzl, gained a credit pass in China Painting II, and her other results show that she was skilled in a wide range of arts and crafts skills. Her china painting impressed Howie, who commissioned Sterzl to paint a set of six cups and saucers as a gift for his wife, using three of his own designs. He was a member of the Field Naturalists' Society and his designs, showing some Art Nouveau influence, were based on the eucalypt (figure 16). The set was treasured and used within the Howie household for special occasions and selected guests.¹⁶⁰

The Decline in Popularity of China Painting

By the late 1930s, changes were on the horizon for the School of Arts and Crafts. Fenner noted in his 1938 Annual Report that the School had 'a remarkable record in creative activity, not only in arts and crafts, but other work as well'.¹⁶¹ He also observed that the greater number of students in the School were part-time voluntary paying students. 1938 was the last time that Fenner signed reports as Superintendent of Technical Education, as G. S. McDonald took over the position in 1939. McDonald stated in his report for 1939 that the School of Arts and Crafts had 1,925 part-time students in the fee-paying classes. In McDonald's 1940 Annual Report he pointed out there were now 2068 part-time students and there was an urgent need for a new art school as conditions were currently very cramped. However with the declaration of the Second World War in September 1939, the plans for a new rebuilding program were shelved. Howie remained as Principal of the School of Arts and Crafts until his retirement at the end of 1941.¹⁶²

During the Second World War, European supplies of on-glaze enamels and suitable white, glazed china blanks dried up and china painting enrolments fell markedly. New Principals and new teachers came with changed expectations of important subject matter within the School of Arts

and Crafts. Although Good and Choate had attempted to instigate pottery classes in the School in the 1930s, with suggestions that the pottery be fired outside the school, they were unsuccessful. Nevertheless after the war, studio pottery became increasingly popular and was eventually included in the School's syllabus in the 1950s, but with a different emphasis on surface decoration. There was little appeal in on-glaze enamel decoration for the new type of studio pottery, and china painting itself was deemed to be an out-moded form of applied art practice. Gladys Good who had initially been appointed junior assistant teacher in 1911, found that after a lifetime of teaching in the School, her hours of teaching were reduced, as new staff and Principals were engaged in the post-World War Two years.¹⁶³ The elderly Gladys Good was retained as a part-time teacher for only a few subjects, including china painting, which was not included in the annual exhibitions beyond 1957.¹⁶⁴ She retired in 1960 and the long association of the School with china painting practitioners came to a close.

Nevertheless, china painting did not completely disappear in South Australia. Howie and the teachers he engaged in the School such as Good and Beulah Leicester, as well as the supportive Mamie Venner, were all active within the South Australian Society of Arts. They played an influential role in encouraging members to exhibit china painting as well as other art/craft work in the Society's exhibitions. The role of the South Australian Society of Arts in increasing public recognition of china painting as one of the decorative arts will be discussed in the next chapter. Just a few of those Society of Arts exhibitors were to influence the revival of china painting in South Australia in the 1960s, and that will be discussed in a later chapter.

¹ 'Certificated' was the language of the era. In the 21st century 'certified skill' is the usual term. Exams were held in china painting as for landscape painting and drawing, with results graded as honours, credit or pass. Proof of subjects passed was necessary should a career in teaching be envisaged.

² Whereas during the 1880s the title was the 'South Australian Art Schools' and consisted of the School of Painting and the School of Design, they were amalgamated in 1892 under the title of The School of Design, Painting and Technical Art, called 'the School of Design' for short. In 1909 the name changed to the Adelaide School of Art, and in 1916 it changed to the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts. In this chapter the name changes will be mentioned as they occurred but the title of the 'School' will be used for subsequent mention. Enrolment records for

the 1880-90s show many women enrolled for only one or two subjects a year and might be part-time students in the School for ten years or so.

³ SRSa GRG 19/95. vol. 3. Barker's name is amongst the students enrolled in the Winter Session 1898, (subject not stated), while Tapson's name appears in the Life classes in the School throughout 1901 and the first session of 1902.

⁴ Catalogue of the 1897 Adelaide Easel Club Exhibition. Barker's exhibit No. 116 was of sixteen pieces of china, but there was no further description of the items and prices. She also exhibited No. 115 'Painted Screen' for one pound ten shillings. Her advertisement, placed in the back of the catalogue, showed that she had an 'Art Room' with Miss Eva Tapson in a building in Grenfell Street, Adelaide and listed the subjects taught there.

⁵ Advertisement in the catalogue of *South Australian Society of Arts Exhibition 1897*. Rigby's stocked 'Dresden china and colours for firing'.

⁶ SRSa GRG 19/95 vol. 3. Art Masters Sessional Returns of students and fees. Spring session 1898; *Advertiser* 11 January 1899 p. 2. Her advertisement in 1899 mentioned prizes and honours, Melbourne National gallery; 'Education', *Advertiser*, Saturday 9 February 1907, p. 10 showed that by 1907 Miss McPherson and Miss Davidson advertised that their art classes would commence 9 March at Studio 58, Adelaide Steamship Building, Currie Street.

⁷ 'Education', *Advertiser*, Monday 5 February 1900, p. 2. They advised that they were moving to 73 Jeffcott Street, North Adelaide. They trained in the Schools of Design and Painting at the same time as Fiveash.

⁸ Jean Wilson was also a graduate from the Schools of Design and Painting and studied there at the same time as Fiveash. Wilson's studio changed location several times from 5 Commercial Chambers, Gilbert Place, Adelaide (*Register*, 28 May 1894, p. 2) to the Widows Fund Building, Grenfell Street, Adelaide in 1908 (*Register*, 15 February 1908, p. 15.)

⁹ 'Education', *Register* Saturday 9 February 1907, p. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹ SRSa GRG 19/248/418. It was dated 5 October 1899 and included woodcarving, pottery painting, stencil decoration, gesso decoration, stained glass windows, ornaments depicted in the round for reproduction in brass, iron, pewter, copper.

¹² SRSa GRG 19/248/418. Attached to report 418 was a lengthy supplement dated 16 October 1899. It contained detailed particulars of the work that it was possible to produce. Amongst items mentioned were decorated furniture, metal casting, silver work for pendants and ornaments, stencilled work and dyes for fabrics such as wall hangings, leatherwork and art needlework. His description of pottery painting for that exhibition was not that of on-glaze china painting.

¹³ John B. Kenny, *The Complete Book of Pottery Making*, Pitman, London, pp. 215-224. This book provides information on slip decoration and other methods of colouring pottery apart from china painting. It is beyond the parameters of this thesis to discuss those different methods of colouring pottery.

¹⁴ SLSA Z Per 607.34 I 42a Catalogue *1905 South Australian Exhibition of Products, Arts and Industries*. The exhibition ran from 20 March to 29 April 1905. On p. 64, Palmer exhibited No. 242 'Painting on China' and No. 248 'Work on China'. She also exhibited No. 99, oil painting 'Study of Roses'.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63. Fiveash's entry No. 210 stated it was 'painted, gilded and fired' by the exhibitor.

¹⁶ Grace Cochrane, *The Craft Movement in Australia: A History*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1992, p. 18.

¹⁷ Caroline Miley, *The Arts Among the Handicrafts*, St. Lawrence Press, Melbourne, 2001, p. 116.

¹⁸ 'China Painting', *Melbourne Argus*, 10 November 1910, p. 6.

¹⁹ Cochrane, pp. 19, 20.

²⁰ SRSa GRG 19/95 vol. 4 Finance - Return of fees paid by students for attendances at the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art, p. 140. Jean W. Weston had china painting by her name for the Autumn (Feb.-May) session.

²¹ 'Education', *Advertiser*, Friday 21 September 1906, p. 11. No other classes were mentioned apart from china painting in this notice. China Painting was not mentioned in the general notice inserted in *Register* Thursday 6 September 1906, p. 10 for the Spring classes offered in the School.

²² 'Education', *Register*, Saturday 2 February 1907, p. 11. Her address was given as 'Glenelg' with no street mentioned.

²³ Wording 'could begin on any date' meant that prospective students could enrol for one term's instruction and start their term at a date suitable to them. Private teachers with only a few pupils did not necessarily follow the strict starting and finishing dates of terms that were applicable in art schools.

²⁴ Norris Ioannou, *Ceramics in South Australia 1836-1986 From Folk to Studio Pottery*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide 1986, p. 282.

²⁵ SRSa GRG 19/96 Roll Book for South Kensington Exams. In July 1893 Palmer sat for Model Drawing Elementary stage 3a and Freehand Drawing Elementary stage 2b. In June 1894 she sat for Drawing in Light and Shade Advanced 5a, (as did Howie) and Shading from the Cast 5b (as did Howie) and also for Freehand Outline

from the Ornament Advanced 3b. However her entry for Model Drawing Advanced in June 1894 showed she was a student of Gill's for that subject and her exams in 1895 showed that she was under Gill in the School of Design. Student enrolments do not show her name in the china painting classes, but many student entries of those years only had the fee amounts entered and omitted the subjects in which the students enrolled.

²⁶ SRSA GRG 19/106. South Kensington Exam Results 1895.

²⁷ SRSA GRG 19/248/328. 26 February 1896. Mr Palmer was not living with his family and the half fee of one pound ten shillings was 'not recoverable'.

²⁸ SRSA GRG 19/106 1895. Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of South Australia. Results of Exams. In 1st grade geometry held 15 May 1895, Eleanor Agnes Palmer. Private tuition from E. F. Palmer.

²⁹ 'Education', *Advertiser*, Monday 11 February 1907, p. 3.

³⁰ SRSA GRG 19/95 vol. 4 Finance – Return of fees paid by students for attendances at the School of Painting, Design and Technical Art. There were three terms a year. Record keeping criteria by the school is sometimes confusing as it changed over the years. The term 'enrolment' in 1906-08 records meant one student for one term, for example if a student enrolled in each of the three consecutive terms in any one year, that was counted as three enrolments for the year. Some students enrolled for one term only during the year (one enrolment). If a student attended two terms during the year, that was called two enrolments in the year. In 1907 there was a total of twenty two enrolments from ten students.

³¹ SRSA GRG 19/248/560.

³² SRSA GRG 19/248/573. Report dated 10 October 1907.

³³ SRSA GRG 19/248/573. On the report dated 10 October 1907, Gill pencilled in this footnote dated 12 October, initialled it H. P. G.

³⁴ SRSA GRG 19/96 Roll Book for South Kensington Exams. On 20 June 1895 Prosser age 18 years and Palmer age 20 years, both sat for Freehand Outline (advanced stage) 3b with Gill, School of Design listed as their teacher.

³⁵ SRSA GRG 19/329 Finance – Cashbook of the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art 1896-1909, p. 4. China firing. On 13 August 1907 firing charges added up to a total of three pounds eighteen shillings and three pence from which Miss Palmer was paid one pound fifteen shillings for firing.

³⁶ SRSA GRG 19/248/560. 4 September 1907. He pointed out that the cost of the kiln and all charges had been more than covered by income from it by firing charges made.

³⁷ SRSA GRG 19/248/580. 29 November 1907. The new kiln was nearly one and a half times the capacity of the old kiln.

³⁸ SRSA GRG 19/329 Cashbook of the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art 1896-1909, pp. 10,11. Miss R Fiveash, Mrs Dobbie, Miss Norman were some outsiders for whom Palmer fired china in the School kiln. Miss Wright was a part-time student in the School over approximately a five year period and her name also appeared in Palmer's firing list on several occasions.

³⁹ SRSA GRG/248/584. 4 December 1907. Gill recommended acceptance of her resignation and that thanks be given for her conduct of the class.

⁴⁰ Joan Kerr, (ed.), *Heritage The National Women's Art Book*, G+B Arts International Ltd., Australia, 1995, Chapter 1, 'Exhibitions and Competitions'. Events mentioned were mainly mixed exhibitions of male and female artists, predominantly those in the Eastern States, and a few London Exhibitions, usually with brief mention of only one female in each event discussed. Martha Sear mentioned a *Women's Work Exhibition* held in Sydney in 1892, p. 10.

⁴¹ Catalogue *First Australian Exhibition of Womans (sic) Work 1907*, copy held in the Art Gallery of South Australia. The Exhibition was inspired by the *Gaulois Exhibition* held in Paris in 1906, p. 28.

⁴² 'School of Design', *Register*, Thursday 28 May 1908, p. 7; SRSA GRG 19/248/603, Gill mentioned that the School's needlework exhibit gained a gold medal and a Certificate of Merit for the School.

⁴³ The catalogue showed that Lungley exhibited in Open Classes Section E, Class 51a and Class 52. Palmer also exhibited in Class 52. In Amateur Class, Class 70, there were fourteen entries from South Australian women, including Wholohan and Stewart. In Amateur Class, Class 71, Wholohan, Legoe, Stewart and Downer exhibited work.

⁴⁴ 'Exhibition of Women's Work. Good Progress Being Made', *Advertiser*, Friday 19 July 1907, p. 7.

⁴⁵ Ibid. It is interesting to note that in the exhibition Australian women were shown to be proficient in other areas besides the feminine virtues of cooking and decorating the home with artistic items. Evidence of their move into formerly male bastions was indicated by Captain Leschen in South Australia who had organised some twenty-five ladies' rifle clubs and that a successful display of shooting by South Australian women was to be expected.

⁴⁶ Catalogue of 1907 Exhibition held in the Art Gallery of S.A., p. 29.

⁴⁷ Miley, p. 79. 'McWhirter' had a column in *Melbourne Punch*.

⁴⁸ Miley, p 80.

⁴⁹ SRSA GRG 19/109 Register of Subscriptions Paid to the Schools of Design and Painting 1881-1892. P. 213, 4 April 1892; SRSA GRG 19/96 Roll Book for South Kensington Exams. He sat for Model Drawing 2nd grade and

also Freehand Drawing 2nd grade in July 1892. This was followed by further South Kensington exams in a variety of drawing, science and painting subjects through 1893 and 1894.

⁵⁰ SRSA GRG 19/68 Staff Records 1890-1940, vol. 1, p. 15. His starting salary was eighty pounds per annum. Salary increased to ten pounds per month 1 July 1900, with a bonus of fifteen pounds authorised September 1900. Howie was evidently highly regarded, as a Board minute of 18 December 1903 raised his salary by annual increments of ten pounds to 150 pounds.

⁵¹ SRSA GRG 19/248/366. Dated 6 August 1897. In this report Gill complained of James Keane's laziness and lack of ability to teach technical handicrafts, so he removed such classes from Keane and gave them to Howie. In a later report GRG 19/248/379 dated 2 November 1898, Gill made arrangements for the School while he would be away in England and recommended that Howie keep the School accounts and relieve Keane of the safe keys and receipt books.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 163-4. Salary 160 pounds per annum with increases to a maximum of 180 pounds per annum. Conditions were stated – three months' notice, no private teaching allowed.

⁵³ SRSA GRG 19/248/584. Gill's report to the Fine Arts Committee on 4 December 1907 regarding Palmer's resignation was the same report in which he recommended that Howie fill her vacated position. Gill also recommended that Howie be paid the necessary fees and sustenance for the trip to Melbourne.

⁵⁴ Juliet Peers, *More Than Just Gumtrees*, The Melbourne Society of Women Painters and Sculptors, Malvern, Victoria, 1993, p. 224. Grist studied at the National Gallery School, Melbourne 1894-1895 and painted china from the 1890s to the 1940s.

⁵⁵ SRSA GRG 19/248/593, dated 21 January 1908. Howie's return fare was three pounds seven shillings and sixpence and his three weeks' board was four pounds ten shillings. Howie had only been given a grant of twelve pounds by the Committee and was therefore three pounds four shillings and sixpence out of pocket as he paid the balance himself.

⁵⁶ SRSA GRG 19/248/580. The 'appended letter from Grist' has not survived and is missing from this report. The kiln cost twenty-five pounds. It was not cheap, but was one and half times the capacity of the old Wilkie kiln.

⁵⁷ 'School of Design Annual Exhibition Opened', *Register*, Thursday 28 May 1908, p. 7. Lady Downer was in Howie's woodcarving class and her large carved screen also attracted comment.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ SRSA GRG 19/284. Statements on Transfer of the School of Design to the Education Department. There was a wrangle between Gill and the Education Department which stated some-one had made a mistake in offering Gill a chance to retain paid services in connection with the Art Gallery after Gill came under employment of the Education Department. Gill at first refused to hand over certain keys and documents but finally had to accept the Education Department's decision that he was not allowed outside paid employment unless granted special permission by the Minister of Education.

⁶¹ SLSA Z Per. 607.34 I 42(a) catalogue *Exhibition of South Australian Products, Manufactures, Arts and Industries*, 1910, March 24 to May 4. South Australian Chamber of Manufactures, Jubilee Exhibition Building'. China Painting was exhibited in Classes 57, 58 and 59. Unfortunately that catalogue contained neither any description of subject matter painted on the china, nor of any awards made; 'School of Design Students' Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Friday 29 May 1908, p. 11. Her copper repousse work was mentioned

⁶² 'Education Department', Government Advertisements, *Register*, 3 September 1909, p. 2; 'Education Department' Government Advertisements, *Advertiser*, Saturday 1 June, 1912, p. 2.

⁶³ 'School of Art. The Annual Exhibition', *Register*, Tuesday 28 May 1912, p. 8. This review mentioned that Maida Wright's work included a columbine plaque in purple and gold and a protea vase, while Ethel Barringer exhibited a vase with kangaroo and native flower decoration. Miss F. Hubble exhibited a tea set in eucalyptus scheme and Miss Dorothy Prince a hollyhock vase.

⁶⁴ 'School of Art. Display of Students' Work', *Advertiser*, Tuesday 28 May 1912, p. 12.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ GRG 18/93. Education Reports 1912. Adelaide School of Art Annual Report.

⁶⁷ GRG 18/93. Education Reports 1914. Adelaide School of Art Annual Report.

⁶⁸ 'Technical Art. School of Art Display', *Register*, Friday 22 May 1914, p. 8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Located in the basement archives, Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia, 1998. Uncatalogued sheet headed 'Education Department, Form 10, Adelaide School of Art, Examiner's Certificate of results of examination in class work in various subjects for Teacher's Certificate'. It was signed by Gill. Howie was the only one to gain the Advanced Full Certificate, which was prepared for him on 18 March 1915.

⁷¹ GRG 18/93. Education Reports 1915. Adelaide School of Art Annual report.

⁷² Gill though well of Howie and gave his own copy of Walter Crane's book *The Claims of Decorative Art* to Howie as a keepsake. Walter Crane, *The Claims of Decorative Art*, Lawrence and Bullen, London, no date of publication. With a number of other books on Japanese, Chinese, European and English porcelain and china and artwork on porcelain, the Gill/Howie copy of Crane's book was located in 1998 on the Archival shelves of the Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia.

⁷³ GRG 18/93. Education Reports 1916. Adelaide School of Art Annual Report. This report was written by Pavia as Acting Principal. He noted Wright's short period of six weeks as School Principal after which he was on active service as lieutenant in charge of 17th Reinforcement, 20th Battalion, NSW.

⁷⁴ SRSA GRG 18/93 Education Reports 1916. Annual report of the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts for the year ending 31 December 1916. Signed by Chas. J. Pavia, Acting Principal.

⁷⁵ See Appendix no. 4 for a photocopy of the first two pages of the six-page letter. Lieutenant Christie Wright was in the 17th Reinforcements 20th Battalion, 5th Infantry Brigade, AIF. Pavia made a hand-written copy of his letter to Wright. It was located in Book J in the archives of the Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia in 1998.

⁷⁶ This short letter in Pavia's handwriting, dated 6 March 1917 was in book J, School of Art Correspondence Book, held in the basement archives of the Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia in 1998. Pavia wrote that he 'expected the times are responsible for a great deal'.

⁷⁷ SRSA GRG 19/93 Education Reports 1917.

⁷⁸ SRSA GRG 18/93 Education Reports 1920. Report of the Superintendent of Technical Education, Appendix C, 'South Australian School of Arts and Crafts'. Dr C. Fenner was the Superintendent of Technical Education.

⁷⁹ William Hall, Dorothy Hall, 'Laurence Hotham Howie Decorative Artist, Designer, Artist and Art Educator' in *Australian Antique Collector*, July-December 1998 issue, p. 140. Howie married Janet Davidson, a primary school teacher on 17 July 1919.

⁸⁰ David Dolan, 'Howie' *Ormolu – Antiques & Art, South Australia* vol. 1, no. 1, October 1979 p. 28.

⁸¹ Mary Hotham Howie, *Laurie's World: The Life and Art of L. H. Howie*, published by Mary Howie, 2007, pp. 6-9.

⁸² Hugh Honour, John Fleming, *A World History of Art*, Laurence King Publishing, London, Fifth edition 1999, pp. 772-3.

⁸³ SRSA GRG 18/93 Education Department Annual Reports. In these reports I noted that Fenner was a Dr. Sc., Dip. Ed. His reports were often concerned with statistics of enrolment figures and the numbers of student teachers who received art training in the School of Arts and Crafts during the 1920-30s.

⁸⁴ SRSA GRG 18/93. Education Reports 1920. Report of the Superintendent of Technical Education. Appendix C, 'South Australian School of Arts and Crafts'.

⁸⁵ SRSA GRG 18/93. Education Reports 1936. Report of the Superintendent of Technical Education, Appendix C, 'South Australian School of Arts and Crafts'.

⁸⁶ SLSA Z Per. 607.34 I 42a. This 1920 catalogue did not list awards made, but it does show the popularity of this type of exhibition as an exhibiting venue for many current and former School of Arts and Crafts students. Gladys Good, Beulah Leicester, Jessamine Buxton, Queenie Primrose exhibited paintings in several different classes in Group 1 Fine Arts and also in different classes within the Group 2 Applied Arts.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Other china painters listed as exhibitors in this exhibition included Mrs E. F. Hackett, Mrs G. Richards, Miss N. L. Godlee, Miss E. Disher, Miss G. Norton. Class 471 contained many entries, including Forwood's 60 pieces.

⁸⁹ SRSA GRG 18/21 item 71 School of Arts and Crafts kiln (china firing) 1922-28. This item contains several letters regarding the kiln. A hand-written letter by Rhoda Holder c/o Mrs Stephens at Gumeracha apologised for the fact that the gas company evidently broke the kiln when they dismantled and shifted it from Holder's previous home in suburban Adelaide. Howie re-negotiated a lower price than Holder first asked for the kiln, because of the cost of repairs.

⁹⁰ GRG 18/93 Education Reports. 1923. Report of the Superintendent of Technical Education, Appendix C, 'South Australian School of Arts and Crafts'.

⁹¹ Located in the basement archives, Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia in 1998. This is a very battered leather-bound book 'Annual Returns and enrolment numbers from 1923 to 1938' with some useful information regarding who taught what subjects. In the Annual Returns of 1923 Good also taught Antique I & II, Anatomy I, II & III, Brushwork I and some Design classes. Good is also listed as teaching Plant Drawing II and, with Miss Leicester, some Leatherwork I

⁹² 'School of Arts and Crafts Exhibition of Students' Work', *Advertiser* 24 May 1923, p. 11.

⁹³ 'School of Art, Work That Appeals, Enamelling and China Painting', *News*, 13 March 1924, p. 4.

⁹⁴ Miley, p. 169. Miley stated that Norah Godlee was a student of Davis, but there is little reference to other students. I have been unable to find any reference to the School of Arts and Crafts sending Good to Melbourne to

study under Davis, as the School had sent Howie to Melbourne to study under Grist, so I presume that Good went privately to Melbourne to take lessons from Davis.

⁹⁵ Located in the basement archives of the Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia in 1998, a book titled ‘Annual Returns and enrolment numbers from 1923 to 1938’. In the annual returns to Superintendent of Technical Education in 1924, Howie was listed as teaching Drawing and Painting from Life. All subsequent enrolment figures quoted for china painting up to 1938 will be taken from this same battered leather-bound book.

⁹⁶ Located in the basement archives, Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia, 1998, a ‘Correspondence book. S. of T. E. 1923-25’. The book contained a copy of a letter dated 5 February 1925 from Howie to Charles Fenner Superintendent of Technical education. The cost of the completed case with the necessary glass shelves was to be twelve pounds two shillings and sixpence. The ‘S. of T. E.’ on the cover means ‘Superintendent of Technical Education’.

⁹⁷ SRSA 18/21 item 111 School of Arts and Crafts Instructions. p. 4a. There was no date on this instruction, but as far back as Gill in the 1890s, there were recommendations that his classes in Design would benefit other subjects, for example, those allied with the pottery industry.

⁹⁸ SRSA GRG 18/21 item 111, School of Arts and Crafts – Instructions, p. 4a. There was no date on p. 4a. Further checking at the SLISA of a number of newspaper lists of exam results published in *Advertiser* and the *News* in December 1922-39, show that most subjects listed on p. 4a were taught in the 1920s, although ‘Interior & Home Decoration’ was a 1939 subject. It is highly likely that such a list as 4a remained the same for core subjects, with courses such as ‘Home Decoration’ included if they were a new course to be tried out, as I found no evidence of exam results for ‘Home Decoration’ in the material available.

⁹⁹ SRSA GRG 18/21, School of Arts and Crafts Instructions 1937-53, item 111, p. 25. Although this particular form was dated 1948 there is no reason to suppose that it differs greatly from earlier directives. The examiner for china painting I and II was listed as Miss G. Good.

¹⁰⁰ SRSA GRG 18/21 item 89. Part-time teachers who have resigned or ceased teaching. South Australian School of Arts and Crafts. The direction quoted was No. 7 on printed form T.S.7 which included details of engagement of part-time teachers. It was in Packet 3. Full-time teachers would have been aware of these directives, but the Education Department obviously wanted to ensure that all part-time teachers also knew their duties.

¹⁰¹ ‘School of Arts Development’, *News*, Friday 28 May, 1926, p. 8.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ ‘Why Examinations Are Necessary’, *News*, 21 December 1927, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ SRSA GRG 18/21 item 71 School of Arts and Crafts Kiln (china firing) 1922-28. This letter of 28 February 1928 was signed by Charles Fenner.

¹⁰⁵ SRSA GRG 18/21 item 71 School of Arts and Crafts Kiln (china firing) 1922-28 Howie’s letter of 20 June 1928 was filed by Howie on 21 March 1928 with Fenner’s letter.

¹⁰⁶ SRSA. GRG 18/21 item 124. School of Arts and Crafts. Staff positions, appointments and vacancies (1925-45 with gaps). A hand-written form, showing a résumé of her skills when Good was classified as Senior Mistress, listed twenty-five separate ‘subjects qualified to teach’, most of them including the higher levels of II and III. The subjects she preferred teaching were listed, and also eleven extra subjects that she could teach in an emergency.

¹⁰⁷ Located in the basement archives of the Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia in 1998. Annual Returns and enrolment numbers from 1923 to 1938. Uncatalogued and in a very fragile state with some loose pages. Yearly enrolment figures stated in this paragraph are taken from this source, usually from forms marked ‘Technical Schools. – Annual Return A’.

¹⁰⁸ ‘School of Arts and Crafts: Second List of Examination results’, *News*, 17 December 1930, p. 5; the final list of exam results was in *News*, 18 December 1930, p. 15.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Arts and Crafts Examination Results’, *Advertiser*, 23 December 1931, p. 12. Violet W. Buttrose was the other credit student.

¹¹⁰ Located in the basement archives of the Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia in 1998. Annual Returns and enrolment numbers from 1923 to 1938. Uncatalogued and in a very fragile state. Most pages were on forms marked ‘Technical Schools. – Annual Return A’. Classes in the first term in 1938 started 5 weeks later than usual; Glenn Stephens (nee Wallman), student in 1938, interview by the author 17 December 1997, stated the 5 weeks’ delay was due to the polio epidemic and that may have contributed to the drop in enrolments in China Painting I to only 12 new students.

¹¹¹ SRSA GRG 18/21 item 124. School of Arts and Crafts. Staff positions, appointments and vacancies 1925-45. Buxton’s credentials were very high. She had a First Class Art Teacher’s certificate and was qualified to teach in a wide range of subjects, including china painting, to the highest level. Staff records show that M. Walloscheck was also qualified to teach china painting I and II. An ‘uncertificated junior assistant’ Miss Marjorie Robina Carmen was also qualified to teach China Painting I. Probably Pavia could also teach china painting after his exam results, and

Howie no doubt could fill in for an extreme emergency. Beulah Leicester was also a china painter. Yet little or no recognition has been made of such a back-up pool of teaching talent for china painting within the School.

¹¹² Personal history sheet written by Lois Carne for the Historical archives of the South Australian China Painters' Association, Members file. This file contains letters written in the 1980s from various members with information on how they started china painting. Transcripts of their letters were later typed by member Pat Roberts and placed in a larger file 'South Australian China Painters' Association Profiles of members'.

¹¹³ University of South Australia, City West campus library, Special Collection, SP 709.9423 S372 Minute Book. The meeting was held in the Mayor's Reception Room, Adelaide Town Hall, 1 September 1916, followed by the first meeting of the Executive Committee in the Society of Arts rooms, 19 September 1916.

¹¹⁴ University of South Australia, City West campus library, Special Collection SP 709.9423 S372 Minute Book. The meetings dragged on over the years as the committee rejected the first plaster mould for the medal made by a Melbourne firm in late 1919 or early 1920.

¹¹⁵ SRSA GRG 18/93 Education Reports 1921. Report of the Superintendent of Technical Education, Appendix C, 'South Australian School of Arts and Crafts'.

¹¹⁶ 'H. P. Gill Medal First Successful Student', *Register*, 8 April 1921, p. 5. The Minister of Education and guests sat at Loughhead's table during the ceremony.

¹¹⁷ Located in the basement archives, Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia, 1998. It was uncatalogued. The 40-page publication was titled *South Australian School of Arts and Crafts Prospectus*. It was not dated, but Miss Rita Loughhead was named as winner of the 1921 Gill Medal Award, and as later prospectuses listed previous Gill Medal winners, it is logical to assume this was the 1922 prospectus.

¹¹⁸ Laughton's Gill Award cup and saucer is now in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia and was often displayed in the ceramics section in 2005-6.

¹¹⁹ 'Successful Exhibition School of Arts and Crafts', *Register*, 21 May 1924, p. 11.

¹²⁰ 'Arts and Crafts. Minister Presents Prizes', *News*, 5 March 1925, p. 1.

¹²¹ University of South Australia, City West campus library, Special Collection, SP 700.709423 F715 *Forerunner* vol. 1, Nov. 1930, pp. 4, 5. Anthony won the Gill Medal with a hand-painted shawl, and Dora Chapman and Gwen Ockenden were equal second.

¹²² SRSA. Agency Details GRG 18 Education Department. Inventory of Series, p. 1. This provides a brief history of the 'South Australian College of Arts and Crafts'. The references to what was known by 1932 as the Girls Central Art School are quoted as Parliamentary Papers Nos. 44 of 1929, p. 10, and 44 of 1933, p. 11.

¹²³ SRSA GRG 18/93. Education Reports 1932. Appendix C. School of Arts and Crafts.

¹²⁴ SRSA GRG 18/93. Education Reports 1933. Appendix C. After Fenner's section 'VII. School of Arts and Crafts, he listed a small separate report titled 'VIII. Girls' Central Art School'.

¹²⁵ Records located in the basement archives, Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia, 1998. The uncatalogued sheets 'Technical Schools. Annual Return A' listed Laughton and Good teaching china painting in 1929. While Good was in England in 1930, Laughton and Jessamine Buxton were the teachers, but from 1931-38 Good and Laughton taught china painting.

¹²⁶ Interview by the author with Melva Maddock (nee Walsh), Rostrevor, on 2 January 1998. Maddock was then an alert 81 years of age and had kept some of her student work in a wide range of media. Maddock left at the end of her third year in the Girls' Central Art School and eventually obtained drawing work with an advertising man.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* The 1929 depression in South Australia lasted well into the 1930s. Maddock said 'things were tough in those days', and tried unsuccessfully for several jobs before working in advertising. She also taught art privately to a few people in her own home after marriage.

¹²⁸ Noris Ioannou, *Ceramics in South Australia 1836-1986 from Folk to Studio Pottery*, Wakefield Press, Netley, South Australia, 1986, p. 294. Mamie married well and was financially supported by her husband throughout her life; Richard Turner (a nephew of Venner) in a phone conversation with Avis Smith on 4 November 2002, stated that he was a tenor in St. Peter's Cathedral choir and that Venner was 'choir mother' for 32 years and mothered the boys. She was evidently fond of young people.

¹²⁹ SRSA GRG 18/21 item 138. S. A. School of Arts and Crafts, Venner Prize. The records are incomplete and do not go back to the 1930s. It is likely however, that the first prize was ten shillings or ten shillings and sixpence in the late 1930s.

¹³⁰ 'Inadequate Accommodation at School of Arts', *Advertiser*, 25 September 1936, p. 26.

¹³¹ 'Crafts of All Ages on Display, Governor at Prize Giving, Annual Show of Art School', *News*, 26 May 1937 p. 8.

¹³² SRSA GRG 18/21 item 138. S.A. School of Arts and Crafts. Venner prize.

¹³³ *Ibid.* Although this reference only included letters covering 1945-55, there are several asking Good if she would act as adjudicator and some asking if Venner herself could act as adjudicator. Winners and monetary amounts further mentioned in this paragraph are from the same item 138.

¹³⁴ SRSA GRG 18/21 Item 138 Venner prize (1948-55). This item contained a variety of letters to Venner and some of the award winning students, plus some (but not all) receipts for money that Venner donated for prizes.

¹³⁵ 'Arts and Crafts – Prizes and Competitions', *Education Gazette* 15 May 1957.

¹³⁶ The term 'conventionalised' meant that students first drew the flower from nature, then eliminated some details to provide a more basic shape of the flower, leaves and stems, which could be further adapted, curved or twisted to fit the shape of the blank being decorated. Often the conventionalised design was used as a repeat pattern around the china.

¹³⁷ Ioannou, pp. 189-194 contains some illustrations.

¹³⁸ 'School of Art. Display of Student's Work', *Advertiser*, 28 May 1912, p. 12; 'Adelaide School of Art. Students' Annual Exhibition', *Register*, 23 May 1913, p. 9; 'Technical Art. School of Art Display', *Register*, 22 May 1914, p. 8. Like many women china painters of the era, the years of Wright's birth and death are unknown.

¹³⁹ Located in the basement archives of the Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia in 1998. Uncatalogued official form titled 'Examiner's Certificate of Results' with an 'Excellent' result, signed by Gill 5 June 1911, and a similar form with a 'Good' result, signed by Gill 23 May 1913.

¹⁴⁰ Margaret Betteridge, *Australian Flora in Art*, Sun Books, South Melbourne, 1979, p. 9. In June 2006 I contacted the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, to validate the purchase of Wright's work in 1910. Although there are several examples of Wright's work in their collection, they stated it was now difficult to check the 1910 date.

¹⁴¹ I make this statement as a result of my own long experience with china painting, firing and teaching. The closer I examined this vase, the more I appreciated how radically different it is by comparison with the tightly controlled china painting of Good and Laughton who were the major teachers of china painting in the School in the 1920-30s.

¹⁴² 'The Gum Tree. Lecture by Mr. R. T. Baker', *Register*, 6 July 1910, p. 6. He also gave another lecture on the use of Australian flora in decorative art.

¹⁴³ Uncatalogued official form titled 'Examiner's Certificate of Results' with a 'Pass' result, signed by Gill 5 June 1911, and a similar form with a 'Good' result, signed by Gill 23 May 1913. Her full name was Hilda Florence Hubble, on some results she was listed as Hilda Hubble, on others as Hilda F. Hubble, whereas in newspaper reports on china painting in the School's exhibitions she was called Miss F Hubble. She signed her work as 'Floy Hubble' or 'F. Hubble'.

¹⁴⁴ 'School of Art. Display of Students' Work', *Advertiser*, 28 May 1912, p. 12.

¹⁴⁵ The Art Gallery of South Australia has a set of six Protea plates painted by Hubble c. 1918. I closely inspected those plates and the rosehip vase. For a number of reasons such as strength of design, application of colour and a difference in the firing results, I consider the rosehip vase to be an earlier work.

¹⁴⁶ 'Technical Art. School of Art Display', *Register*, 22 May 1914, p. 8.

¹⁴⁷ Located in the basement archives of the Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of South Australia in 1998. Uncatalogued sheet of paper on which were pasted newspaper clippings of various Adelaide School of Art exam results in 1913, 1914. Unfortunately there was no indication from which paper, nor the exact date of the paper from which they were cut. It is difficult to locate Kriehn's further exam results. His birth and death years are unknown.

¹⁴⁸ SLSA Z Per. 607.34 I 42a. Catalogue *All Australian Peace Exhibition* 1920. His entry No. 406 was an original design for stencil work on a hall curtain, entry No. 430 original design for leatherwork, and his entries for embossed leather work were No. 564 a purse, No. 565 a bag, No. 566 a book cover, No. 567 a writing case. He was entered in Division 2 (exhibitors 18-21 years of age) of those classes, exhibitors over 21 years of age were in Division I; 'The Peace Exhibition, list of awards' *Advertiser*, 27 April 1920, p. 9. In this article Wright and Hubble are also named as silver medallists in the china painting plate and compote class.

¹⁴⁹ In the curriculum included in the 1922 prospectus of the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts, artistic leatherwork had grades I and II, was on Thursdays 1.30-4.30 p.m. for ten shillings and sixpence a term, with evening classes on Fridays 7-9 p.m. for five shillings and sixpence a term. There were two grades in stencilling, taught for 3 hours every Monday and Thursday for ten shillings and sixpence a term. Further details on course content indicate the wide variety of skills taught in artistic leatherwork and readers were told that 'on completion of this course a student should be able to follow the craft as a livelihood'.

¹⁵⁰ Kriehn's name does not appear in available lists of china painting students in the school, but he could well have picked up the necessary technical skills from other teachers in the School or by sitting in on a few lessons.

¹⁵¹ Ghislaine Wood, *Essential Art Deco*, Victoria and Albert Museum Publications, 2003, pp. 34, 35, 72, 74.

¹⁵² Ghislaine Wood, *Essential Art Deco*, Victoria and Albert Museum Publications, 2003, pp. 36-7.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* pp. 14, 15. In 1927 Cliff used bold on-glaze colours to make old ceramic ware more saleable and that influenced her *Bizarre* design range.

¹⁵⁴ 'Arts and Crafts. First list released', *News*, 22 December 1926, p. 11.

¹⁵⁵ Beurle painted the outside of the bowl pale green and signed 'Jean M Beurle, 1930' underneath the bowl. It has a backstamp 'Victoria china. Czechoslovakia'.

¹⁵⁶ The author has three small pieces by Kernick, each showing her skill with a different palette; in 'School of Arts and Crafts. Second list of examination results', *News*, 16 December 1929, p. 5, she passed China Painting I. In *News*, 17 December 1930, p. 5, she passed China Painting II.

¹⁵⁷ Wood, pp. 31, 32.

¹⁵⁸ 'Arts and Crafts Examination Results', *Advertiser*, 23 December 1931, p. 12.

¹⁵⁹ 'Central School For Art. Results of Girls' Examination', *News*, 20 December 1932, p. 8.

¹⁶⁰ Interview by the author with Howie's daughters Miss Mary Howie and Mrs Jan Flint, 14 January 1998. They stated that Howie loved china painting, provided the china and the three different designs that Sterzl painted. The set was entered in the Royal Adelaide Show. It won an award, but Howie's daughters were unsure in which year. Both women related how they were 'dragged out on Field Naturalist's outings' with their father and learnt the names of native flora. He encouraged drawing and painting from nature. I was allowed to handle and closely inspect their pieces of Howie's china painting, but not to photograph it, due to a recent visit and proposed article by Dr. W. Hall. The china cabinet also housed other examples of china painting by Good and Sterzl.

¹⁶¹ SRSA GRG 18/93 1938 Education Report Appendix C, report of the Superintendent of Technical Education.

¹⁶² 1965 Program of the South Australian School of Art Presentation of Diplomas and Prizes. This included the naming of the Howie Theatre in the School's new premises in Stanley Street, North Adelaide and provided a brief overview of his career within the School.

¹⁶³ SRSA GRG 18/93 1911 Education reports. Adelaide School of Art Annual Report. Both Good and Miss Margaret Kelly were offered those positions in the same year. Both were former students and continued studying in various classes after their junior assistant teacher appointments; the South Australian Education Gazette 15 January 1955 p. 15, does not list Good as on the staff of the School, although in the 15 January 1957 issue, p. 19, she is listed as part-time 4 hours a week.

¹⁶⁴ 'Classes on view next week', *News* 7 August 1957, p. 25. The acting principal Mr P. D. Roberts was reported saying, 'Exhibits will include commercial and fashion art, woodwork, weaving, leather work and china painting'.

CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF ARTS

Introduction

As mentioned in earlier chapters, from the early 1880s when Tannert and Gill were first employed in the School of Painting and the School of Design, exhibitions of students' work were organized and received critical reviews in newspapers of the day. Annual exhibitions were maintained throughout subsequent name changes of the School and, although teachers also exhibited some work, the primary purpose of the School's Exhibitions was to show-case the variety of the students' work and establish a reputation for the School as an admirable training institution for a range of careers. The School also usually exhibited some students' work in the Chamber of Manufacturers, Art and Industry exhibitions that included a very diverse range of entry classes and were held once every five years. However students who wished to further careers as professional artists or teachers, needed to exhibit their work in other exhibitions outside the School in order to establish and maintain a reputation and increase professional recognition.

The South Australian Society of Arts, as the premier art society in South Australia, served such a purpose. In this chapter I will discuss the role it played in educating the public in art/craft appreciation from the time it was formed till the late 1940s. I will point out how women became increasingly visible in the Society, both in organisational roles and as exhibitors alongside male artists of the day. I will argue that the Society's early practice of exhibiting other works besides painting, established a precedent for the ready acceptance of china painting in exhibitions in the first half of the twentieth century. The fact that most china painters had also received formal art and design training and exhibited paintings as well as china in many exhibitions, was a factor that increased the status, and influenced the recognition, of china painting as a suitable applied art to exhibit alongside pictures.¹

Establishing the South Australian Society of Arts and Educating the Public

A few landscape images of South Australia were painted as early as 1802 by male artists such as William Westall who accompanied Matthew Flinders on his voyage around Australia. However it was not until artists arrived amongst the passengers on several of the early immigrant ships to South Australia that landscapes depicting more intimate aspects of South Australian colonisation were painted. Mary, the youngest daughter of the first Governor, John Hindmarsh, arrived with her father in HMS *Buffalo* in December 1836 and produced drawings and paintings over the next few years, for example her pencil drawing *Landing of the emigrants at Glenelg, 1839* (figure 17).² Early artists produced paintings and drawings in the colony for several reasons. Some did sketches and small paintings to send 'back home' to show friends and relatives what the new colony and life therein was like; other artists produced commissioned paintings of South Australian scenery to exhibit or publish as prints in England to entice emigration to the new colony.

Tracey Lock-Weir discussed the early history of visual artists in Adelaide after colonisation in 1836 and stated that, 'by the 1840s Adelaide had the most progressive arts community in the country.'³ The first major art exhibition by artists working in South Australia, the *Exhibition of Pictures, the works of Colonial Artists*, was organised by a committee with colonial secretary Captain Charles Sturt as chairman and took place in the Legislative Council Chamber in Adelaide on 10 February 1847.⁴ A second similar but smaller exhibition was held in 1848.

The subsequent 1850s gold rush to Victoria and New South Wales enticed many able-bodied men from South Australia, including artists such as S. T. Gill and G. F. Angas, but some interest in art remained in Adelaide. For example, Alexander Schramm from Hamburg arrived in South Australia with many other German immigrants in 1849 and found much to paint, and the German artist Eugene von Guerard - an immigrant to Victoria in 1852 - came to

South Australia on a busy painting and sketching trip in July 1855.⁵ Artist, line-engraver and teacher Charles Hill arrived in South Australia in 1854 aboard the *Historia* and attempted to establish a professional art-related career in Adelaide.⁶

Hill initially faced difficulties to the full practice of his art in Adelaide, so taught drawing and ‘had little time for original work’.⁷ He established the Adelaide School of Art located in Pulteney Street and a newspaper advertisement in October 1856 showed the wide range of classes offered, from the human figure, landscapes and animals, to mechanical drawing, architecture, ornament and design.⁸ Most classes ran for two hours in the evenings as such hours would be more suitable for male students, but a three-hour class was held on Tuesday and Friday mornings for ladies. Hill knew many people were interested in art, so decided there was a need in South Australia for the formation of an art society. Consequently, in the same issue that carried the advertisement for the Adelaide School of Art’s classes, Hill also placed another advertisement inviting ‘friends of the Arts generally’ to attend a meeting in the School of Art to discuss the formation of the South Australian Society of Arts, ‘for the formation and cultivation of the taste to procure and the knowledge to produce Works of Art generally, but the Fine Arts in particular’.⁹ A report of the meeting appeared in the *Register* the next day and informed readers that, owing to inclement weather, attendance was lower than expected but letters of regret from interested people unable to attend were read at the meeting. Nevertheless it was decided to go ahead with forming the society, and as soon as Mr. Hill enrolled fifty members, another meeting was to be scheduled.¹⁰

An advertisement placed in the *Register* on 12 January 1857 advised that the adjourned meeting of the South Australian Society of Arts would be held on 14 January for the purpose of electing a committee and officers for the coming year.¹¹ On 15 January the *Register* carried a lengthy article ‘The Ornamental Arts’ that pointed out ‘perhaps the most essential as well as the most obvious point of difference between European and Australian communities is

the elaboration of ornament sought by the former and the devotion to utility manifested by the latter'.¹² In the same article the writer further commented that, 'as society advances and prosperity comes to the individual ... and the leisure conferred by wealth enables him to develop his finer tastes ... the fine arts begin to be practised.' The writer evidently believed that the time was right to form the South Australian Society of Arts as he then observed 'at the present moment there are perhaps more manifest tokens of the vitality of the finer tastes among us than at any previous part of our colonial existence.' After a detailed description of the aims of the Society of Arts in London and Edinburgh, the point was further made that few educated colonists would be unacquainted with the Society of Arts and that an objective of such an institution was, 'to impart an artistic character to articles of utility'.¹³

The South Australian Society of Arts expected to play a role within the colonial community similar to that performed in London by the English Society of Arts and moved quickly into action. A notice in the *Register* on 4 March 1857 informed the public that His Excellency Sir R. G. MacDonnell C. B., Governor-in-Chief was President, with Vice Presidents J. H. Fisher Esq. Speaker and G. F. Angas Esq. M. L. C.¹⁴ Such important people established the prestige of the South Australian Society of Arts' membership, with an annual subscription of one guinea.

The committee consisted of twelve prominent men in the local community, including the artist Charles Hill. The notice also informed the public that:

The Society has for its objects to promote the knowledge and love of the Fine Arts, and their advancement in this colony, by the encouragement of resident or native artists, and the improvement of the public taste.¹⁵

To accomplish the objectives, the Society planned to commence a School of Design, an art union and to affiliate the Society to the South Australian Institute.¹⁶ Annual exhibitions were planned with a prize of ten guineas to be awarded to the best original painting of an

Australian subject, on condition that the artist himself exhibited the painting and was a member of the Society. It was intended to open the exhibition with a *conversazione* to which members only and ladies introduced by them, would be admitted. It appeared from such advertisements in the early years of the Society's history, that women artists were not expected to hold aspirations as committee members or executive positions, and serious artists competing for the ten-guinea prize were mentioned in terms of the masculine gender. Moreover a male member must introduce women attending any *conversazione*. Another notice in the *Register* advised the public that the first annual exhibition of the Society would be held, by permission of His Excellency the Governor, in the Legislative Council Chamber.¹⁷ Those interested in the Society were requested to lend pictures, engravings, sculptures etc. for the exhibition.

The Society opened its first exhibition of 'Pictures and other Works of Art' in the Council Chambers, North Terrace, Adelaide on 9 March 1857.¹⁸ The exhibition catalogue listed 166 varied entries.¹⁹ A list of 'contributors' appeared on the last page, with the name of His Excellency Sir R. G. MacDonnell C. B. at the top of the list. Many catalogue entries were vague, listing neither the specific title of the painting, nor the artist nor the exhibitor. Nevertheless, the fact that there were artists in Adelaide who exhibited their own work is indicated by entries that listed the title, name of the artist and an address. (See Appendix 8.) At least one female artist exhibited; nos. 102 and 103 each titled *Flower* by Miss Jones, Adelaide.²⁰ Other catalogue numbers indicated the wide range of items exhibited. For example entry nos. 113 and 114 were listed as 'Paintings in enamel' and are ambiguous as 'enamel' can indicate either fired on-glaze ceramic enamels (china painting) or fired enamels on metals.

About 100 persons attended the afternoon opening to which only members, and ladies introduced by them, were admitted, and slightly fewer people attended the evening

Conversazione. His Excellency the Governor and Lady MacDonnell attended both events. The opening of that first annual exhibition received a favourable report in the *Register*. The report commented on the wide variety of exhibited items that included paintings, engravings, photographs, statuettes, bronzes, models, vases, stating that it was ‘as a whole, much superior to anything of the kind ever got up in Adelaide’.²¹ It was quite possible that the ‘vases’ were from English potteries and china-painted. The fact that a wide variety of objects and art media was exhibited in the first annual exhibition of the Society established a precedent for future exhibitions. It was an early indication of the Society’s liberal attitude to the definition of ‘art’ that subsequently led the way encouraging the multi-media skilling of the exhibiting South Australian artists in the twentieth century. Loans of artwork from the private collections of various Adelaide art lovers for the South Australian Society of Arts’ subsequent exhibitions continued to raise the level of taste in Colonial South Australia. The Society’s 1859 Exhibition also contained a diverse range of exhibits, including such items as no. 267 *The ‘Buckinghamshire’ in Holdfast Bay* by Col. Light, from the collection of Mr. J. Morphett and no. 234 *Small Enriched Vase* an Art Union Prize from the Society of Arts.

Another objective of the Society was to establish a School of Design in South Australia and this was opened in 1861 with Charles Hill as Director.²² The fourth annual exhibition of the South Australian Society of Arts, held in the rooms of the Institute, North Terrace, Adelaide, in April 1861 showed the close association between the Society and the new school.²³ The exhibition catalogue listed ‘pictures, sculptures and other works of art’ with the name of the exhibitor of each painting. The catalogue also included a section titled ‘School of Design’ under which were listed items contributed by the South Australian Society of Arts for practical instruction in the new School such as no. 380 *Leg of Horse*, no. 386 *Acanthus Leaf* and no. 403 *Colossal Hand*.²⁴ (See Appendix 9.) The items indicated to exhibition viewers that the Society’s newly established School of Design training included drawing, modelling and architectural studies, all of which were in keeping with established classical English and

European traditions. Furthermore, three papers were read at the exhibition opening to educate the public on art, and were subsequently printed in the *Register*.²⁵ The inclusion of such an eclectic mix of exhibits supported by talks and published papers educated people on art history, whether they viewed the exhibition or merely read newspapers. It is further proof how the Society sought to educate the general public as well as Society members and students.

All available evidence indicates that educating the colonists in all matters appertaining to art was indeed the top priority of the Society. Although their first annual exhibition in 1857 mostly contained items loaned from colonists' homes, by the 1860s the exhibitions also provided a venue for displaying the artwork of school students as well as established colonial artists. The report of the Society for 1861 stated, 'the Art education of the young has, from the first, occupied a considerable share of the attention of the promoters of the Society.'²⁶

Educating the younger generation in all things artistic was anticipated to raise the taste of the colony and have long-term benefits for Society membership. Exhibitions then included competitive prizes for artwork in a variety of media and subject matter, with some prizes awarded to adult artists and some prizes for school children (boys and girls) of different age groups. A notice in the *Register* before the 1861 exhibition, listed seventeen competitive prizes, of which five were for children.²⁷ In the October 1862 annual exhibition list, some prizes were reserved for South Australian School of Design students, and two prizes, for original drawings, were restricted to competition by young ladies only. Although women were not highly visible in the first few years of Society of Arts' activities unless introduced by male members at the *conversaciones*, by 1862 they were at least gaining some recognition as artists. The report for the year 1862 covered some events in 1863, and showed further evidence of women artists' increasing visibility as they gained seven prizes.²⁸ Martha Berkeley however, who was an early resident in Adelaide, was already a professional artist of

some note in Adelaide by the 1840s.²⁹ Her painting of North Terrace in 1839 showed wooden structures along North Terrace and people engaged in various activities, gentlemen on horses, a bullock cart, people gossiping and a ladder against a house wall that indicated building activity.³⁰

Art Unions were popular features of Society of Arts' activities in the 1860s, and exhibition catalogues listed a number of exhibited items to be drawn later as 'Art Union Prizes'. Items to be won included not only sketches, but also decorated vases, goblets, small English china figurines, glass jugs and goblets, and hand-made wax flowers.³¹ The report for the year 1862-63 stated that:

The establishment of an Art Union, also held at each Exhibition, gives to every Subscriber a chance of obtaining, as a prize, a work of art not ordinarily procurable - thus diffusing art objects, and insensibly, but surely, educating the taste ... the works of art, consisting principally of Porcelain Statuary, introduced from England to supplement Colonial contributions to the Art Union, give a higher value to the Subscriber's chance at the distribution, than at any former Exhibition.³²

The inclusion as Art Union prizes of decorative items which in their original undecorated forms could be viewed as merely 'utility objects', shifted their perceived status towards 'objects worthy of artistic contemplation'. That was another example of how the Society expanded its role as the educator of public taste to include appreciation of the decorative arts. It also validated naming the new art school the School of Design and reinforced the proposed benefits to industry of good art and design training. The long-term result of subtly indoctrinating South Australians with an appreciation of the decorative arts was one factor in the ready acceptance of locally produced china painting as a skill worthy of inclusion in the Society's exhibitions following Federation. For maximum public impact however, the location of a suitable gallery space for exhibitions was important, as was a suitable Patron for the Society, also the President and someone of high social standing to open the Exhibitions.

Given the Society's affiliation with the Institute, the 1861 exhibition was held in the new South Australian Institute buildings on North Terrace, but this was not without some heated debate within the Institute committee.³³ Exhibitions continued to be held there, but space and lighting became inadequate as the popularity of exhibitions increased. The Institute Building on North Terrace, Adelaide, was eventually extended and a well-lit gallery added at the rear of the Society's old rooms, enabling the Society to improve the standard of exhibitions. From 1872 onwards the managers of the Society decided to '... dispense with loan works ... and to announce that future exhibitions would include competitive work from local artists only, and that the Society's prizes were to be confined to original productions.'³⁴

The Society's annual report for the year 1868 reiterated the aim of promoting a love of the fine arts, the improvement of public taste and the art education of the young. The Patron of the Society was His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, the President was His Excellency Sir D. Daly Kt, Governor-in-Chief, and a number of important South Australian male dignitaries filled the roles of Vice-Presidents and committee members. People of such standing reinforced the cultural and social importance of the Society of Arts. The annual report also contained an optimistic report from Hill, the Master of the School of Design.³⁵ Hill reported an increase in the classes offered and the numbers of male and females studying in each class. The majority of students were males, but a small number of females attended. Both sexes studied the human figure at elementary level, from shaded copies, but only male students studied in life drawing classes and also received tuition in more detailed animal studies. Female students drew flowers instead.

Nevertheless in the 1870s, interest in the Society started to decline. The decade of the 1870s was a period of debate regarding education in South Australia, especially that of women, as discussed in the previous chapter on Rosa Fiveash. In 1873 the School of Design, under the direction of the South Australian Society of Arts, and situated in the South Australian Institute

with Hill as the Art Master, continued to offer afternoon and evening art classes, although in fewer subjects.³⁶ The same tired curriculum continued till the end of 1879.³⁷ However by 1880 Hill was approaching the end of his art teaching career and enthusiasm within the Society of Arts was low. The Board of the Institute therefore set up a committee to recommend changes in the old School of Design.

The result was, as discussed in the previous chapter on Fiveash, that Hill resigned his teaching position in September 1881. Two new schools commenced under the guidance of the South Australian Institute; a new School of Painting under Louis Tannert, closely followed by a School of Design under Harry Pelling Gill. In February 1883 an exhibition of students' work was mounted in the Institute. In a review of the exhibition, the *Register* believed that the authorities of the South Australian Institute deserved every credit for the students' good work, and pointed out that the old art school connected with the Institute had languished for some time and furthermore that the Society of Arts 'was anything but a successful institution'.³⁸

The 1880s and early 1890s were a period of reorganisation in the South Australian art world. On 1 July 1884 the South Australian Institute was renamed/replaced by the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery through Act of Parliament No. 296 of 1883-4.³⁹ Parliament also recognised the Society of Arts and affiliated it to the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery by Act Number 296. The Schools of Painting and Design then came under the control of the Fine Arts Committee of the Board of Governors of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of South Australia.⁴⁰ Gill became increasingly involved in promoting art and design education in South Australia as discussed in previous chapters, so it was not surprising that he also became interested in the activities of the Society of Arts.

Previously most of the positions of office in the Society of Arts as well as judges of the art exhibitions, had been filled by prominent South Australian men who were, nevertheless, not

artists themselves. By October 1891 the Society of Arts membership was at such a low ebb that only two members turned up at the 34th annual meeting.⁴¹ Mary Overbury and Mr. H. E. Fuller, when discussing the reasons for the flagging interest in the welfare of the Society of Arts, believed that the lack of suitable gallery exhibition space was a factor. Overbury pointed out that the Town Hall exhibition area in the 1870s was inadequate and poorly lit, while the progress of the new Institute Building with improved, better-lit exhibition space, was so slow that it hampered the Society's activities and caused a decrease of interest.⁴² Another factor in the decline in membership of the Society of Arts was its failure to adequately address an increased interest in the arts and crafts that resulted from the so-called aesthetic movement in England.⁴³

It was obvious that restructuring of the Society was urgently required. Gill, some of his artist friends and the Hon. S. J. Way set to work to revive enthusiasm and membership. By September 1892 it was decided to change the membership structure of the Society in favour of artists. Non-professionals would be classified as Honorary Members and could still retain all their former privileges of admission to exhibitions and other functions of the Society, but the principal artistic direction of the Society would be reserved to the professional members, assisted by the associate members who consisted of art students and amateur artists.⁴⁴ Such a decision suggests that exhibiting artists considered the prominent men who were not artists, to be too conservative and lacking in the necessary knowledge and practical skills to make informed judgments on art matters. This, too, would have been a factor in the decline in membership.

Increasing the Visibility of Women Artists

By 1893, the President was His Honour the Chief Justice S. J. Way who was a keen collector and patron of art, but not an artist. Gill was one of the three Vice-Presidents and set to play

an active role in the future direction of the Society. Women artists, most of whom were, or had been, involved with training under Gill or Tannert, featured strongly in the new regime. Three women artists, including Rosa Fiveash, all of whom had all trained in the Schools of Painting and Design in the 1880s, were elected in the committee of eight.⁴⁵ There were nine women and four men listed as members, and eleven women and ten men as associates. This was a marked departure from earlier years in the history of the Society, when women were not expected to hold office and had little input with decision-making unless it involved issues of hospitality or entertaining.

The next exhibition of the South Australian Society of Arts opened on 22 September 1893 in the Institute Building, North Terrace, Adelaide. The preface in the exhibition catalogue informed readers of the revisions of the rules, and stated that, although it was now many years since the Society held an Exhibition, the Society hoped that art lovers and the public would patronise future exhibitions and so ensure ‘a series of advances in the Art progress of the Country’. Women artists were increasingly visible and submitted ninety-nine out of the total of 186 exhibits.⁴⁶ The 1893 catalogue entries indicated the increasing number of South Australian women artists who had received formal art training, and were confidently exhibiting their paintings alongside male artists, – a great change from the first decades of the Society’s exhibitions.

The Earl of Kintore, His Excellency the Governor, opened the 1893 Society of Arts exhibition. Admission was one shilling. It was a social event attended by many art patrons and rated a lengthy column in the *Register*.⁴⁷ In his opening address, His Excellency noted that, ‘until a year ago its (the Society) usefulness was believed by many to have lapsed’; but he then commented favourably on the exhibited work of several artists, including the portraiture and excellent workmanship of the Misses Hambidge, the excellent treatment of native birds by the Misses Benham and Fiveash, and the painting of flora in the Adelaide

Hills by Mrs Scott. He concluded with, 'this Society may go far towards creating a school of painting distinctly national in its aim, in its subjects, and in their treatment'. Although a distinctly national school of Australian painting became based mainly on the Australian landscape, as shown by later purchases through the Federal Exhibitions, Australian birds and flora were a more intimate observation of Australian-ness.

Many artists were inspired to create a 'national style' in their paintings with an emphasis on sunlit landscapes as the move towards Federation gained momentum. The Society of Arts made some acknowledgment of this when, in the preface of the June 1894 exhibition catalogue, they stated one reason why the month of June was chosen was, 'so that a shorter time may elapse between the sketching season of summer suns, and this public exhibition of complete labours'. Another reason for holding the exhibition in June was in order that it would not 'compete with, and encroach upon other Exhibitions in connection with the various Art Schools, at which the Society's Associates are wont to exhibit'.⁴⁸ Gill probably influenced this decision, as he would have known of the activities of, for example the School of Design Art Club that exhibited in May 1894, the Art Easel Club that exhibited in 1894 and also of artist James Ashton's Norwood Art School that had 160 students in 1893.⁴⁹

The 1894 Society of Arts Exhibition attracted forty-eight exhibitors with a total of 184 entries. It was also the first Society of Arts exhibition in which china painting by an Australian artist was exhibited, namely Fiveash's entry no. 29A that consisted of a number of pieces of china painting, as discussed in a previous chapter.

The Society's 1895 Exhibition catalogue showed that, besides the traditional landscape painting genre, interest in the decorative arts was also increasing in the South Australian community. An advertisement by bookseller Arthur H Roberts in the catalogue advised readers that his establishment could supply a number of overseas books and magazines on art,

including the *Journal of Decorative Art*, *Art Decorator*, *Home Art Work*, and *China Decorator*. Publications such as those reflected the growing interest in the Arts and Crafts movement currently popular in England and America, but which, as Overbury commented, had been ignored by the previous Society of Arts' officials. Fiveash did not exhibit china paintings in the 1895 exhibition, but Mabel Boothby's entry no. 11 '*Silk D'Oyles*', priced at one pound ten shillings, was a departure from traditional fine art exhibits.⁵⁰ Boothby also exhibited a painting no. 11A *Australian Wild Flowers*, also priced at one pound ten shillings.

There was also evidence of the increasing number of women active in the art world and of another trend in South Australian art practice in 1895, namely in black and white illustrative skills suitable for reproduction.⁵¹ Indeed illustrations of some exhibits also appeared for the first time in the 1895 catalogue, and many pages carried additional decorative images, with the name of the artist printed underneath, as for example Miss A. M. Hambidge (figure 18).

The preface in the catalogue informed readers that:

This illustrated catalogue is a PIONEER, it being the first published in S.A. in connection with an Exhibition of local Art. We are hopeful it will be a stepping stone to greater achievements by the members of this Society in the important art of drawing for reproduction. It is our hope that in the immediate future, works of merit by South Australian artists will occupy a large portion of the Australian Room in connection with our NATIONAL GALLERY.

The mention of an 'Australian room' indicated the desire of many artists to press for recognition of their work as distinctly Australian and was a hint of the coming Federal Exhibitions. Whereas previous catalogue covers carried printed information only, the 1895 cover had a decorative image in the popular Art Nouveau style. The curving plant forms are vaguely Australian, certainly a carpet of everlasting daisies is a feature of arid regions after a good rain and artists such as Fiveash were well acquainted with Australian flora. Rather appropriately, as female membership of the Society of Arts was increasing, the image portrayed a confidently poised female artist, holding her brush and palette (figure 19). Although male members held the most important positions in the Society up to the turn of the

Century and for many years thereafter, women increasingly gained positions with some influence, such as being elected as committee members, (subsequently called Council members) Associates and Fellows.⁵² By 1895 the category of nine Fellows included seven female artists and of the thirty-eight Associates, twenty-six were female.

There could be several reasons for the increase in female participation in the Society of Arts' affairs in the 1890s. As stated in the chapter on Fiveash, the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art provided formal art training and certification for both sexes who aspired to earn a living as professional artists, and there was a high percentage of women students in most classes. Although the School of Design mounted exhibitions for students, exhibiting work in the Society of Arts Exhibitions helped establish their professional reputations in subsequent years. Drawing was an important skill taught in the School of Design, and drawing for reproduction would be useful for earning some income within the advertising world. Images printed in the 1895 catalogue were evidence of this skill, such as Alice Hambidge's design of a sleeping woman. The depression in South Australia during the 1890s, as discussed before, made it difficult for many women to support themselves financially and even small commissions would be useful. The Society of Arts was one venue that could result in sales of exhibited work or attract future commissions. The preface of the 1895 catalogue sought to influence the public by suggesting:

The cognoscenti will easily discern the great advance made by many of the artists whose names appear in this catalogue, and we trust their work will enlist the sympathy and support of South Australia.

Women continued to feature in subsequent Society of Arts exhibitions, and works of artistic endeavour other than paintings and sculpture, continued to be accepted as exhibits. For example the preface in the catalogue of the Society of Arts 1900 Exhibition contained the following information from the hanging committee:

In the present Exhibition it will be noticed that Landscape and Figure subjects are of more equal merit than those in former Exhibitions ... Those who recognise that Art is not limited to pictorial compositions will welcome the exhibits in the Artistic Crafts section. We trust that these exhibits will lead to higher achievements in this direction in the future.

The 1900 catalogue did not list artistic crafts as a separate section but included, amongst the painting entries, exhibits that undoubtedly came under the artistic crafts category, although full details were not stated. For example seven items that could be classified as artistic crafts merely had 'School of Design' as the exhibitor and not the name of the individual students responsible for them.⁵³ Other craft work was exhibited by James Keane who exhibited no. 33 a 'lady's writing cabinet' for ten guineas and V. J. Pavia's entry no. 36A 'pillar candlestick'. Both men had associations with the School of Design and Mr. Jas Keane was also the Hon. Librarian of the Society of Arts. With Gill as one of the Vice Presidents and several of his female ex-students on the Society's Council, it is not surprising that the Society exhibited craft items that reflected training in the School of Design during the last decade. However, china painting was not exhibited in the 1900 exhibition; the 'jardiniere' entries from the School of Design were ceramics without painted on-glaze decorations. The inclusion of exhibits termed as 'artistic crafts' was, after all, in keeping with the eclectic mix displayed in the very early Society of Arts exhibitions. Although women did not appear to enter any artistic crafts in the 1900 exhibition, their paintings however were visible and drew comment. A review of the 1900 Society of Arts' Exhibition in the *Advertiser* informed readers that:

Without exception all the flower paintings in the Society of Arts Exhibition are by women. They have made this section exclusively their own by reason of the faculty they possess of rendering those charming natural objects with delicacy and refinement.⁵⁴

That same article did not comment on any paintings by male exhibitors, nor on craft items. Nevertheless male artists were active in the Society and membership numbers increased when the Adelaide Easel Club, in which art teacher James Ashton was an influential member, amalgamated with the Society of Arts.⁵⁵ By the early 1900s the Society of Arts annual exhibitions remained popular venues in which to exhibit, but the recently introduced Federal

Exhibitions, held at a different time to the Society of Arts' annual exhibitions, had emerged as prestigious events and drew many entries from prominent South Australian and Interstate artists. Recent large paintings from noted male artists were especially popular exhibits and received much comment, although women increasingly exhibited work in the Federal Exhibitions over the next two decades.

The Federal Exhibitions

Prior to the first Federal Exhibition in 1898, reference to the idea of the Society working with the Art Gallery to form a nucleus collection of Australian paintings, was made as far back as 1894 by His Excellency the Earl of Kintore when he opened the 1894 Society of Arts exhibition.⁵⁶

A timely bequest by Sir Thomas Elder (1818-1897), finally paid in March 1898, enabled the Board of Governors of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery to increase the art collection of the National Gallery of South Australia, and to form a collection of Australian paintings. The money was to 'be spent in the purchase of pictures only for the said Gallery and for no other purpose whatsoever'.⁵⁷ Gill, as Hon. Curator 1892-1909 of the National Gallery of South Australia drew up a list of recommendations for the Fine Arts Committee to submit to the Board, regarding the most efficient way of allocating Elder's twenty-five thousand pound bequest.⁵⁸ The Board accepted Gill's advice to invest one third of the bequest and use the annual interest of 250 pounds to purchase the best Australian paintings from annual Federal Exhibitions in which paintings from leading artists would be hung. The Federal Exhibitions were to be Australasian, held in the South Australian Society of Arts gallery in Adelaide, and entries were solicited from artists in similar art societies in other Australian Colonies (later called States) and New Zealand.⁵⁹ The exhibitions were to be held

for five years, after which the Board would make another decision as to whether they should be continued.⁶⁰

Seven leading Australasian art societies sent selected paintings from their members to the first Federal Exhibition. On 9 November the *Register* printed an article on the Intercolonial Art Exhibition advocating that, 'to foster the federal spirit in such matters as artistic, social and literary work, is as important as to formulate any system of legislative federation'.⁶¹ In the same article, the writer praised the work in the current exhibition, and deplored the tendency of purchasers of canvases to favour artists with an English reputation and ignore colonial artists.⁶²

Before the opening, the Fine Arts Committee of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery closely examined the exhibition, and made purchase recommendations to Board members, who then viewed the paintings before sanctioning expenditure. The exhibition was opened by His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor the Right Hon. S. J. Way on Thursday afternoon 10 November 1898.⁶³ He remarked, 'in the domain of art Australia was now federated, and in that respect it was now in advance of political federation'.⁶⁴

The anticipated success of the Federal Exhibitions depended on the quality of work exhibited by Australian artists that fitted into the collecting parameters of the National Gallery of South Australia. Catherine Speck, in a paper examining the Federal Exhibitions and how they related to the construction of Australian art, commented on the importance of Gill's good eye for suitable contemporary paintings to purchase for the emerging Australian collection in the National Gallery of South Australia, and also his networking skills to bring in worthy exhibitors during the first decade of the Federal Exhibitions.⁶⁵ Most paintings purchased for the Australian Collection, and which received good critical reviews or engendered public debate, were painted by male Australian artists, although Speck pointed out that women

painted approximately one third of the artworks purchased by the National Gallery of South Australia.⁶⁶

Gill's acumen resulted in a successful first Federal Exhibition in 1898, with paintings exhibited from sixty-seven male and twenty-seven female artists.⁶⁷ The proportion of women artists gradually increased, and, after the first few Federal Exhibitions, female exhibitors usually outnumbered male exhibitors. This was especially so with the exhibiting South Australian artists, where, by the third Federal Exhibition in 1900, only fourteen male artists but twenty female South Australians exhibited, and the Art Society of Tasmania sent paintings by eight women artists and three men. Various aspects of the Australian landscape featured strongly as the preferred subject matter of the leading male artists of the day and also by gallery curators and the cognoscenti in establishing an Australian style of art. Although many women artists did indeed exhibit some landscapes, much of their art practice focused on intimate aspects of domesticity, home and garden, or native flora and birds. China painting certainly implied domesticity with a preponderance of floral images on items useful in events such as tea parties, but did not appear in any of the early Federal Exhibitions.⁶⁸

The catalogue cover for 1898, designed by James Keane, certainly depicted the idea of Australian states joining together under the name of Art, with State floral emblems such as Sturt peas for South Australia, flannel flowers for New South Wales and artists' palettes with initials of New Zealand and the Australian states, but not of Western Australia.⁶⁹ These were connected by twining Art Nouveau lines and all held together by a female figure which suggests that women played a useful role in keeping the states connected (figure 20).

Covers of succeeding Federal Exhibition catalogues continued the precedent of conveying an Australian sentiment. Many covers also included images depicting the role of women in the arts. This was not surprising, considering the increasing number of professional South

Australian women artists, who, encouraged by the art training offered by the School, entered the public domain.

In contrast to the previous ‘public amateur’ and ‘private professional’ colonial categories described by Caroline Jordan in chapter one of this thesis, professional women artists were now taking their place in public as council members and exhibitors alongside male artists in the South Australian Society of Arts. For instance, Gill was President in 1910, with five women, the Misses Ethel Bloxam, Mary Overbury, Elizabeth Armstrong, Rosa Fiveash and Rose McPherson (later Margaret Preston) on the council, along with seven male artists, including Gustave Barnes and Howie, who was then teaching china painting and other subjects in the (now renamed) Adelaide School of Art. By the thirteenth Federal Exhibition in November 1910, the total proportion of male and female exhibitors had completely changed, with only thirty-four male artists, but sixty female artists, exhibiting paintings.

In most artwork, there is often additional, underlying, subtle information included by the artist that can convey how he/she feels about the situation or environment portrayed on paper or canvas. Federal Exhibition catalogue covers were no exception. Occasionally the same image appeared for consecutive years, but usually the artwork on the covers made some type of comment on the era. Gustave Barnes designed the 1910 Federal Exhibition catalogue cover. It is not surprising therefore that he included women in his drawings for many exhibition covers from then on.

For example, the 1910 Federal Exhibition catalogue cover, designed by Barnes, contained imagery which suggests that, although men might like to paint armless, semi-nude, mute women placed on a pedestal, women artists of the day could scrutinize and pass judgment on paintings, and also still enjoy the feminine craft of art needlework.⁷⁰ A latent interest in ceramics is indicated by the pitcher and decorated plate partially in view on the floor (figure

21). For the 1912 cover, Barnes drew a romanticized view of a bare-footed shepherd seated on a rock and playing a pipe to a contented flock of sheep (ewes) grazing behind him. The trees on the hillside are eucalypt saplings and the sheep certainly indicate an Australian industry (figure 22). On the 1913 Federal Exhibition catalogue cover, Barnes depicted male and female figures standing side by side, with a palette between them as they gaze at a gum butt (figure 23). This suggests a sense of equality between male and female artists and that women also painted landscapes as well as flowers and portraits.

The 1914 catalogue cover featured a drawing by Barnes of two seated women, one of whom gazes directly at the viewer as she holds a paintbrush, and the other woman clasps her knees as she gazes downwards in melancholic meditation (figure 24). The Australian aspect is indicated by drooping eucalypt leaves and gum nuts behind the women. No men appear in this scene. The war had started; men were enlisting in the armed forces and women worried about the safety of their loved ones.

The South Australian Society of Arts, like a number of organizations, experienced difficulties during the 1914-18 World War, with many young men with artistic potential joining the Australian armed forces. The 1916 Federal Exhibition catalogue cover, designed by Barnes, has a resonance of sadness. He depicted a seated woman actively producing art, as a young man in civilian clothing merely sat and gazed sadly at his board as if in farewell to art, while behind them another young man, with crossed arms and already in uniform, stood on stones in front of a large Union Jack (figure 25). A wreath was drawn below the uniformed figure.

The (unsigned) illustration on the 1917 Federal Exhibition catalogue cover featured a woman artist leaning on a post and rail fence in the Australian bush, looking at her artwork, with only a sulphur-crested cockatoo for company (figure 26).⁷¹ It was a sign of Australian-ness, that the men were away overseas, leaving the women artists at home.

The image by C. Wall on the cover of the twenty-sixth Federal Exhibition in 1923, also depicted a lone woman artist painting (figure 27). Have the important male artists disappeared from the scene, given up painting the iconic ‘Australian Bush’, and gone elsewhere? Many important male artists had indeed disappeared elsewhere and only a few bothered to send work from interstate to the 1923 Federal Exhibition. Critical reviews were not favourable, commenting, ‘there is no work outstanding’, and ‘the selection committee have done as well as could be expected under the circumstances.’⁷² Federal Exhibitions in South Australia had indeed changed, and this was the last one held. Instead of continuing the original purpose of attracting the best of Australian paintings, they had become venues for exhibiting paintings of minor importance and an increasing amount of popular decorative art/craft work, including china painting, produced by women artists.

China Painting in the Federal Exhibitions

In 1912, china painting was exhibited in a Federal Exhibition for the first time. The fifteenth Federal Exhibition that opened on 14 November 1912 marked several departures from previous years. Female artists were again well to the fore, with only twenty-nine male artists but fifty female artists exhibiting artwork. Of particular note, was the fact that a few South Australian women artists set a new trend and exhibited work that came under the category of ‘applied art’ or ‘artistic crafts’. Miss Maida Wright exhibited no. 52a ‘painted china’ and Miss Alice Campbell exhibited no. 45 a set of coffee cups at three guineas, no. 48 *Placque (sic) after Moorish Design* no price stated, no. 50 *Vase (Conventional Design)* at two guineas and no. 51 *Vase (Landscape Design)* no price stated.⁷³ Leatherwork was exhibited by Misses Gladys Good and J Cleland. This set a pattern for future Federal Exhibitions. Other changes

in 1912 included declaring the exhibition open during an evening 'conversazione' instead of the afternoon private viewing of previous years; admitting groups of school children at a greatly reduced rate; and allocating a day for inmates of the Destitute Asylum to view the exhibition.⁷⁴

Critical reviews of the 1912 Federal Exhibition commented on a wide range of subject matter depicted by various artists in a range of media. However the review in the *Advertiser* commented that a number of exhibits had 'no manner of right to appear in a Federal exhibition, the primary aim of which is to afford the Art Gallery authorities an opportunity of selecting works for their walls ...'.⁷⁵ The china painting entries of Wright and Campbell were inserted in the catalogue amongst the fine art entries, but the *Advertiser's* critic ignored the china painting. The *Register's* critic merely mentioned that there was 'a small exhibit of hand painted china'.⁷⁶ Other South Australian women artists such as Mamie Venner, Beulah Leicester, Gladys Good and Maude Wynes received favourable critical comment for their exhibited paintings of flowers and still life.⁷⁷ They did not exhibit china painting in the 1912 Federal Exhibition, but later became regular exhibitors of china painting in other exhibitions.

But why did women exhibit china painting in the 1912 Federal Exhibition, and in increasing amounts up to and including the last Federal exhibition in 1923, when there was no chance of such work being purchased under terms of the Elder Bequest which mentioned 'paintings only' and minimal possibility under the Morgan Thomas Bequest? There are several inter-meshing factors why this was so.

Women speaking up was undoubtedly a major factor, and women were now the exhibiting majority in the Federal Exhibitions, and especially in the South Australian contingent. As discussed in the previous chapter on Rosa Fiveash, women became more publicly visible and vocal in the decade leading up to and after Federation. Catherine Helen Spence's influence

on better educational opportunities for women, the suffragist's efforts in winning the vote in South Australia, and Gill's efforts in gaining certification for art teachers, all provided more confidence for women to speak up and take action on issues that affected them. Moreover the right to earn some income of their own was a necessity for most women who chose to remain single, and for those who were professional artists with a range of media skills, every exhibition in which a sale could be made, including the Federal Exhibitions, was a valid target.

By November 1912, china painting classes in the Adelaide School of Art were in their sixth year, so there were undoubtedly women like Wright, who were members of the South Australian Society of Arts and were skilled china painters eager to exhibit and sell their work. Although the 'pictures only' purchasing policy of the Elder Bequest was known, members of the public were also potential purchasers, and china painting could appeal to discerning women viewing the Federal Exhibitions.

Gill's known interest in what was then called 'the applied arts' was another factor that could have influenced the inclusion of china painting. As Honorary Curator of the State Gallery, Gill had been responsible for advising and arranging many acquisitions for the Gallery Collection. In his original submission to the Board in 1897 regarding the application of funds under the Elder Bequest, Gill suggested that a more liberal reading of the bequest be made and that purchases be made of European works of art applied to design. He wrote:

Your Board recognizes that your school has worked in forwarding the applied art in Adelaide and Australia, yet the art gallery offers no opportunities to the students and artisans while workers in the sister colonies, especially Melbourne, have received such assistance in the specimens of applied art in those galleries.⁷⁸

Nevertheless the Board thought otherwise, and the 'pictures only' injunction of the Elder Bequest held. As the Gallery's Honorary Curator, he was bound to comply, irrespective of his own inclinations

The category 'applied art' that Gill mentioned, covered many items and skills, including designing and painting images onto factory-produced china such as English Doulton or Continental Meissen. It could also include furnishings and hand-painted tiles designed and produced by Morris and Co. in England where the British Arts and Crafts movement was still popular. In 1899 Gill wrote to Robert Barr Smith, hoping to obtain some assistance in collecting suitable applied art items, but was unlucky. Another benefactor, George Brookman, gifted a Doulton English bone china vase featuring Australian wildflowers hand painted by Louis Bilton, to the National Gallery of South Australia in 1899.⁷⁹ By 1903 the Gallery's 16,500 pounds share of the Morgan Thomas Bequest was available and enabled the Gallery to broaden its collection policy. However the emphasis was on forming a nucleus of British, Chinese and Japanese ceramics, as well as furniture and silver, and not on adding South Australian china painting to the Gallery's collections.⁸⁰

In 1909 Gill resigned his position at the Art Gallery, and was therefore no longer strictly bound to maintain his former official standpoint, but nonetheless he was still influential in the Adelaide art world.⁸¹ Given this background, by 1911-12 Gill may well have turned a sympathetic ear to women china painters, many of whom had studied in the Adelaide School of Art, and given tacit approval for the women to approach the selection and hanging committee in 1912. As mentioned in an earlier chapter on Howie, Gill was 'absent on leave' before the end of 1912 and, from the end of 1913 until October 1914, was in England due to ill-health, leaving Howie acting as Principal of the Adelaide School of Art. In such an important event as the 1912 Federal Exhibition, the inclusion of china painting could be viewed as a subversive promulgation of an acceptable applied art and also a subtle

advertisement for the classes in the Adelaide School of Art. Wright in particular was an experienced china painter and, as will be mentioned later, had exhibited her work elsewhere before the 1912 Federal Exhibition.

There was also the possibility that the supply of saleable paintings that would appeal to the public had diminished in the last few years leading up to 1912, and the Federal Exhibitions could do with a 'new look'. In 1910 for example, a critic observed that the exhibition was 'not on par with the best of the past', that it had fewer outstanding paintings, a lack of picture-buyers, and that the trouble and expense of sending important work to the exhibition was a factor in the lack of notable work exhibited.⁸² The addition therefore of applied arts exhibits in 1912 would have added a point of interest to an exhibition that was, perhaps, becoming a trifle mundane. In addition, there was increasing interest in the arts and crafts which was to become so prominent in the 1920s.

However enthusiastic support from interstate artists certainly returned in 1913. The selection and hanging committee regarded the sixteenth Federal Exhibition in November 1913 as 'the strongest yet shown, due possibly to the fact of a recent announcement that the Board had a larger amount than usual available for the purchase of work'.⁸³ Moreover the selection committee regarded the display as a 'distinct advance in Australian Art', with paintings from Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria included. It was a Federal Exhibition particularly strong in the number of women artists who submitted work, with fifty-nine of the 100 exhibitors listed in the catalogue, being women. The Society of Women Painters of New South Wales sent a selection of paintings that were hung 'en bloc'. South Australia was represented by fifty-eight artists, of whom thirty-eight were women.⁸⁴

An increasing amount of china painting was also exhibited in the 1913 Federal Exhibition. South Australian women artists, Campbell, Wright and Gladys McDowall exhibited a total of

eleven entries of china painting. Their work, nos. 43-53, was not in a separate section in the catalogue, but included among the painting entries, and with little indication of subject matter.⁸⁵ Prices for the china painting ranged from one to five guineas. Given that Hans Heysen's large and impressive landscape painting *Red Gold* was for sale at 315 pounds, and attracted much attention, it is somewhat surprising that the newspaper reviews even mentioned the china painting. However the *Register's* review of the exhibition commented, 'There is a small, but good collection of ceramics' and the *Advertiser* that year noted, 'grouped with the miniatures are some interesting exhibits of painted china, the work of South Australians Misses Gladys McDowall, Maida Wright and A Campbell'.⁸⁶

The start of the 1914-18 World War marked further changes in the Federal Exhibitions, with women and china painting becoming increasingly visible. The character of the seventeenth Federal Exhibition in November 1914 was greatly lessened due to the strenuous period through which Australia was passing.⁸⁷ Only sixty-three artists exhibited work. A critic noted that the paintings were bold, full of colour and daring effects, but then voiced his concern that local artists were 'feeling something of the modern tendency towards the impressionist method and theory ... (which was) cause for a sigh of regret for the almost utter absence of detail which they reveal'.⁸⁸ Such remarks indicate that a conservative outlook and distaste for anything with a modern outlook prevailed in South Australia.

Perhaps the lower number of interstate entries in 1914, coupled with the fact that thirty-seven out of the fifty-eight South Australian exhibitors were women, influenced the selection and hanging committee to relax the original dominant 'emphasis on pictures' concept for the Federal Exhibitions and allow an increasing number of art/craft exhibits. Maida Wright exhibited eight entries of china painting, of which no. 17 was *cups and saucers, native flowers, on dark blue*, (with no indication of how many cups and saucers). They would be items that could grace any afternoon tea occasion. In the 1914 Federal Exhibition, South

Australian artist Mr. J. F. Scott tellingly indicated the use of attractive china in his entry no. 130 *A Visit*, a painting that depicted a group of three well-dressed ladies around a table on which afternoon tea is being poured into elegant cups and saucers (figure 28).⁸⁹ The price asked for this painting was two hundred and ten pounds – a hefty sum compared to Wright’s price of one guinea for a china-painted cup and saucer.

For the first time, Gladys Good also entered a piece of china painting, exhibit no. 22 *decorated bowl*, at one pound, and which could have a variety of purposes from gracing a china cabinet, to containing fruit or a floral display on the dining or hall table. Maude F Prosser exhibited leather work, including a handbag, a case for writing, a book cover, and an art needlework panel, all of which could be purchased by a discerning lady for an acceptable gift or for personal use. It was a further shift in the format of Federal Exhibitions from Australian landscape paintings that might possibly be purchased for inclusion in the Art Gallery’s Australian collection, to exhibiting a more intimate connotation of domestic interiors and the social structures of a woman’s world. The *Register’s* critic briefly mentioned china painting, ‘passing lingeringly by a case full of beautiful china’.⁹⁰ The *Advertiser’s* critic also mentioned briefly, ‘a cabinet which contains varied and excellent work, such as book covers, painted china &c., for which the Misses Prosser, Wright and Good will doubtless receive, and justly so, unstinted praise.’⁹¹

The South Australian Society of Arts decided to donate half the admission fees, received to view the 1914 Federal Exhibition, to the Patriotic Fund ‘which will secure relief to the dependents of those brave men who are risking their lives in upholding the liberty of the empire’.⁹² Local artists also donated a number of works for an art union for visitors to the exhibition, with the art union funds used for patriotic purposes.

As the war dragged on, there was increasing national concern and patriotic fervour to help the war effort. Women constantly 'pulled their weight' in Society of Art activities, both as patriotic fund raisers, and also as artists. An indication of their increasing influence and activity came in the eighteenth Federal Exhibition in 1915, when thirty-one South Australian female artists, but only fourteen male artists exhibited their work. Interstate artists were barely represented, with only one male and one female from Victoria exhibiting. In the 1915 Federal Exhibition catalogue, the preface mentioned for the first time, 'a small but choice exhibit of Applied Art is also shown. (nos. 35 to 45)'. The actual number of applied art items exhibited, exceeded the eleven entry numbers. For the first time, jewellery was exhibited in a Federal Exhibition.⁹³ Like previous inclusions of china painting and leatherwork, the applied arts exhibits nudged the agenda of Federal Exhibitions further away from being purely an exhibition of contemporary Australasian paintings towards the more intimate feminine domestic persona.

Three artists, Howie, Miss Sydney May Irwin and Wright, exhibited china painting in the 1915 Federal Exhibition. The review in the *Register* ignored the china painting, but the *Advertiser* review mentioned the applied art exhibits, advising readers that 'all the examples are sure of praise'.⁹⁴ Howie, who was described by the newspaper as 'the late master at the South Australian Art School, and who is now in camp training for the front' exhibited two china-painted vases.⁹⁵ Wright's china painting exhibits included no. 45 *Dessert Set* for ten guineas, which must have taken up considerable space, and this was a large price for the time. Neither Wright, Irwin nor Howie exhibited any pictures, only china painting, in that exhibition. However not all women exhibited china painting, with the Misses F. Ada Drew, Olive Atkinson, Gwen Habner, Beulah Leicester, Maud Wynes, May Grigg, Ida Hamilton and Mrs Mamie Venner exhibiting pictures in this exhibition.

By 1916 the Society of Arts struggled to maintain numbers and former standards for the nineteenth Federal Exhibition, and decided to combine their own Annual Exhibition with the Federal one. Of the South Australian exhibitors, only twelve were men, but thirty-six were women. The selection and hanging committee also bemoaned the fact that this Nineteenth Annual and Federal Exhibition 'contains no picture descriptive of any incident connected with the world wide struggle in which we are involved'.⁹⁶ As was the case in 1915, Victoria was the only other Australian State to send paintings; consequently the exhibition was not very Federal. The *Register's* critic wrote, 'the exhibition as a whole is hardly up to the average standard – a fact reflected in the small purchases made for the National Art Gallery'.⁹⁷ The *Advertiser* commented that the exhibition would have been improved had the selection committee been a little less lenient.⁹⁸ There was no separate 'Applied Art' section in the 1916 catalogue; although South Australians Wright and Irwin exhibited nine pieces of hand painted china between them as exhibits nos. 24 and 24a. Their work was not mentioned in newspaper reviews.

Nor was there any critical comment made in newspaper reviews regarding the china painting exhibited in the combined twentieth Annual and Federal Exhibition of 1917, apart from a brief few words that the exhibition included 'work on china by Misses Maida Wright and S. M. Irwin'.⁹⁹ This was despite the fact that, in the 1917 exhibition, there were fifteen entries of china painting including some by Miss Floy Hubble. The Federal Exhibitions were feared to be nearing the end of their useful public life. In an effort to 'induce a larger attendance, and create a wider interest in Australian Art', the selection and hanging committee decided that entrance to the 1917 exhibition would be free, except for the private view day. Women were well to the fore in this exhibition, and of the fifty-two exhibitors, thirty-five were women. Moreover May Grigg's painting, *One of Our Gallant Lads*, was the only war subject in the exhibition gallery.¹⁰⁰

The twenty-first Annual and Federal Exhibition opened on 13 November 1918 at a time when there was great jubilation and celebration over the recent ending of the war. Newspaper accounts of the exhibition were somewhat overshadowed by articles about the cease-fire.¹⁰¹

Although South Australian women artists remained in the majority with thirty five exhibiting, the number of male South Australian artists who exhibited, increased to twenty.

New South Wales and Victorian artists sent work to the 1918 Annual and Federal Exhibition which the selection and hanging committee believed, 'educational interest of the Exhibition is enhanced by the presence of those giants in Australian Art, Messrs. Norman and Lionel Lindsay'.¹⁰² For the first time, work that could be called 'decorative art' was received from New South Wales, when Miss Florence Mofflin from Sydney sent four 'dainty studies', namely paintings on silk, including two fans.¹⁰³ Wright exhibited paintings, as well as a considerable amount of china painting, which received only passing mention. Beulah Leicester exhibited china painting with a vase *Eurydice*. However newspaper reviews regarding the Exhibition were rather cool, and did not share the optimism of the hanging and selection committee. The *Register* critic commented 'mediocrity is liberally represented and there are a few – very few - downright atrocities'.¹⁰⁴

Over the next few years, enthusiasm waned to some extent regarding the importance of the Federal Exhibitions as a possible source of purchases for the National Gallery in South Australia, even though paintings from more interstate artists were received. In 1919 the twenty-second Annual and Federal Exhibition of the Society of Arts contained an increased amount of china painting, with a total of fifteen entries. Wright exhibited a selection of bowls and vases that showed her interest in lustre work. They were for sale at prices between two to four guineas. Hubble's entries were mainly cups, saucers and plates with some eucalyptus designs, while Irwin exhibited five pieces from a dessert set. Critics did not have many kind words to say about the exhibition and did not mention the china painting. In opening the Federal exhibition William Sowden, President of the Board of Governors of the National

Gallery, said that 'it had not done all that it might have done' and it was hoped to alternate the Federal Exhibitions between Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney.¹⁰⁵

In 1920 the number of exhibits in the twenty-third Annual and Federal Exhibition was high, with works from New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania. In the South Australian entries, women artists retained their majority, with thirty four female and twenty-three male exhibitors. Mamie Venner exhibited seven pieces of china painting, including a teapot and sugar basin on which she had painted Sturt Peas (no prices stated), and other South Australians exhibited various examples of applied art such as leather work and metal work. Howie, recently returned from overseas service, and resuming his new position as Principal of the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts, exhibited some sketches that depicted war zones in France.¹⁰⁶ The *Advertiser's* art critic stated bluntly that, 'the standard of work from this State falls short of that set last year'.¹⁰⁷

Reviews of the twenty-fourth Federal Exhibition in 1921 were even worse. Both local newspapers commented that standards had deteriorated. One critic, commenting on the work of South Australian artists, stated that 'there might have been a stricter supervision on the part of those responsible for the selection of the pictures' and that 'a number could well have been dispensed with'.¹⁰⁸ Another critic wrote, 'the quality of the work by South Australian artists does not speak very highly for the progress of art in this state', but closed by stating 'There is the usual display of tempting art pottery'.¹⁰⁹ The critic's use of the term 'art pottery' was rather a misnomer, as it was applied to china painting, which was in fact catalogued as a separate section titled 'China Exhibits' at the end of the 1921 catalogue. China painters Barker, Venner and Rhoda Holder exhibited a considerable range of items, including a set of six cups and saucers, various plates, bowls, jugs candlesticks, vases and a luncheon tray. Prices ranged from two guineas for a bowl or a candlestick, to nine guineas for the set of cups and saucers.

In 1922, although critics commented favourably on a number of individual paintings, overall praise tended to be rather lukewarm. That was a year in which a greater number of decorative arts/crafts produced by even more South Australian practitioners, especially women artists, were exhibited in the Federal Exhibition. Their work took up two pages in the twenty-fifth Federal Exhibition 1922 catalogue in a new section titled 'Sculpture, China, Painting, and Craft Work'. Misses Gladys Good, Beulah Leicester, Maude Priest, Floy Hubble, Maida Wright, Lama Barker, and Mrs Mamie Venner exhibited sixty-six entries of china painting, including many mounted brooches. Mr. G. Reynolds exhibited many items of cloisonne enamelling, also pieces of silver jewellery, some of which incorporated pearls or opals. The inclusion of such a diverse and large range of decorative arts/crafts certainly extended the original format of Federal Exhibitions. The *Register's* critic merely mentioned china painting, metal work and 'other diversities of craftsmanship, occupy special cabinets..., but did publish names of the exhibitors of those items.¹¹⁰ The Advertiser's critic, perhaps echoing a fading public interest in the paintings exhibited in the Federal Exhibitions, was of the opinion that, 'added interest is lent by the introduction of craft work, and beautiful examples of art enamelling, silver smithing, and Ceramic art are on view'.¹¹¹

By 1923 the Art Gallery's Fine Arts Committee had decided that Federal Exhibitions no longer served their original purpose, hence the twenty-sixth Federal Exhibition in 1923 was the last. It was opened by His Excellency the Governor Sir Thomas Bridges, who, with Lady Bridges, were 'artists of no mean ability themselves' according to Mr. John White, president of the Society of Arts. One of the Elder Bequest's purchasing policies from the Federal Exhibitions was to limit purchases over a number of years, to a total of three of the best paintings by each major Australian artist. Quite simply, after the first thirteen or fourteen years, the supply of paintings suitable for purchase was drying up, and since the war years there had been a slow decline in the standard of work exhibited. By the 1920s the Gallery

Board was more interested in Australian art by up-and-coming young artists who reflected the progress of Australian art, and exemplified the newer movements such as Modernism, rather than viewing paintings by elderly, conservative, Australian landscape painters.¹¹²

Modernism was not a strong point of the paintings hung in the last decade of Federal Exhibitions and was not accepted by a number of Adelaide artists and art lovers who made their views widely known. Indeed, to some elderly influential South Australian men such as Mr. W. Wadham, who exhibited six paintings in the 1923 Federal Exhibition, shifts into Modernism were anathema. He had exhibited in the Royal Academy before he came to Australia, had been a President of the Adelaide Easel Club in the 1890s and exhibited his paintings in a number of previous Federal Exhibitions.¹¹³

Nevertheless there was one point that set the Federal Exhibitions apart from somewhat similar important exhibitions of art in other Australian States. 'Becoming modern' for many South Australian women artists, was expanding their skills into other media, as was indicated by the increasing number of what was increasingly regarded as 'decorative art' entries, especially china painting. In the last Federal Exhibition in 1923, there were 159 entries of pictures, but South Australian women artists Estelle Disher, Wright, Leicester and Good, between them exhibited a staggering fifty-two entries of china painting. It was a record for any Federal Exhibition and was included in the *Twenty-sixth Federal Exhibition November 1923* catalogue as a 2-page, separate section titled 'China'.

Disher had exhibited paintings in Federal Exhibitions, such as no. 86 *Roses* at five guineas in the 1908 Federal Exhibition, as well as her china painting in later exhibitions. Her work was always of a high standard; for instance in the 1920 *All-Australian Peace Exhibition*, she was awarded a silver medal.¹¹⁴ As with many china painters, Disher painted double roses on cups and saucers. The roses that she painted on a morning tea tray are not randomly placed, but

used in a radiating design that accentuates the form of the china. Her choice of yellow roses and background colour implies a bright cheerful atmosphere and would be a happy start to the day of any person using the set (figure 29). Wright's entry no. 3 consisted of six items, namely three cups and saucers and her entry no. 2 was a brass tray which showed her skills in other media. Good, the teacher of china painting in Howie's reformed 1923 agenda for the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts, exhibited twenty-two pieces of china painting, and Leicester, also a teacher in the same School, exhibited sixteen pieces. Included in Good's and Leicester's exhibits were a number of hand-painted china brooches – forerunners of a shift in tone from decorating the home to adorning the personal and a popular item with female viewers. Although the twenty-sixth Federal Exhibition in 1923 no longer served its original purpose, and was the last of its kind, in fact it heralded the new era of contemporary South Australian arts and crafts exhibits that became popular from the mid 1920s to the Second World War.

Despite critical commentary that the paintings exhibited diminished in quality during the last decade of the Federal Exhibitions, they were popular drawcards for Adelaide artists and for the public. As there were many female members of the Society of Arts who became interested in china painting, it was a wise political move by the selection and hanging committee to allow china painting entries which, in most years, were slotted in amongst the painting entries in the Federal Exhibition catalogues. The inclusion of such applied art or craft items in Federal Exhibitions served quietly as an advertisement for the additional skills taught in the School.¹¹⁵

Neither art critics at the time of the Federal Exhibitions nor the committee responsible for purchasing policies of the Art Gallery in South Australia from 1913-23, fully recognised that much of the arts and crafts work exhibited indicated an exploration of new territories by (predominantly female) artists of the era. Ron Radford briefly outlined the history of

collecting Australian decorative arts by Australian State Galleries and commented that, 'only the Art Gallery of South Australia began to collect Australian decorative arts during the nineteenth century, although, it must be admitted, not at that early stage with the intention of developing a decorative arts collection in a systematic manner'.¹¹⁶ Indeed, the Art Gallery of South Australia did not seriously start collecting decorative arts till around the 1960s.¹¹⁷ The term 'decorative arts' covers a wide range of objects and media, of which china painting is only one small section.

Pieces of South Australian hand-painted china now in the Art Gallery of South Australia, were mainly gifted, usually many years after the pieces were painted, have minimal documentation of provenance, and quite possibly are not the best example of the artist's work. Sadly, the Gallery missed a wonderful opportunity of directly selecting the best of the exhibited china painting in the 1912-23 Federal Exhibitions. Although the Elder Bequest funds were used to purchase paintings only, and were the primary reason for the Federal Exhibitions, nevertheless there were other funds available. For example the Morgan Bequest in 1903, permitted a wider scope of purchases.¹¹⁸

However the focus of State Art Galleries in the last decades of the nineteenth century, was primarily on the acquisition of important paintings that are worthy of display. China painting exhibited in the Federal Exhibitions was perceived more as a minor form of applied art/craft produced by South Australian women, primarily for domestic use during afternoon teas or for flower arranging, and not to be taken seriously. As such, it could well have been one of the factors that contributed to the perceived decline in standards of the Federal Exhibitions.

Nevertheless, to those artists who exhibited china painting and other art/crafts in the Federal Exhibitions, their work was practised as a new, interesting, exciting and saleable addition to their skills in oils, watercolours and drawing. It enabled many women to explore new original

design concepts far removed from the well-established, traditional Australian landscape paintings. Indeed the few pieces of signed hand-painted china that have survived from those days, often reveal quite a different style of work to the paintings produced by the same artists.

Federal Exhibitions were perceived as prestigious affairs and work exhibited had to first pass selection and hanging committees. Therefore to the viewing public, the inclusion of china painting exhibits put a stamp of approval on the items and intimated that they were worthy of scrutiny and purchase. Mamie Venner for example, exhibited no. 38 *Sugar Basin, Sturt Pea* and no. 40 *Teapot, Sturt Pea* in the twenty-third Annual Federal Exhibition in 1920.¹¹⁹ China painting became increasingly popular and continued to appear in many Society of Arts exhibitions after the last Federal Exhibition of 1923.

The Problems of Categorization in the 1920-40s.

As china painting became more popular during the 1920-30s and increasingly figured in exhibitions organized by the South Australian Society of Arts, there was some degree of ambiguity as to how it should be categorized. Catalogue entries and critical reviews in the newspapers of the day indicated a diversity of viewpoints. As discussed before, early exhibitions of the South Australian Society of Arts in the nineteenth century contained an eclectic mix of various art objects as well as hung paintings. Rosa Fiveash's entry of china painting, in the South Australian Society of Arts 1894 Annual Exhibition, was catalogued as *Exhibit of China Ware* amongst the fine art list of exhibits, while Fiveash's former student Miss Lama Barker, exhibited both china painting and paintings in the Easel Club's annual exhibition in 1897, with no categorized difference.¹²⁰

However in the South Australian Society of Arts 1912 Annual Exhibition, the catalogue listed a separate section titled 'Applied Art' in which the increased amount of china painting was

entered. 'Applied art' was not a pejorative term. It mirrored the viewpoint, held by Gill and Howie, that art based on sound principles of drawing, design and originality could be applied to china painting, wood carving, leather embossing and needlework, as well as the traditional bases of canvas and paper. The slippage between 'applied art' and 'art' was fluid. For instance, in 1912 in the fifteenth Federal Exhibition, where for the first time, china painting and a small amount of leatherwork was exhibited, the entries for them appeared in the catalogue amongst the fine art entries. That format continued for some subsequent Federal Exhibitions. However by 1915, the Federal Exhibition catalogue used the Society of Arts' former terminology for china painting of 'Applied Art Exhibits'. That term 'applied art' gradually lost favour after Gill's death in 1916, and changes in terminology appeared in the early 1920s. For the last three Federal Exhibitions when craft work became popular, the catalogues listed china painting as a separate section. In 1921 it was described as 'China Exhibits'; in 1922 as 'Sculpture China, Painting, and Craft Work'; in 1923 it was simply called 'China'.

The word 'craft' was increasingly used to categorize exhibits that did not come within the ambit of 'fine art', which implied paintings displayed on walls. Craft referred to so-called 'useful' objects, whereas 'fine art' was applied to objects produced for contemplation. In 1921 the South Australian Society of Arts organized their *Winter Exhibition of Paintings and Craft Work* for which the catalogue nevertheless placed the 'craft' entries in a section titled 'Applied Art'. As membership increased during the 1920-30s, and china painting was taken up by more women artists, the South Australian Society of Arts held two annual exhibitions: the *Spring Exhibition* in September or October, and the *Autumn Exhibition of Paintings and Craftwork* in April or May, although the title of the latter was sometimes shortened to *Autumn Exhibition of Paintings*. The inclusion of 'Craftwork' in the title suggests that the committee anticipated the increasing number of exhibits of work other than fine art (paintings) that might be exhibited predominantly in the Autumn exhibitions. This left the Spring exhibitions as the

major venue for painting exhibits. However if this were the original intent, it certainly did not eventuate, as artists continued to exhibit crafts, especially china painting, in both Autumn and Spring exhibitions. Although catalogues sometimes listed china painting in a section by itself, by the 1930s when hand-built pottery and other domestic items were also exhibited, they were usually all listed together under 'craft'. The term 'decorative arts' was not generally used in South Australia until after the Second World War, although 'Art Deco' was a term used overseas from the mid 1920s onwards to define a particular movement or style of design.

Many positions in the South Australian Society of Arts were filled by people conversant with the range of art/craft training taught in the former Adelaide School of Art, or the even wider range taught after Howie became Principal in 1920 of the (renamed) School of Arts and Crafts. This knowledge base was one of the strengths of the Society of Arts. Such multi-skilled artists exhibited regularly and were prepared to fill many positions in the Society of Arts. For example, in 1920 Howie was on the Council of the South Australian Society of Arts along with Miss Elizabeth Armstrong, Miss Margaret Kelly, Mr. Charles Pavia and Mr. Robert Craig, all of whom were, or had been, associated with the School.¹²¹ During the 1920-40s, the Council of the Society of Arts also often included multi-skilled artists who had trained elsewhere but were also skilled china-painters, such as Maude Gum, Mamie Venner and May Grigg. Howie became one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society from 1921-27, and President from 1928-32, and undoubtedly was comfortable with the notion of allowing multi-skilled artists to exhibit china painting, as well as their paintings in oils and watercolours. The resultant willingness to incorporate a wide range of arts and craft skills in exhibitions, served both to educate the general public on different ways of looking at art, and also encouraged artists to broaden their horizons and learn new skills.

Case Study: Maida Wright

Some multi-skilled South Australian Society of Arts members concentrated particularly on their china painting, which they exhibited more extensively than their paintings. Wright was probably the most enthusiastic and prolific of all the South Australian china painters of her time, although little of her work has apparently survived in South Australia and most is known through exhibition catalogue entries and newspaper reviews.¹²² Like Disher, Wright exhibited floral paintings in the 1908 *Federal Exhibition* and, as mentioned in an earlier chapter on Howie, Wright exhibited her china painting in the Chamber of Manufactures Exhibition in 1910 and Adelaide School of Art Exhibitions in 1912 and 1914.

She was also an active member of the South Australian Society of Arts and exhibited china painting in the Society's exhibitions in April 1911, 1912 and May 1914, 1915.¹²³ In the Federal Exhibitions of 1912-19 and 1922-23, Wright regularly exhibited her china painting, as well as a few of her other paintings. She also won two silver medals and three certificates of merit in the china painting divisions of the *All-Australian Peace Exhibition* in Adelaide in 1920.¹²⁴ In May 1921 Wright exhibited her china painting, along with that by Barker, Good, and Miss G Casely in the Society's *Winter Exhibition of Paintings and Craft Work*. A review of that exhibition commented that Wright 'revealed her clever art in hand-painted china and brooches, the lustre work commanding attention'.¹²⁵ In September 1921 she had 'a fine exhibit' of china painting in the Arts and Crafts Club Exhibition held in the Society's Gallery.¹²⁶

Although Wright exhibited in numerous large group exhibitions, she was one of a number of single, professional women artists who trained in the Adelaide School of Art under Howie and Gill, and who remained unmarried. She subsequently worked in her studio in Adelaide which doubled as an exhibition venue. For instance she advertised that her exhibition of china painting and pictures, to be opened by Sir William Sowden, would be held at her studio

in King William Street in November 1920.¹²⁷ It was an astute time of the year for women artists with applied art skills to exhibit, as small items of original work at reasonable prices were saleable, as indicated by Wright's reference in the above advertisement of 'Christmas presents of unique design in handpainted china, leatherwork &c'. Wright also had a solo exhibition of her work in August 1923, when a critic wrote that 'the clever work done by Miss Maida Wright in the realm of china painting is already well known in Adelaide art circles', and went on to describe the prominence she gave to Australian subjects of flowers and birds, her fondness of Egyptian designs, and her particular skill in lustre work.¹²⁸ For instance on her coffee cups, Wright's stylized and flattened insect design show up strongly against her use of an opalescent yellow lustre background, and her use of bright orange lustre over which she drew random lines of liquid bright gold, is in marked contrast to the black on-glaze enamel (figures 30a, 30b). The fact that china painting would be of particular interest to women who enjoyed decoratively enhancing the domestic environment, was indicated when, in the same review, the critic commented that Wright's embellishment of china was for the tea table, drawing room, and dressing table. With such a validation of the appropriate place for china painting, it is little wonder that it was not viewed as an important feature of Federal Exhibitions in which the emphasis was on paintings worthy of display on the large walls of the Art Gallery.

Wright continued to hold solo exhibitions in her studio, which in 1924 was situated in Rundle Street, Adelaide. Lady Barwell opened Wright's exhibition in August 1924 and commented, 'there was undoubtedly a steady growth of the finer appreciation of art in Australia' and further added that, 'Miss Wright's fine display of painted china, both useful and ornamental, was part of the same movement ...'.¹²⁹ In October 1926 Wright held another solo exhibition in her Studio at 6 Rundle Street and a fairly lengthy review appeared in the *Register* with comments on her colour schemes 'with low-toned and softly handled decorations' but noting that 'by way of striking contrast, Miss Wright's lustre work is particularly strong and rich in colour and bold in treatment, the blending of colours being especially striking and

effective'.¹³⁰ Wright was certainly a multi-skilled artist. In the same exhibition she also exhibited fans with hand-painted designs, boxes covered with hand-painted silks, also some leather and snakeskin handbags. The *Register's* critic further commented that Wright introduced figure subjects into her china painting and also 'pictures from the brush of this versatile artist, so the exhibition may be counted as many-sided'.

Another studio exhibition in October 1928 received a lengthy review in the *News*.¹³¹ That review included considerable details of subject matter favoured by Wright in her china painting, including native flora such as eucalypts, tetraheca, boronia, Sturt peas and gum tree designs. Of particular interest is mention of a set of coffee cups on which Wright had painted miniature bush scenes. As far as I have been able to ascertain, Wright was the only china painter of her time in South Australia to paint Australian bush landscapes on her china. As mentioned in the Howie chapter, Wright possibly went out on trips with the sketch club of the School of Design in the first decade of the twentieth century to do landscape sketching for her other paintings. Wright continued to hold solo exhibitions in her studio in Rundle Street and in April 1929 a critic glowingly reported on 'exquisite specimens of her work ... gems in miniatures ... cups and saucers bearing coats of arms and school badges, placques (sic) treated with modern and fanciful subjects ...'.¹³² Wright also exhibited her oil and watercolour paintings in the same exhibition. She offered for sale a variety of 'dainty and rare white china' suitable for china painting. There is no mention of students in any of her exhibition reviews, but stocking china blanks for sale indicates that she probably taught china painting in her studio, as she also had a kiln. Wright's ability to paint in oils, watercolors and china painting, and have her work accepted for the Society's own exhibitions, as well as the Federal Exhibitions, indicates the success of the education available in the Adelaide School of Art to women, enabling them to become professional artists in South Australia in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The Increasing Popularity of China Painting in South Australia

Howie's re-introduction of china painting into the School's curriculum in 1923 was a popular move as interest, especially from women artists, in that particular skill grew and class numbers increased rapidly. The School of Arts and Crafts was not the only source of instruction however. Miss Ida Holland, a member of the Royal Drawing Society London, and a Fellow of the South Australian Society of Arts, taught painting, china painting and other crafts in her studio in Pirie Chambers in 1923.¹³³ Lama Barker, who taught china painting in her studio in 1897 when she was a member of the Easel Club of which James Ashton was then President, taught china painting in 1926 in Ashton's Academy of Arts in Grenfell Street, Adelaide.¹³⁴ Both Howie and Ashton were Vice Presidents of the South Australian Society of Arts for much of the 1920s, and many active members of the Society such as Beulah Leicester, Gladys Good, Holland and Barker were teachers of a wide range of art/craft subjects, including china painting, so it is little wonder that china painting was readily accepted into the Society's exhibitions.

There may have been some concern felt by conservative painters, especially those from the New South Wales and Victorian fine art societies, regarding the quantity of china painting exhibited alongside fine art in the Federal Exhibitions in the 1920s, but the South Australian Society of Arts had no qualms about including it in May 1921 in their *Winter Exhibition of Paintings and Craftwork*. The winter exhibition catalogue listed fifty-four entries of china painting from Misses Lama Barker, Gladys Good and Maida Wright, and five entries of leather work and one entry of powder puffs from Miss G. Casely.¹³⁵ However the number of catalogue entries for china painting in this exhibition does not provide a true indication of the actual number of hand-painted china pieces exhibited. For example Lama Barker's entry no. 3 was of six plates on which she had painted figures, while Wright's entry no. 6 on which she painted native flowers, was of six cups and saucers which is twelve pieces of china. A more

accurate indication of the popularity of china painting in 1921 is the fact that the fifty-four entries totaled 105 pieces of hand-painted china.¹³⁶

China painting was well and truly before the public eye in 1925. In the large *All-Australian Exhibition* held 27 March to 23 May 1925, artists associated at some time or other with the South Australian Society of Arts such as Floy Hubble, Norah Godlee, Gertrude Richards, Jessamine Buxton, Lois Laughton, Good and Barker featured strongly in the list of certificates and medals awarded in the many classes of china painting. Howie was on the judging panel for the Fine and Applied Arts.¹³⁷ Understandably, with so much exhibited in the *All-Australian*, there were only thirteen entries of china painting in the South Australian Society of Arts Autumn Exhibition of Paintings in April, 1925, although one of those entries, no. 135, was part of a twenty-four piece tea set exhibited by Mamie Venner. At a meeting of the Society of Arts in July for the purpose of criticisms of members' work and the awarding of prizes, Venner was awarded the prize for applied art, which in her case was china painting.¹³⁸

China painting reached a peak in the South Australian Society of Arts Spring Exhibition of 8 October 1925. The catalogue cover indicated the continuing attraction of the Australian bush landscape, but still carrying remnants of the sinuous Art Nouveau influence (figure 31). An advertisement for the exhibition featured a male artist, pipe in mouth and palette in hand, looking warily at the viewer (figure 32). Well might he be wary, as china painting by women artists took up seventy of the total of 270 entries in that exhibition, and were listed in the catalogue under the title of 'China' and not as applied art or craft.¹³⁹

Norah Godlee exhibited china painting in that exhibition, although within a few years she exhibited increasing amounts of pottery and diminishing amounts of china painting. Godlee's

china painting often incorporated strong accents of black line work and stylized fruit (figures 33a, 33b). The overall number of pieces of china exhibited would have been well over 100 as Venner's entry no. 195 was of an entire black coffee set, which would have consisted of at least six cups and six saucers with possibly a coffee pot, creamer and sugar bowl as well. Barker exhibited entry no. 250 that was a nine-piece lunch set, her entry no. 249 was of fruit dishes with no indication exactly how many dishes, nor was there an indication how many items were in her entry no. 253 of a fruit salad set. Other artists exhibited various entries of cups and saucers that would have consisted of two items per single entry. Leicester exhibited eight brooches, which were the only items with an indication of subject matter and showed that other subjects, apart from flowers, were painted on brooches by those feisty women; though one wonders if Leicester's *Spider* brooch found a buyer, although her *Seahorse* and *Kookaburra* brooches could have interested buyers keen on Australiana.

Prices charged for some of the china painting exhibits in the 1925 Spring Exhibition were low for the skill and time required to produce them, and for the firing charges the artists would have paid. Firms such as Clarkson Ltd catered for the demand by china painters for supplies and a very necessary firing service, as shown by the advertisement placed in the back of the October 1925 catalogue of the South Australian Society of Arts *Spring Exhibition* (figure 34). Women such as Wright and Venner, who were experienced china painters and produced quantities of work, owned kilns and did their own firing. For example gilded raised paste work on china was a highly skilled and demanding technique, both in applying the raised paste and the subsequent firing.¹⁴⁰ Venner's entry no. 197 *Comport, raised paste and hawthorn* was priced at one pound, which was low considering the high level of skill and time required for raised paste work which, in Venner's case, was always gilded and required several firings. By way of comparison, the advertisement for 'Take a Turkish Bath' printed in the *Advertiser* above the Exhibition notice, showed that Venner's comport price was the same as that charged at the City Baths for six tickets for a Turkish bath! (figure 32). Jessamine

Buxton's three small vases nos 240-242 at three shillings and sixpence each, were cheaper than the price for a single Turkish bath at four shillings. A critic stated, in a review of the exhibition that:

The craft work makes a fascinating display, and in this department the vases and bowls of Mamie Venner and Jessamine Buxton are of outstanding quality. Daintiness of colouring and grace of form and design are characteristics of each, and the work should be popular for the purpose of personal presents.¹⁴¹

Another critic wrote in more detail on the china painting in the same exhibition and noted, 'The advance of china painting in recent years has led to its recognition by the society, and there are many good examples of this fascinating art'.¹⁴² The critic also mentioned the work of each china painter and commented that, 'Leicester's brooches merit more than a passing glance', while Venner's 'examples of raised paste are a revival of the old French art' and Jessamine Buxton's 'collection of tiny but exquisite vases ... show a distinct feeling for originality in color and treatment'.¹⁴³

The South Australian Society of Arts cooperated in an exhibition with the South Australian Institute of Architects in the Autumn Exhibition, April 1926. The foreword to the exhibition catalogue, written by John White, reminded readers that Art was an important factor in the life of any community and that 'our homes, with their furnishings, their embellishments, their conveniences, are the products of Art.'¹⁴⁴ White further pointed out that an 'increasing interest in artistic products may fairly be assumed to indicate progress in culture and refinement', and then commented on the large numbers of purchases of works produced by South Australian artists during the last few years. As well as complete working drawings of large buildings, the architects exhibited photographs of buildings and home interior plans, with ideas for making the home and surrounds a beautiful place in which to live. A critic, writing on the exhibition, stated that it repaid close study as:

there should be a wider, deeper and more intelligent appreciation of all that goes to make the “home beautiful” ... other bits of interior detail include really beautiful doors, charming windows and dainty corner cupboards.¹⁴⁵

The emphasis on making a beautiful home and surroundings that the owners could enjoy as well as use for entertaining in style, was further inculcated by newspaper advertisements in 1926 for such necessary items as the ‘right tea’ (figure 35). A discerning hostess would elegantly pour a superior quality tea into her best cups and saucers for her fashionable guests who called on her during the afternoon. A wide choice of exclusively designed and hand-painted cups and saucers was a feature of the Autumn and Spring exhibitions organized by the South Australian Society of Arts. Moreover a set could be specially commissioned from a china painter such as Gertrude Richards, who would incorporate specified monograms into the design. The position of a monogram was important. In this case, it was so placed that, if the user of the cup were right handed, the monogram *EHA* would not face the drinker, but be clearly visible to people sitting opposite her (figure 36). Richards added further individuality to the set by painting a different colour inside each cup.

China painting entries overall dropped slightly in 1926-27 to between forty to fifty entries in each of the Autumn and Spring Exhibitions. Leicester, Norton, Barker, Venner, Richards, and Gwen Habner were the main exhibitors of china painting. Maud Wynes had also taken up china painting, which she exhibited in the 1927 *Spring Exhibition*. Although catalogue entries rarely indicated the subject matter painted on the china, Wynes’ exhibits would have stood out from the work of others, as she painted figures of elegant ladies on her cups, and introduced exotic images from other cultures into her designs, painting them in strong colours with black outlines (figures 37a, 37b).

However the effects of the depression started to be felt in 1928. The *Autumn Exhibition of Paintings and Craftwork* 26 April 1928, only had twelve entries of china painting, although

Venner's entry no. 195 was a specimen of her tea set which contained twenty-three pieces, priced at eighteen guineas the set. Nevertheless, there were other exhibits in the craft section, such as batik, jewellery, a copper bowl, and Norah Godlee's hand-thrown pottery. Entries picked up somewhat in the 4 October 1928 *Spring Exhibition* with forty entries of china painting, including some by Lois Laughton, Evelyn Guy and School of Arts and Crafts teacher Charles Pavia who china painted a nut bowl, for sale at one guinea.

Generally, during the depression years from 1928 onwards, the entries of china painting were for sale at lower prices than small framed paintings. Lower prices could tempt viewers who liked to own some form of original art/craft, but had to be financially prudent. Roses appealed to most women and were certainly Venner's favourite subject matter to paint on china, whether on bowls, teacups or brooches. Venner often used gold with her china painting, such as expensive burnished gold around the rim of a piece of china, or a gold mount for many of her brooches (figures 38a, 38b). In the 1928 *Spring Exhibition* it would have been affordable for a women who might be a little short of ready cash, but wished to smarten up her outfit or to buy a gift, to purchase a hand-painted porcelain brooch; for example Venner's brooch (usually featuring her famous double pink roses) for one guinea, or a rose brooch by Norton for one pound two shillings and sixpence. In the same exhibition, by comparison, a painting such as Louis McCubbin's *The Blue Dress* was for sale at 157 pounds ten shillings.¹⁴⁶

During 1929, prices of china in large Adelaide department stores dropped considerably in the sales. Myers department store, for example, advertised a commercially produced 22-piece, lustre and floral decoration, tea set for ten shillings and sixpence (figure 39).¹⁴⁷ Unsurprisingly, no tea sets or coffee sets and very few cups and saucers were exhibited in the April 1929 *Autumn Exhibition of Paintings and Craftwork*. Venner was cautious and exhibited a specimen sample of her two tea sets in the 26 September 1929 *Spring Exhibition*.

The most common items of china painting exhibited in the *Spring Exhibition* of that year were brooches and vases; original, china-painted brooches were certainly not available in the department stores!

The South Australian Society of Arts Annual report for the year 1930-31 stated that, although attendances at the exhibitions had been satisfactory, 'the general depression had undoubtedly had a strong effect upon the question of sales'.¹⁴⁸ The report also stated that the Art Gallery purchased Venner's china-painted vase *Antoinette* from the 1930 *Spring Exhibition*, 'being the first piece of locally painted china purchased by the institution.'¹⁴⁹ It indicated that the Art Gallery recognised South Australian china painting as worthy of collection, and would have been a cause for jubilation by the china painters in the Society at the time. Venner had been an active member, for many years, and her china painting was sufficiently noteworthy that a separate article had appeared in the *News* describing her china painting exhibits in the September 1924 *Spring Exhibition*.¹⁵⁰ Sadly, *Antoinette* is no longer in the Art Gallery's collection; it was evidently later de-accessioned.¹⁵¹

The amount of china painting exhibited in the South Australian Society of Arts Autumn and Spring Exhibitions for most of 1930 to 1937 fluctuated around the number of forty entries each exhibition. Besides the stalwarts Venner, Good, Leicester, Norton, Laughton, Habner, Wynes, Godlee, and Hubble, other women such as Maude Gum, Ada Hough, Rosa Masters, Muriel Oldfield, Kathleen Farr, Doris Tilley, Ida Holland, Esther Perry, Beatrice Chettle, Jean Symons, F. G. Carlier, Marion Gabriel, Agnes Rymill, Violet Myers, Mrs Simmons, Florence Smith, Lorna Woolcock, Beatrice Gerry, Joan Timcke and C. Schultz also exhibited their china painting with the Society at various times during those years. No doubt the availability of formal classes in china painting in both the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts, and Ashton's Academy in the 1920s contributed to so much china painting passing the exhibition selection committees. Both schools had an emphasis on drawing and design skills that were

necessary for china painting and general craft work. In 1933 there was an increased enthusiasm for crafts, when a massive number of seventy-four entries of 'Craft Work' which included china painting, was entered in the catalogue of the *S.A. Society of Arts Autumn Exhibition of Paintings and Craftwork*, that opened 20 April 1933.

By 1937 however, exhibits of hand-built pottery increased and china painting entries declined as some china painters concentrated on pottery. For instance, Miss Annie Mitchell practised and taught china painting in her studio at Goodwood during the 1920s. Her china painting included images of Scotch thistles on a jug, - possibly influenced by the fact that her father was a Scotsman – and her painting of eucalypts on a cup saucer and plate reflected her interest in Australian flora (figures 40a, 40b). After her parents died, Mitchell left for Queensland in 1929 and studied pottery under L. J. Harvey at the Central Technical College in Brisbane.¹⁵² After her return to Adelaide she included pottery classes in her studio and also used thistles and eucalypt decorations on her art pottery. It appears that Mitchell abandoned her own china painting, preferring instead to concentrate on teaching and exhibiting pottery. She exhibited six entries in the (now Royal) South Australian Society of Arts 1937 Spring Exhibition, but it is not clear if all six entries were of pottery, as one entry 'fruit dish' could have been either. In 1938 Mitchell exhibited pottery only. Mitchell contributed an article on hand-built pottery and probably the adjacent article on china painting, to the Country Women's Association's book *Handcrafts for Countrywomen* in the late 1930s.¹⁵³

In 1938 there were possibly sixteen entries of china painting in the *Autumn Exhibition* and only about twelve entries in the *Spring Exhibition*.¹⁵⁴ Change was in the air. Although Howie's influence in the Society of Arts was still strong, and china painters Gum and Venner were often on the Council, the swing to art pottery gained momentum and was an indication of its coming popularity in the School of Arts and Crafts after the end of the Second World War in 1945.

That war was a deciding factor in the rapid demise of china painting as an artistic pursuit of women. Supplies of china paints were either Lacroix brand from France, Dresden colours from Germany or Wenger's brand from England, and all supplies became difficult to obtain during the war, including quality china and porcelain blanks as they, too, were imported. Nevertheless, some mature-age china painters had amassed supplies and were able to continue china painting to some extent, and exhibited small amounts in the Society of Arts exhibitions.

Women's culture also changed during the war years, with many women entering the Armed Forces or full-time employment, and the custom of decorating the home and of leisurely entertaining at afternoon teas, declined markedly. There was neither the demand nor the time for china painting by the younger generation of women. Additionally, all genres of art and crafts come and go in fashion, and quite simply, china painting went out of fashion in the 1940s. By 1945, the catalogue of the *Royal South Australian Society of Arts Autumn Exhibition* in April, listed under 'craftwork' a variety of exhibits, only seven of which are clearly identifiable as china painting, and there were similarly only two identifiable entries of china painting in the *Spring Exhibition*. No china painting was exhibited in the 1948 *Spring Exhibition*.

However Gladys Good maintained an interest in china painting until the end of her life, exhibiting six entries of china painting in the *Royal South Australian Society of Arts Jubilee Exhibition* in 1951, and seventeen entries of china painting in her retrospective exhibition in the Yureilla Gallery, Uraidla in 1970.¹⁵⁵ Good was fond of a particular orange hue of china paint and used it appropriately in an autumn leaf design on a large fruit bowl (figure 41).¹⁵⁶ Florence Smith was another Royal South Australian Society of Arts member who also maintained her interest in china painting; she exhibited work depicting peacocks in the *Royal S.A. Society of Arts Spring Exhibition Centenary year 1836-1936* and a number of other

Society of Arts exhibitions. Her painted peacocks were always perched proudly in a garden, surrounded by a plethora of bright blooms. They are exuberant images and could not possibly be overlooked (figure 42).¹⁵⁷ Smith also exhibited five pieces in the *Royal South Australian Society of Arts Associates and Lay Members Exhibition* 21 May 1957. She was the only china painter to exhibit china in that exhibition.

China painting by South Australian artists enjoyed a public profile alongside fine art exhibits that was not accorded to a similar degree by the major fine art societies elsewhere. China painters in other states were not so fortunate. Although a few art societies included an occasional display of china painting in their exhibitions of paintings and sculptures, the most usual exhibition opportunities for china painters in other states was through craft organizations, or by a small exhibition in the china painter's own studio.

Grace Cochrane, in her seminal work *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History* discussed how craft workers, including those who produced china painting, managed to promote and exhibit their work in the various Australian states.¹⁵⁸ Arts and Crafts Societies or Guilds in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania; organised exhibitions in which members could exhibit a variety of work, including china painting. The Society of Arts and Crafts of New South Wales, formed in 1906 and with predominantly female membership, organized exhibitions, and was supportive of many crafts, including china painting.¹⁵⁹ Deborah Edwards pointed out that the surprisingly rich collection of Australian decorative art, including china painting, in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, was purchased from exhibitions of the Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW from 1909 until 1934.¹⁶⁰

Some art societies in New South Wales included a few craft items in their exhibitions, but this was not a normal, regular occurrence, and china painting exhibits were comparatively few. For instance, no crafts were included in the catalogue of the Art Society of New South Wales

Annual Exhibition in 1897, although the 1901 twenty-first anniversary exhibition catalogue included three exhibits of woodcarving. Even in 1927, when china painters exhibited a considerable body of work in the Royal South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions, the catalogue of the annual exhibition of the Royal Art Society of New South Wales included only a small amount of book binding, but no china painting, as a craft exhibit. The Society of Artists (a NSW organization) were more liberal-minded and included china painting in some exhibitions, such as Mildred Lovett's vase decorated with a pastoral design of dancing figures, exhibited in their 1909 annual exhibition, and which was purchased by the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The 1931 annual exhibition catalogue of the same society included craftwork such as pottery, plaster work, bookbinding and jewellery, but no china painting.

The catalogue of the *First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work 1907*, held in Melbourne, showed the popularity of china painting in Victoria. The Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria, which contained a variety of professional people, including architects, was not formed until the 1907 Women's Work Exhibition closed. Membership was not restricted to practising craftspeople and representatives of craft subjects of particular interest for exhibitions were appointed.¹⁶¹ The crafts mentioned were bookbinding, art needlework, enamelling and leatherwork, furniture, jewellery, photography, sculpture and modeling, stained glass and ceramic work, wood carving and repoussé. China painting as such was not mentioned, although it would have fitted under 'ceramic work' and, when exhibited, would have taken its place amongst a host of different craft exhibits. Caroline Miley examined the products of the Arts and Crafts movement in Victoria and noted that, altogether, some forty-five china painters might have exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria's annual exhibitions.¹⁶² The Victorian Artists' Society catalogues show that miniatures and sculpture, but no china painting, were exhibited in the annual exhibitions of 1911, 1912, 1917, 1919, 1924, although a case of craft work from the Arts and Crafts Society was included, by

invitation, in the Spring Exhibition of 1925. Solo exhibitions of china painting in Victoria did occur, such as the exhibition of Florence Royce's work in the Geelong Art Gallery in 1937.¹⁶³ China painter Miss Rose Patterson exhibited her work in a solo exhibition in 'The Block', room 8, fourth floor, Collins Street-end, Melbourne in 1910 and sold a third of her work shortly after the exhibition opened.¹⁶⁴

China painting was popular in the Arts and Crafts movement in Tasmania and was prominent in exhibitions organized by the Tasmanian Arts and Crafts Society. That society, initially formed in 1903 as the Arts and Crafts Guild, then re-named as the Tasmanian Arts and Crafts Society in 1904, had many members who trained in the Hobart Technical School.¹⁶⁵ The 1903 *Australian Arts and Crafts Exhibition* organized by the Arts and Crafts Guild in the Custom House, Hobart, included 'Painting on China (fired)' under the category of glass work.¹⁶⁶ The Arts and Crafts Society of Queensland in which the potter L. J. Harvey was an active member, held its own exhibitions in 1913 and 1914 but also managed to exhibit some crafts in the Art Society.¹⁶⁷ In Western Australia the situation of exhibiting crafts generally, and china painting in particular, was not as easy as it was in the other Australian states during the 1890-1950 period. An Arts and Crafts Society did not form in Western Australia in the early twentieth century, but the West Australian Society of Artists included some crafts in their exhibitions at that time.¹⁶⁸ The Western Australian Women Painters and Applied Arts Society held an inaugural exhibition in 1936 but little information is available regarding the china painting that may have been exhibited in that exhibition.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, there were some active china painters, including Marina Shaw, in that society, so china painting would have been exhibited in some exhibitions.¹⁷⁰

The (Royal in 1936) South Australian Society of Arts was therefore unique in the opportunities it offered to women members to increase their visibility; particularly those who were skilled china painters and wished to exhibit their china painting alongside fine art

exhibits of painting. From Fiveash's exhibits of china painting in 1894 to the mid twentieth century, a time span of approximately sixty years, china painting was accepted for exhibition alongside the fine art exhibits of paintings and sculptures, provided that it was of a sufficiently high standard to pass the exhibition selection committees. The selection committees did indeed play an important part in raising the profile and status of china painting, as noted by the *Advertiser's* critic who scrutinized the *Spring Exhibition* of October 1925 and commented that the quality of the exhibited china painting had led to its recognition by the Society.¹⁷¹ The professionalism of the china painters in South Australia was high, mainly due to their background training in art and design, usually in either the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts or in the Academy of Arts where James Ashton was Principal. Because of the resultant high standard, and the fact that it was exhibited alongside the fine art of the times, the general public became educated in viewing china painting as an acceptable form of applied art/craft to collect and, instead of putting it to everyday use, it was usually displayed in the china cabinet. The cessation of formal classes in china painting, and the emergence of new cultural values following the 1939-45 war, had a marked effect on the practice of china painting in South Australia.

In the 1957 *Royal South Australian Society of Arts Associates and Lay Members Exhibition*, china painting would have been merely a reminder of the past as far as the Royal South Australian Society of Arts was concerned, as only Florence Smith exhibited china painting. By 1957 the multi-skilled women artists who exhibited china painting in the 1920-30s were elderly. Very few of them continued to exhibit art in any medium, especially china painting that required dexterous handling of fragile china, the difficulties of firing the work, and good eyesight for the meticulous detail involved in painting small objects. The 1950s were also an era in which other crafts such as studio pottery that used under-glaze painting or coloured glazes became popular and attracted students and crafts people. As mentioned in an earlier

chapter, china painting was discontinued as a subject in the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts by 1958 and a broader field of ceramics study was introduced into the curricula.

Nonetheless, china painting survived in the practices of just a few elderly practitioners around Adelaide till it was 'rediscovered' by another generation of women in the late 1950-60s. Gwynith Norton, Maude Gum and Ada Hough were some of the members of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts who exhibited china painting in the Society's exhibitions in the 1930s and were the main 'bridging artists' instrumental in the 1960s revival of china painting in South Australia. Although those three women were elderly, they were prepared to share their knowledge with the few young women who sought them out. How and to what extent Norton, Gum and Hough became involved with the next generation of china painters, will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹ The (later Royal) South Australian Society of Arts was the major art society in Australia to establish and maintain such a precedent.

² Tracey Lock-Weir, *Visions of Adelaide 1836-1886*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2005, p. 15. The book was published to coincide with the opening of the exhibition of the same title in October 2005. Mary Hindmarsh's drawing on paper depicts passengers being rowed ashore in small boats from the ships visible at anchor on the horizon. A small group of women and children huddle together on the beach with some luggage nearby. The foreground shows sand dunes with a few small scraggy plants and bare stems of a dead bush. It is not a very welcoming aspect to a new land and was probably far more realistic a portrayal of reality than the rather eulogistic artwork produced by male artists to entice the colonisation of South Australia. The drawing is held in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

³ Lock-Weir, p. 16.

⁴ Lock-Weir, p. 128.

⁵ Alison Carroll, John Tregenza, *Eugene von Guerard's South Australia*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1986. This book was published on the occasion of a July 1986 exhibition at the Art Gallery of South Australia and contains interesting accounts of Guerard's walking tours in South Australia with many reproductions and explanations of his sketches made at specific points.

⁶ Lock-Weir, p. 128.

⁷ Sir William Sowden (ed.), compiled by Mary Overbury & H. E. Fuller, *A History of the S. A. Society of Arts, Inc.* Hassell Press, Adelaide, 1933, p. 10. Hill eventually taught drawing at St. Peter's College, Adelaide, for many years as well as at other schools.

⁸ 'Adelaide School of Art', Education advertisements, *Register*, 15 October 1856, p. 1. Tuition was available in pencil, crayons, oils or watercolours. There was also a juvenile class held for two hours on Monday and Thursday afternoons.

⁹ 'South Australian Society of Arts – a Meeting', Public Notices advertisements, *Register*, 15 October 1856, p. 1. The advertisement advised that it was intended to submit propositions to 'place the Arts on as broad and permanent a base in the colony as possible'.

¹⁰ 'S. A. Society of Arts', *Register*, Wednesday 16 October 1856, p. 3, column 2. The resolution was unanimously passed to form the South Australian Society of Arts. Annual subscriptions were to be one guinea, which would entitle subscribers to a range of free benefits.

¹¹ 'South Australian Society of Arts – the Adjourned Meeting', Companies and Societies advertisements, *Register*, Monday 12 January 1857, p.1. The meeting was scheduled for 7 p.m. 14 January and 'none but members may vote' but tickets could be had from the secretary.

¹² 'The Ornamental Arts', *Register*, Thursday 15 January 1857, p. 2. It was a very lengthy but unsigned article wherein the author quoted at some length the aims of the Council of the Society of Arts in Edinburgh and in England, also the aims of the Art Manufacture's Association in Edinburgh. It was clear from the article that those associations firmly believed that the term 'art' encompassed not only the fine arts of painting and sculpture, but also many facets of manufacture; from the textile and cloth manufacturing industry to jewellery and various metal industries, glass, china, kiln manufacture, photography and a wide range of other industries where good design training was necessary.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ 'South Australian Society of Art' Companies and Societies advertisements, *Register*, Wednesday 4 March 1857, p. 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ SRSA. File of 'Records of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery 1855/56-1940'. The SA Institute was formed under control of a Board of Governors under provisions of Act 16 of 1855/56.

¹⁷ *Register*, Wednesday 4 March 1857, p. 1.

¹⁸ 'South Australian Society of Arts', Companies and Societies advertisements, *Register*, Monday 9 March 1857, p. 1.

¹⁹ A photocopy of this catalogue is held in the library of the Art Gallery of South Australia. Other catalogue entries list local subjects such as No. 6 *Dogs* by C. Hill, Adelaide, No. 72 *Church of St. Francis Xavier, Adelaide*, drawn by James MacGeorge, coloured by S. T. Gill; No. 76 *First Steamer on the Murray – Surprise of the Natives!* by J. H. Adamson, Adelaide; No. 144 *Bushing it* by Schramm, Adelaide.

²⁰ The entries from Miss Jones clearly stated 'Adelaide' after her name. There is no way of knowing if other paintings such as nos 105, 106 *Portraits of Mr Crawford's family* by Madam Du Pre were produced in Australia or overseas, and it is impossible to know if many paintings were by male or female artists, when only initials and a surname were stated.

²¹ 'South Australian Society of Arts', *Register*, Tuesday 10 March 1857, p. 3.

²² Jenny Aland, Art and Design Education in South Australian Schools, From the Early 1880s to the 1920s: The influence of South Kensington and Harry Pelling Gill, unpublished thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the Degree of Masters in Education, University of Canberra, 1992, pp. 39, 40; 'copy of report on School of Design', in Report of the South Australian Society of Arts for the year 1861 and List of Prizes for the October Exhibition 1862, p. 13. That page of the report stated that the School of Design opened 2 September 1861. Pp. 9-11 of the report described the arrival of the long-expected casts for the School of Design, the damages during transit and subsequent repairs. The report also documented difficulties encountered with mounting exhibitions in 1861.

²³ The catalogue merely listed the exhibition as being in the 'Rooms of the Institute', but an advertisement in the *Register*, Wednesday 3 April 1861, p. 1 called it 'the New Institute' and a further article in the *Register* 13 April 1861, p. 3 called it the 'South Australian Institute'.

²⁴ *South Australian Society of Arts catalogue of the Pictures, Sculptures and other Works of Art comprised in the Fourth Annual Exhibition, April 1861*, pp. 10, 11. Entries under the School of Design section included such items as no. 384 *Portion of Greek Cornice*, no. 387 *Torso of Venus* with printed information that it formerly belonged, then being perfect, to the Duke of Richmond, no. 392 *Torso of Hercules* from the Vatican in Rome, no. 393 'from the Ghiberti Gates' in Florence: Sowden, p. 11 stated that the parent English Society (of Arts) donated 'valuable casts and models' for use within the School of Design.

²⁵ 'Exhibition of the Society of Arts', *Register*, Tuesday 16 April 1861, p. 3, column 5.

²⁶ Report of the South Australian Society of Arts, for the year 1861 and List of Prizes for the October Exhibition 1862, p. 3. A copy of this report, printed in 1862, is held in the Art Gallery of South Australia library.

²⁷ 'South Australian Society of Arts – the Fourth Annual Exhibition', Companies and Societies advertisements, *Register*, Wednesday 3 April 1861, p. 1. The list mentioned two prizes for girls, two for boys and one for either a girl or a boy. There were also age restrictions for some prizes, for example under 18 years of age, under 21 years of age. There was also a class with a prize to the value of five guineas for the best drawing from nature or a cast, open to any lady or gentleman resident in the colony, and not being a professional artist. Of the seventeen prize categories listed, that was the only one to specifically mention 'lady'.

²⁸ Report of the South Australian Society of Arts, for the year 1862, and list of prizes for the December Exhibition 1863, p. 8. That report also revealed difficulties that caused date alterations for some exhibitions due to expected Art Union prizes from England not arriving in the colony by the expected time.

²⁹ Lock-Weir, p. 16.

³⁰ Lock-Weir, pp. 26, 27.

³¹ Report of the South Australian Society of Arts, for the year 1862, and list of prizes for the December Exhibition 1863 'List of Art Union Prizes', p. 18

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4.

³³ 'South Australian Institute', *Register*, Saturday 13 April 1861 p. 3. Much of the debate centred around the pros and cons of costs associated with Institute soirees and admission charges to the Society of Arts exhibitions.

³⁴ Sowden, p. 12.

³⁵ South Australian Society of Arts Eleventh Annual report for the Year 1868, pp. 7, 8, 9. Although not specifically mentioned in his report, I believe male and female classes were separate. Females were not taught landscapes in oils, only in watercolours. Nor were females in architectural, mechanical, or geometrical drawing classes. His Excellency Sir D. Daly died during the year and caused a vacancy in the President's position.

³⁶ 'South Australian Institute. Evening Classes', under Education advertisements, *Register*, Monday 6 January 1873, p. 1. Other evening classes such as mathematics, German and French, taken by other teachers, were also offered by the Institute. The art classes, fees five shillings a month, advertised in 1873 were for drawing, painting and modelling,— a fall from the wider variety of art classes taught by Hill in 1857 in the School of Art.

³⁷ 'South Australian Institute Evening Classes', under Education advertisements, *Register*, Saturday 18 January 1879, p. 2. The same advertisement was repeated in the *Register*, Friday 11 July 1879, p. 1.

³⁸ 'Exhibition of Art', *Register*, Friday 26 January, 1883, p. 6.

³⁹ SRSA. File of 'Records of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery 1855/56-1940'; Further notes on changes of control of the school are in 'A Short History of the School' in the School's 1961 prospectus, p. 11. That prospectus was sighted in the archives of the Joan Brewer Library, Underdale Campus, University of SA in 1998.

⁴⁰ SRSA. GRG18 Education Department, Agency details. Date Range 1878-1994, Inventory of Series, Description, p. 1 of 15.

⁴¹ Sowden, p. 13.

⁴² Sowden, pp. 11, 12.

⁴³ Sowden, pp. 13, 14. Gill subsequently introduced into his School of Design, classes such as woodcarving, art needlework and china painting that fitted under the umbrella heading of 'arts and crafts'. Those classes were very popular with female students.

⁴⁴ 'Preface', *South Australian Society of Arts Exhibition Catalogue*, September 1893.

⁴⁵ *South Australian Society of Arts Exhibition Catalogue*, September 1893. One page in the catalogue listed the officers of the Society, also the names of members and associates. Miss Ethel Bloxam and Miss F. Kay were the other two women on the Committee.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* For example the Misses Bloxam, Kay, Benham, Armstrong, Overbury, Meek, Wilson, Hambidge were some who had associations with Gill's art instruction policies. There were other female artists exhibiting, who had also probably been students in the School.

⁴⁷ 'S.A. Society of Arts Exhibition', *Register*, Friday 22 September, 1893, p. 6. It contained much information on the Governor's opening address. The writer did not provide many details of the artwork, but went to some trouble to describe the awning of gold tinted muslin erected in graceful fashion overhead, as well as mentioning the marigolds, polyanthus and lilies that decorated the light refreshment tables. The writer must have anticipated that women would have been the dominant readers as well as the dominant exhibitors!

⁴⁸ 'Preface', *South Australian Society of Arts Exhibition Catalogue*, 1894. The exhibition was open 15-30 June, instead of in September like the 1893 exhibition.

⁴⁹ 'Mr. James Ashton', *Adelaide Observer*, Saturday 21 July 1894, p. 16.

⁵⁰ It was a home art/craft practice for young ladies in the late 19th. Century to hand-paint a small silk or cotton doil'y, usually with floral images. Such items could be used as special gifts to favoured friends or be carefully displayed at afternoon teas. The State Library of South Australia has, in its collection, a hand-painted doil'y by Rosa Fiveash.

⁵¹ The most common black and white medium was black ink on white paper. However dark pencil work on white paper, or linocuts, etchings, lithographs drawn on the stone with the appropriate black material, could also come under this heading.

⁵² The 1895 catalogue also listed the category of membership. The term 'Member' of 1893 was now re-named 'Fellow'. Artists who joined the Society would submit their work to the selection and hanging committee in the first instance for exhibiting, but would later submit specific artworks as adjudicated nominations for Associateship. Once an Associate, they could then exhibit more work for adjudication as a Fellow of the Society, which was the highest ranking. For example in the 1895 Exhibition Catalogue, Miss Amy Bosworth who lived at Glynde, submitted exhibits no. 22 *A Portrait*, no. 45 *A Portrait*, no. 123 *A Siesta*, all of which carried the additional printed information 'Nomination Work for Associateship'. Rose McPherson, Kermod Street, North Adelaide submitted no. 35 *Portrait*, no. 37 *Still Life*, both of which were stated to be 'Nomination Work for Fellowship'.

⁵³ *South Australian Society of Arts Exhibition Catalogue*, 12 July 1900, p. 10, entries nos. 33-39. They were jardinières, a candlestick and tobacco jar, either ceramic or brass.

⁵⁴ 'Society of Arts Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Friday 20 July 1900, p. 6.

⁵⁵ 'Preface', *South Australian Society of Arts Exhibition Catalogue*, July 1901. The hanging committee reported the 'happy amalgamation' and noted that 'by which union the latter [Society of Arts] has secured the co-operation of a number of earnest workers'.

⁵⁶ 'The Society of Arts Annual Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Friday 15 June 1894, p. 5; 'Exhibitions of Art', *Register*, 15 June 1894, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Fayette Gosse, 'Sir Thomas Elder GCMG: A biographical note', *The Story of the Elder Bequest Art Gallery of South Australia*, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2000, p. 24.

⁵⁸ GRG 19/51 vol.4. Gill report to Fine Arts Committee 10 May 1897. Gill cautioned that spending the bequest of 25,000 pounds at once upon artworks from the English and Continental Schools 'would be an extreme extravagance'. Instead he suggested the amount be divided into three equal parts and he then proceeded into plausible arguments regarding ways in which each section could best be used. His report makes interesting reading and reveals the great extent of Gill's knowledge of the art world and his financial prudence.

⁵⁹ A joint committee of the Board and the Council of the South Australian Society of Arts drew up the regulations for the exhibitions. References to these facts are made in 'The Federal Exhibitions – South Australian Society of Arts 1898 – 1923' an information sheet in the Art Gallery of South Australia library, files on the South Australian Society of Arts; Catalogue preface of the 1898 South Australian Society of Arts Federal Exhibition 1898; 'Australian Art. First Federal Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Friday 11 November 1898, p. 6. The term 'Australasian Art' was soon dropped in favour of 'Australian Art'.

⁶⁰ 'Federal Art Exhibition. Notes on the Pictures', *Advertiser*, Thursday 6 November, 1902, p. 6. They were considered useful examples for South Australian art students to observe and public opinion wished them to continue; 'Preface', Federal Exhibition Catalogue of Exhibits, 1903. The Board of Governors was pleased with the 1902 fifth Federal Exhibition and decided to sustain them.

⁶¹ 'The Intercolonial Art Exhibition', *Register*, Wednesday 9 November 1898, p. 4.

⁶² *Ibid.* The writer of that article advised Australians to 'stand on their own feet instead of leaning on extraneous support', and instead of being 'much concerned with what people in England or Timbuctoo may think of our paintings', Australians should hold opinions of their own.

⁶³ The list of office bearers of the South Australian Society of Arts Inc, printed in the catalogue for the 1898 Federal Exhibition, shows that the Right Hon. S. J. Way was also President of the Society in 1898.

⁶⁴ 'The Federal Exhibition. A Good Display', *Register*, Friday 11 November 1898, p. 6.

⁶⁵ Catherine Speck, 'Adelaide's Federal Art Exhibitions 1892-1923', in *Seize the Day: Exhibitions, Australia and the World*, (ed) Darian-Smith, K., Gillespie, R., Jordan, C., Willis, E., Monash E-Press, 2008.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ This 1898 figure is taken from 'Index of Exhibitors' at the back of the catalogue. Just a few names however were only initials with the surname, so the male/female numbers could be slightly out. Nevertheless it is clear that male artists dominated the scene. Later catalogues often had a list of exhibitors on the last pages, with the sex clearly indicated.

⁶⁸ Women artists such as Jean Wilson, Rosa Fiveash and Lama Barker who were china painters by the turn of the century, exhibited framed paintings of Australian flora and not china painting. Jean Wilson's painting of *Eucalyptus Alba and Rosa* was purchased by the Art Gallery from the 1898 Federal Exhibition but has since been de-accessioned.

⁶⁹ Keane was a teacher in the School at that time; David Symon, Manfred Jusaitis, *Sturt Pea; A most splendid plant*, Board of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium, Adelaide, 2007, pp. 92, 93. Images of the Sturt Pea were used to represent South Australia for many years before it was officially proclaimed as the State Flower in the *South Australian Government Gazette* 23 November 1961.

⁷⁰ Barnes was a member of the Society and designed the 1910, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1916, 1918 and 1920 catalogue covers. A communication from Jin Whittington, Librarian at the Art Gallery of South Australia, 24 May 2007, advised that in the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery 1914-15 annual report, Barnes was listed as 'artist and art supervisor' and as 'curator' in the 1918-19 report.

⁷¹ The forward-curving crest and size indicates the Greater Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*.

⁷² 'Society of Arts. Federal Exhibition', *Register*, 15 November 1923, p. 13; 'South Australian Art. The Federal Exhibition', *Advertiser* 15 November 1923 p. 15.

⁷³ The Society of Arts annual report for the year 1912-13, showed that Fiveash resigned her membership, which possibly explained why she did not exhibit china painting in the Federal Exhibition. The annual report also showed that Gill resigned, but remained an Honorary member.

⁷⁴ 'Federal Art Exhibition', *Register*, Tuesday 12 November 1912, p. 9.

⁷⁵ 'Federal Art Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Thursday 14 November 1912, p. 12.

⁷⁶ 'Federal Art Exhibition', 'The Opening Day'. *Register*, Thursday 14 November 1912, p. 9. In the still life and flowers section, the paintings of Venner's *Flowers and Silverware* and Leicester's *Daffodils* were mentioned. Campbell also exhibited leather work, along with Miss Gladys Good and J. Cleland. The *Register* review mentioned it under a heading 'Ceramics and Leather Work'.

⁷⁷ 'Federal Art Exhibition. The Opening Day', *Register*, Thursday 14 November 1912, p. 9.

⁷⁸ AGSA. GRG 19/51 vol. 4. Gill report to Fine Arts Committee 10 May 1897.

⁷⁹ Christopher Menz, *Australian Decorative Arts: 1820s-1990s: Art Gallery of South Australia*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia 1996, p. 136. The magnificent Doulton 1892 bone china vase on which Louis Bilton china-painted Australian wildflowers, was gifted to the Gallery collection by George Brookman in 1899.

- ⁸⁰ Mervyn Horton, Daniel Thomas (eds), *Art Gallery of South Australia 1881-1981*, p. 45; Information sheet, 'The Morgan Thomas Bequest' from the Art Gallery of South Australia.
- ⁸¹ Angus Trumble, 'Harry P Gill: A Biographical Note', *The Story of the Elder Bequest: Art Gallery of South Australia*, The Art Gallery of South Australia, 2000, p. 45. There had been a major inquiry into his role at the School of Design. However he was cleared of allegations of misconduct.
- ⁸² 'Federal Art Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Thursday 3 November 1910, p. 12.
- ⁸³ 'Preface', *Federal Exhibition South Australian Society of Arts Catalogue*, 1913. It was open from 15 November to 6 December 1913.
- ⁸⁴ Nevertheless, despite the high proportion of exhibiting South Australian women artists, only four women were included in the list of twenty-nine positions in the South Australian Society of Arts, as printed in the front of the 1913 Federal Exhibition catalogue. There were four women and eight men in the Council.
- ⁸⁵ Apart from Maida Wright's no. 47 *Vase, Tetratheca* at two guineas, the other entries merely indicated 'blue bowl', 'vase', 'trinket box' or 'painted china'.
- ⁸⁶ 'Federal Art Exhibition. The Opening Day. Splendid Collection of Pictures', *Register*, Friday 14 November 1913, p. 9; 'Federal Art Exhibition. To be Opened This Evening. A Varied Collection', *Advertiser* Friday 14 November 1913, p. 10.
- ⁸⁷ 'Preface', *South Australian Society of Arts Federal Exhibition catalogue*, 1914
- ⁸⁸ 'South Australian Art. An Eloquent Display of Pictures', *Register*, Friday 13 November 1914, p. 7.
- ⁸⁹ Unfortunately this is the best reproduction available as the current whereabouts of the painting is unknown. Close inspection indicates decorations on the cups. Also note the drawn-thread embroidery on the white tablecloth. Maude Prosser exhibited needlework in the same exhibition and taught art needlework in the Adelaide School of Art. The price asked by Scott for his painting was the second highest in the exhibition; Hans Heyson's *In Sunset Haze* was three hundred and fifteen pounds.
- ⁹⁰ 'South Australian Art. An Eloquent Display of Pictures', *Register*, Friday 13 November 1914, p. 7.
- ⁹¹ 'Federal Art Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Friday 13 November 1914, p. 13.
- ⁹² 'Preface', *South Australian Society of Arts Federal Exhibition catalogue*, 1914
- ⁹³ For example exhibit no. 44 consisted of jewellery, enamelling and silver-smithing by Ethel Barringer. It encompassed twelve items of her work, including a casket, paper knife, brooch, necklet, chain and earrings.
- ⁹⁴ 'Federal Art Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Monday 15 November 1915, p. 11.
- ⁹⁵ 'Federal Art Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Monday 15 November 1915, p. 11. The review mentioned the various articles and proteas and flannel flowers painted by Wright, and the blue salvias and eremophila painted by S. M. (Sydney May) Irwin. Neither the subject matter Howie painted on his vases, nor the prices were stated.
- ⁹⁶ 'Preface', *South Australian Society of Arts Annual & Federal Exhibition Catalogue*, 1916.
- ⁹⁷ 'Society of Arts. Annual Federal Exhibition', *Register*, Tuesday 14 November 1916, p. 7.
- ⁹⁸ 'Federal Art Exhibition. Opened by Lady Galway. Pictures secured for the Gallery', *Advertiser*, Tuesday 14 November 1916, p. 7.
- ⁹⁹ 'Society of Arts Exhibition. A Creditable Display', *Register*, Monday 12 November 1917, p. 6.
- ¹⁰⁰ 'Society of Arts Exhibition', *Register*, Monday 12 November 1917, p. 6. The review of this painting stated her treatment gave it a 'dramatic accent'. Despite the fact that over 67% of exhibitors were women, the critical reviews of this exhibition tended to concentrate on more descriptive accounts of paintings by male artists rather than on women's artwork.
- ¹⁰¹ 'Cease Firing', *Advertiser*, Tuesday 12 November 1918, p. 5; 'German Revolution', *Advertiser*, Wednesday 13 November 1918, p. 5.
- ¹⁰² 'Preface', *South Australian Society of Arts Annual & Federal Exhibition Catalogue*, 1918.
- ¹⁰³ 'List of works purchased with the Elder Bequest', *The Story of the Elder Bequest Art Gallery of South Australia*, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2000, p. 117. The Art Gallery purchased *The Silver Moon*, watercolour on a silk fan, from the artist Florence Mofflin in 1918. This was listed in the 1918 Federal Catalogue as entry no. 30, at twenty-one dollars and is illustrated on p. 17 of the catalogue.
- ¹⁰⁴ 'Federal Art Exhibition. A Various Display', *Register*, Wednesday 13 November 1918, p. 6.
- ¹⁰⁵ 'Federal Exhibition. Opened by Sir William Sowden', *Register*, Thursday 13 November 1919, p. 8..
- ¹⁰⁶ 'Australian Art. Federal Exhibition reviewed', *Register*, Thursday 25 November 1920, p. 7. The critic stated that Howie's sketches were on a martial note, and that no-man's land and war zones were uninviting subjects.
- ¹⁰⁷ 'The Society of Arts. Annual Federal Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Thursday 25 November 1920, p. 11.
- ¹⁰⁸ 'Society of Arts. Annual Federal Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Thursday 17 November 1921, p. 10.
- ¹⁰⁹ 'Federal Art Exhibition. Some Impressions', *Register*, Thursday 17 November 1921, p. 8.
- ¹¹⁰ 'Federal Art Exhibition. Society of Arts Annual Display', *Register*, Thursday 16 November 1922, p. 8.
- ¹¹¹ 'Society of Arts. Federal Exhibition Opened', *Advertiser*, Friday 17 November 1922, p. 12.
- ¹¹² For example James Ashton exhibited in the Easel Club in the 1890s, and subsequently in most Federal Exhibitions. He was an influential art teacher, served in various positions in the South Australian Society of Arts. His style did not change very much throughout his painting life. He specialised in painting seascapes and coastal scenes that attracted favourable critiques in newspaper reviews of numerous exhibitions from the 1890s to the early 1930s. Gustave Barnes was another regular exhibitor in many Federal Exhibitions and his landscape

paintings attracted similar lengthy favourable critiques year after year. The Hambidge sisters were other regular exhibitors of portraits, usually of female subjects.

¹¹³ 'Famous Art Collection. Mr. W. J. Wadham's Exhibition', *Register*, Thursday 15 November 1923, p. 10. After Wadham's Adelaide Exhibition he planned to establish an art gallery in Sydney. He exhibited in the Royal Academy before he came to Australia, was President of the Adelaide Easel Club in the 1890s and had exhibited in many previous Federal Exhibitions. Wadham believed the only art worth collecting was by the great artists of the past and the writer of the *Register's* article made the point that Wadham's contempt for the various ultra-modern schools was 'spontaneously undisguised'.

¹¹⁴ 'The Peace Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Tuesday 27 April 1920, p. 9. Disher is listed in the 'Individual Effort Group 1. Fine Arts' list of awards, painting on china. It is impossible to track down in which exhibition her work in figure 29 was exhibited.

¹¹⁵ Women artists were the principal decorative art producers at that time, and as many of those were single women, struggling to be self supporting and teaching, additional sales opportunities were very useful.

¹¹⁶ Menz, pp. 5-7, 'Foreword' by Radford, Director of Art Gallery of South Australia, informs readers that the term 'Australian Decorative Arts' was a term of collecting category that only started to be used around the 1970s. The term covers a comprehensively wide range of objects and materials, from silverware, furniture, textiles, ceramics and metalwork.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 6. Dick Richards was the Gallery's first Curator of Decorative Arts and he and Judith Thompson put effort into building up the Decorative Arts Collection from the 1960s onwards, to be followed by Christopher Menz in 1989.

¹¹⁸ R. G. Appleyard, 'History of the Gallery', *Art Gallery of South Australia 1881-1981*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, 1981, p. 47.

¹¹⁹ No price was stated by her entries. Venner was a well-known member of the Society in the 1920-30s and also donated the annual Venner Prize for china painting to students in the Art School as mentioned in the Howie chapter.

¹²⁰ Barker's entry no. 115 *Painted Screen* ten guineas, her entry no. 116 was listed as *13 Pieces China* (no price), entry no. 102 *The Spotted Bower Bird* four pounds ten shillings. Hans Heyson and Jas. Ashton exhibited many paintings in that exhibition. A few years later the Easel Club amalgamated with the South Australian Society of Arts.

¹²¹ They had trained in the School as students and subsequently engaged as teachers.

¹²² The author has been unable to locate the year of her birth and the year of her death.

¹²³ AGSA. The SAART Database vol.2, WRIGHT, Maida (SA).

¹²⁴ 'The Peace Exhibition. List of Awards', *Advertiser*, 27 April 1920, p. 9.

¹²⁵ 'S.A. Society of Arts. Paintings and Craft Work', *Register*, Wednesday 18 May 1921, p. 10.

¹²⁶ 'Arts and Crafts Club Exhibition', *Advertiser*, 14 September 1921, p.7. Olive Atkinson who was one of the bridging china painters who taught Necia Birch in the revival of china painting in the 1960s, exhibited a sketch. The review briefly mentioned Barker, Barringer, Maude Prosser, Fiveash, Norah Godlee, Good, Wright and Disher as craft exhibitors of leather bags, embroidered silk handbags, woodcarving and painted china.

¹²⁷ Public notices, 'An Exhibition of China Painting and Pictures', *Register*, Saturday 13 November 1920, p. 2.

¹²⁸ 'The Charm of Art. Miss Maida Wright's Exhibition', *Register*, 2 August 1923, p. 10. That exhibition was held in Messrs. Bayly and Speir's Art Shop, 1 Currie Street. The article mentioned that a perennial show of her work was at Salisbury Chambers, 41 King William Street, and that she did all her own designing and firing.

¹²⁹ 'Miss Maida Wright's Exhibition', *Register*, 28 August 1924, p. 3.

¹³⁰ 'Dainty China. Miss Maida Wright's Exhibition', *Register*, Tuesday 26 October 1926, p. 12.

¹³¹ 'Hand-painted China. Art of Miss Maida Wright.' *The News*, Monday 8 October 1928, p. 4.

¹³² 'Exhibition of China Painting. By Miss Maida Wright', *Advertiser*, Thursday 18 April 1929, p. 17.

¹³³ Advertisement in the Education section, *Advertiser*, 24 May 1923, p. 1.

¹³⁴ Under Education advertisements 'Ashton Academy of Arts', *Advertiser*, 14 September 1926, p. 7. Barker also taught leatherwork and wood staining in Ashton's Academy. In the first two decades of the 20th. Century Ashton's advertisements emphasised instruction in aspects of drawing and painting, but he was sufficiently astute to acknowledge the increasing interest in the crafts in South Australia in the 1920s.

¹³⁵ AGSA. *South Australian Society of Arts Winter Exhibition of Paintings and Craft Work Catalogue*, 18 May-4 June, 1921. The china painting entries included many more items than entry numbers indicate and the display area must have been crowded. For example, Lama Barker's entry no. 3 was of six plates with figures china painted on them (no price), and her entry no. 17 was of a nine-piece coffee set (no price). Maida Wright's entry no. 3 was of 'Nut Bowls' (twelve shillings and six pence each, but no mention of the number of nut bowls in this entry.) Wright's entry no. 12 was of six cups and saucers with native flowers painted on them (four pounds fifteen shillings the set). The numbering system for the 'fine art' exhibits was separate to that used for the applied arts. Numbering system for the applied arts was confusing. Lama Barker, Gladys Good and Miss G Casely's entries were catalogued as nos 1-41 in 'Applied Arts' and Maida Wright's china painting exhibits in 'Applied Arts' were separately numbered nos 1-19.

¹³⁶ Even this figure may be too low as Wright's entry no. 3 was for 'nut bowls' twelve shillings and sixpence each, with no indication of exactly how many nut bowls, and her entry no.9 was 'brooches' fifteen shillings each, with no indication how many brooches Wright actually exhibited.

¹³⁷ 'The Exhibition. Judging Resumed', *Advertiser*, 15 April 1925, p. 15.

¹³⁸ 'The Society of Arts', *Advertiser*, 8 July 1925, p. 17.

¹³⁹ Venner, Good, Godlee, Beulah Leicester, Buxton and Barker were the artists responsible for this large amount of china painting.

¹⁴⁰ The author speaks from personal experience in producing and firing such work. Temperature control, speed of firing and cooling the kiln, and the type of china, such as bone china, soft paste porcelain, hard paste porcelain must all be addressed to prevent subsequent chipping off of the raised paste work.

¹⁴¹ 'Society of Arts. Big Spring Exhibition. Many Fine Works', *Register*, 8 October 1925, p. 4.

¹⁴² 'Society of Arts. Comprehensive Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Friday 9 October 1925, p. 9.

¹⁴³ 'Society of Arts. Comprehensive Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Friday 9 October 1925, p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ 'Foreword', *The South Australian Society of Arts Autumn Exhibition Catalogue*, 22 April 1926, p. 3. It was written by John White, President South Australian Society of Arts.

¹⁴⁵ 'Art Exhibition. Co-operation of Architecture', *Register*, 22 April 1926, p. 13.

¹⁴⁶ RSASA archives, *Society of Arts Spring Exhibition Catalogue*, 4 October 1928. There were bargains to be had however. Ivor Hele's no. 190 *Valkyrie* was priced at £1-15-0.

¹⁴⁷ Myers store advertisements, *Advertiser*, 18 April 1929, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ South Australian Society of the Arts, Report for the year 1930-31, p. 3. Page 2 of the same report stated, 'Purchases for the Art Gallery were ... and "Antoinette", a vase by Mamie Venner, being the first piece of locally painted china purchased by the institution'.

¹⁴⁹ The S.A. Society of Arts Spring Exhibition 1930 was opened by Lady Sowden on Thursday 25 September 1930. Entry no. 232 vase *Antoinette* by Mamie Venner, was priced at ten guineas, a very high price for china painting in that exhibition, where many china-painted jugs, dishes and bowls were in the ten shillings and sixpence to the two guinea price range. The section 'Craftwork' listed not only china painting but also six raffia hats, a wallet, brass work, woodcarving, art needlework, batik and spoons.

¹⁵⁰ 'Artistic China. Mrs. Mamie Venner's Work', *News*, Friday 12 September 1924, p. 11.

¹⁵¹ The whereabouts of Venner's *Antoinette* vase was checked with the Art Gallery of South Australia June 2007. It was not listed in their collection. However since 1980 seven other pieces of Venner's china painting have entered the Gallery's collection.

¹⁵² Noris Ioannau, 'The emergence of the studio potter; Part 3', *Ceramics in South Australia 1836-1986*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1986, p. 315. Mitchell's pottery, also featuring thistles and eucalypt decoration, is illustrated on pp. 238-9.

¹⁵³ *Handicrafts for Countrywomen*, compiled and published by the South Australian Country Women's Association, Inc. The first edition appeared in 1939, the third edition in 1947. Miss A. F. Mitchell's name is included in the acknowledgements to contributors on p. 3 of the third edition. The article 'China Painting' is on p. 64, 'Hand-Built Pottery' on p. 65.

¹⁵⁴ It is difficult to be precise from the catalogue entries as some entries, for example those by Mrs E. Lewis and Myers could be either of china painting or hand-built pottery – probably the latter.

¹⁵⁵ 'Artist's last exhibition, but lots to do', *Advertiser*, Tuesday 26 May 1970, p. 20; A photocopy of the catalogue shows she also exhibited thirteen pieces of pottery and nineteen paintings. Good died in 1979.

¹⁵⁶ The author noticed the same orange colour used in china painting by some of her students in the School of Arts and Crafts. It is unusual as orange is a hard colour to hold in firing, let alone over such a large area as Good applied it in this piece. That colour orange appears to have gone off the market by the 1960s.

¹⁵⁷ These are in the author's collection and there is also a matching teapot or coffee pot with peacocks painted on both sides of the pot. Invariably, on the rare occasions they are used for selected guests, there is the 'Wow' factor.

¹⁵⁸ Grace Cochrane, *The Crafts Movement in Australia: a History*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, NSW 1992, pp. 15-25.

¹⁵⁹ Patricia R. McDonald, 'What to do with our girls', *Hearth & Home; Women's Decorative Arts & Crafts 1800-1930*, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, Glebe, New South Wales 1988, p. 38.

¹⁶⁰ Deborah Edwards, 'Australian Decorative Arts at the Art Gallery of New South Wales', *Australian Decorative Arts*, Trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1991, p. 1. In 1909 the Gallery purchased a china-painted vase by Mildred Lovett, illustrated on p. 11.

¹⁶¹ Caroline Miley, *The Arts Among the Handicrafts. The Arts and Crafts Movement in Victoria 1889-1929*, St. Lawrence Press, Melbourne 2001, pp. 91, 92.

¹⁶² Miley, 'china painting', pp. 115-117.

¹⁶³ Joan Kerr (ed.), *Heritage the National Women's Art Book*, G+B Arts International Ltd., Roseville East, NSW, 1995, p. 184.

¹⁶⁴ 'China Painting', *Melbourne Argus*, 10 November 1910, p. 6.

¹⁶⁵ Peter Timms, *Australian Studio Pottery & China Painting*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, p. 14.

¹⁶⁶ Caroline Miley, *Beautiful and Useful. The Arts and Crafts Movement in Tasmania*, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, 1987, p. 20: Cochrane stated that Lovett introduced china painting into the Technical College around 1905, p. 17. However china painting instruction must have been available before then, because of the 1903 entries.

¹⁶⁷ Cochrane, p. 23. There is no indication of what particular crafts were exhibited.

¹⁶⁸ Cochrane, p. 25. There is no indication if china painting was one of the crafts exhibited.

¹⁶⁹ Kerr (ed.), p. 26.

¹⁷⁰ Dorothy Ericksen, 'Art Pottery and China Painting in Western Australia: A Few Tall Poppies', in *Australian Art Pottery 1900-1950*, eds K Fahey, J Freeland, K Free, A Simpson, Casuarina Press, Sydney, 2004, p. 46.

¹⁷¹ 'Society of Arts. Comprehensive Exhibition', *Advertiser*, Friday 9 October 1925, p. 9.

Introduction

The practice of china painting in South Australia did not completely disappear after it ceased to be a popular exhibit in the Royal South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions. Maude Gum, Gwynith Norton and Ada Hough, all of whom had been active exhibitors in numerous exhibitions organised by the Royal South Australian Society of Arts before the Second World War, played a part in the revival of china painting in the late 1950-60s. Gum and Norton taught china painting privately to small groups of students in the 1950s and Hough provided encouragement and a firing service to a new generation of china painters in the 1950-60s. In the following sections, the art careers of Gum, Norton and Hough will be explored. Their work was accepted, catalogued and sold in leading South Australian fine art exhibitions of their time.

The argument pursued in this chapter is that, to those women, china painting was considered an additional skill to their established abilities in other media such as drawing and painting in oils and watercolours, and not seen as a skill they might use for gainful employment in a commercial pottery or industry. Gum and Norton chose to remain single, with no children, in order to establish their professional careers as artists. They maintained themselves financially throughout their lives, by exhibiting work for sale in prestigious exhibitions and advertising their teaching abilities. Hough also pursued a professional career, before and after she married, as an artist exhibiting in a wide range of media. However, Hough placed her exhibiting career aside on several occasions due to family commitments. She practised in a private professional capacity in the last decades of her life, with teaching china painting to a few pupils in her home studio, and also providing a firing service for a number of china painters in the wider community. Gum, Norton and Hough were not amateur hobbyists, but sought professional careers as artists, capable of teaching a variety of art media, of which china painting was just one. That was in marked contrast to the background of the later exponents of china painting in the 1960s revival, as will be explained in subsequent chapters.

Case Study: Maude E. Gum

Maude Gum's Art Training

Maude Edith Gum (1885-1973), one of five children, was born at Amyton, a small rural settlement in the mid-north of South Australia, where her family owned farming properties. Like many girls in farming communities of that era, she was expected to milk cows and perform other farm duties and rode a pony to the local public school, which she attended till 1900.¹ While still a teenager at Amyton, Gum received her first art lessons from Miss Von der Borch. Those lessons, weather permitting, were often held outside under the trees and could well have been the impetus for her preferred method of outdoor painting and sketching when she 'walked for many miles, often in adverse weather, carrying her painting outfit ...'.² Gum's father died in 1907. She decided to make a career as a professional artist, so shifted, with her mother and sister, to Adelaide to enrol in 1916 in James Ashton's Academy of Arts, then situated in Grenfell Street, Adelaide (figure 43).³

Ashton (1859-1935) received his training in the Royal College of Art, South Kensington, London, was a member of the Royal Drawing Society in London and also a prominent figure in the South Australian Society of Arts.⁴ An advertisement in 1896 stated that Ashton's Academy of Arts, then situated in Victoria Square, Adelaide, was affiliated with the Royal Drawing Society of Great Britain and Ireland.⁵ Art critic Ivor Francis, when writing on the life of James Ashton, commented, 'his success with students has been attributed to his insistence on accurate drawing as the foundation of good painting...'.⁶ Ashton himself, in an article in the *Prince Alfred Chronicle* during his tenure as art master at Prince Alfred College, advised that the time spent in learning the basics of drawing was never wasted, even though to some students it might appear monotonous and uninteresting, as 'skill in drawing is found to be most helpful in many of the ordinary studies ... the art of writing, in fact, is nothing but drawing from memory.'⁷ Ashton's insistence on the necessity of good drawing skills as a

foundation for all branches of art was a basic tenet of his Academy and influenced Gum's art, including her subsequent china painting, and her subsequent teaching career.

Gum was one of Ashton's star pupils. At the Academy of Arts' prize-giving function held in December 1922, Gum's oil painting (title unknown) was awarded the first prize, which consisted of a gold medal donated by Mr. T R Barr Smith Esq and twelve months free tuition (figure 44).⁸ At the same prize-giving event, Gum was also awarded the Olive Twelftree gold medal for the best painting from nature and an honourable mention for her watercolour study (titles unknown) (figure 45).⁹ In December 1922, following his established precedent, Ashton sent paintings by his best pupils to the Royal Drawing Society's exhibition competitions in England, where medals were awarded for the best works in various sections. The exhibition was held in the Guild Hall, London in April 1923 and the only two gold stars awarded to the many entries from the 'overseas Dominions' were to Maude Gum and Frank D'Eposito, both of whom were from Ashton's Academy of Arts (figure 46).¹⁰ Gum's gold star painting was of an interior scene featuring items of learning. It depicted a pile of books with the top one open, an inkwell with plumed pen, an atlas and scrolls with a bottle in the background.¹¹

To improve her skills, Gum did not hesitate to seek further tuition under various teachers. In addition to her training at Ashton's Academy of Arts, she enrolled in two further drawing classes in the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts. In 1923 she gained Honours in Antique Drawing I and in 1924 gained Honours in Antique Drawing II. She had been a student under Leila McNamara in Ashton's Academy of Arts and had also, at some time, trained under Miss May Grigg.¹²

At the December 1924 annual prize-giving function of the Academy of Fine Arts, James Ashton announced that Miss Gum was going to Sydney to further her studies in the studio of

Mr. Will Ashton.¹³ In February 1925, a notice in the *Register* informed readers that the Misses Leila McNamara and Maude Gum were sailing to Sydney ‘on a sketching tour, which will include Sydney harbour, the Blue Mountains, and the Hawkesbury River’.¹⁴ In her solo exhibition of 1926 after her return from New South Wales, Gum exhibited a number of landscape paintings that showed the effects of her tuition under Will Ashton. Many of her floral and still-life paintings done under the influence of James Ashton tended to be sombre and dark, such as her gold-framed oil painting *Yellow flowers in a blue vase* (figure 47).¹⁵ However after she studied under Will Ashton, her paintings were brighter, more high keyed and much looser, such as her watercolour *Boats at rest* that depicted boats and sheds around the Sydney coves area (figure 48).¹⁶

Maude Gum’s Exhibiting Career

James Ashton was an active member of the South Australian Society of Arts so it is not surprising that by 1920 Gum was also a member and subsequently exhibited her work regularly in many of the Society’s exhibitions.¹⁷ By 1923 she was firmly set on her path as a professional artist when she exhibited three paintings in the *South Australian Society of Arts Twenty-sixth Federal Exhibition* and continued to regularly exhibit in group exhibitions organised by the South Australian Society of Arts till the late 1940s. She was particularly active during the mid 1920-30s and served on the Council at various times for a total of twelve years (figure 49).

Gum’s multi-media art skills also extended to print making, which gained in popularity during the 1920-30s and for which drawing was also a useful skill. She continued to occasionally exhibit work based on her Sydney sketches when she exhibited a lino-cut as entry no. 1 *Misty Morn, Sydney* at one guinea, in the *Royal South Australian Society of Arts Autumn Exhibition of Paintings and Craftworks* in April 1941.

Nevertheless, Gum's rural upbringing influenced her penchant for painting aspects of the Australian landscape in oils or watercolours throughout her art career. Whereas her china painted landscapes such as in figure 57, depicted the more feminine viewpoint of a garden and house as the main feature, her oil and watercolour landscape paintings focused on features of more importance to the men on the farm, for instance gum trees for stock shelter and creek beds. Her frequent inclusion of creek beds, whether dry or containing water, are a reminder of the importance of water in South Australian farming communities.¹⁸ *Winter in the Adelaide Hills* depicted farming country in the greener area of the Adelaide Hills where water flowed regularly and the gums grew tall (figure 50).¹⁹ Her watercolour *Amyton Creek* showed the frequently dry watercourse on her family farm (figure 51).²⁰ As she walked and carried all equipment to her chosen painting locations, most of her landscape paintings were small watercolours and painted in the conservative, realistic style popular in the South Australian Society of Arts in the 1920-30s. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, by the early 1920s that style of painting was already considered passé by the Federal Art Exhibition's contemporary art purchase committee, although saleable to conservative Adelaide exhibition viewers.

In 1926 Gum became a Fellow of the South Australian Society of Arts (figure 52). By September of that year she had assembled eighty-nine paintings to hold her first solo exhibition in the Society of Arts Gallery, Institute Building, North terrace, Adelaide, and her exhibits included many scenes from New South Wales, as well as South Australian landscapes.

A critic writing of her solo exhibition, commented that Gum was 'evidently an indefatigable worker, and her exhibition is distinctly meritorious. She combines a good color sense with correct draughtsmanship and an eye for the picturesque'.²¹ Painting no. 45 *Late Afternoon near Narrabeen, N.S.W.* in that exhibition and for sale at twenty-five guineas (the highest

amount in the catalogue), later featured in *A Book of South Australia. Women in the First Hundred Years*.²² (See Appendix 10.) Another short account of her exhibition, observed that sales were good, and that Gum was, ‘wise in keeping her prices low, so that people of small means can have an example of her work’.²³

On 28 October 1931, Gum mounted another solo exhibition in the South Australian Society of Arts Gallery in which she presented fifteen watercolours, sixty-three oil paintings and fifty-seven entries of china painting. It was the first year in which she exhibited china painting and indicated her enthusiasm for her new medium.²⁴ The effects of the 1929 depression were still felt within the arts community, as was indicated by Mrs. Francis Fisher when she opened the exhibition. In her speech she appealed to the public to:

express gratitude to the living artist and not be so reverential of the dead ... (has) it ever impressed those present, how luckily artists obeyed the commands of the world to produce the smooth side of life when the artists themselves usually saw the rough ... they all cheered and brightened life, and people were apt to accept art as a kind of right. ... People said “This is no time for luxuries”, and so painters went unrewarded. (yet) they, too, made the world brighter, and more pleasant by their work, and the public should be grateful to them while they lived.²⁵

Art critic H. E. Fuller considered her work in the 1931 exhibition:

of much better quality than her last show in 1926. Since that date she has developed a taste for watercolours and china painting ... the predominant features of her work are good draughtsmanship and correct perspective, added to the charm of pleasing subjects. The watercolours show direct, clean work ... (the china) shows the versatility of the artist. Generally speaking, the designs are good, the majority being of a conventional nature. The brooches are particularly dainty.²⁶

The china painting exhibits also revealed a change in career structure for Gum. Entries nos 86, 87 and 92 consisted of a jug and basin and two cups and saucers etc, all with the Wilderness Badge painted on them. In 1931 Gum took up the position as art teacher at the Misses Brown’s prestigious establishment for girls, the *Wilderness School*. The Browns supported the new art mistress at their school, and one of Gum’s brooches no. 119 *Delphiniums* at ten shillings and sixpence, was purchased by them at that time.²⁷

Although Gum was a skilful china painter and teacher, there is no record regarding when or from whom she received tuition in china painting. She was friendly with Gwynith Norton and Mamie Venner, both of whom were capable of providing a few short lessons to her, and Venner served on the Council of the South Australian Society of Arts with Gum for several years. However Gum could also have been taught the necessary technical skills in about 1930, from her friend and former art teacher Miss May Grigg, who was also a china painter and painted a loose spray of white blossoms with falling petals against a blue background on the inside of a bowl to which she added a rim of gold (figure 53).²⁸ Gum's business card at that time show that Gum and Grigg shared a studio in Grenfell Street, Adelaide.

Gum did not have a kiln, but there were nearby arts supply shops in Adelaide, such as Clarkson Ltd. in Rundle Street and Sands and McDougall Pty. Ltd. in King William Street, that provided a firing service for china painters. Although Gum's preference was for traditional oil or watercolour landscape paintings, her china painting revealed a more adventurous spirit. Her interpretation of Art Deco influences, an interest in other cultures and, as previously mentioned, her interest in boat scenes, was shown in the painting of her Egyptian plate or plaque (figure 54). In this piece she included stylised figures of oarsmen on a boat, with a sense of movement through the water indicated by strong black zigzag lines. Representations of the lotus flower are in the foreground. It is signed 'M.E Gum' but undated. The colour scheme of blues and browns was a colour scheme that she often used in her china painting of the early 1930s, as they were also the colours of the Wilderness School where she was the art teacher and received commissions. She painted, in the same period and also using a blue and brown colour scheme, a small dish with a central stylised floral image surrounded by a very angular design outlined in black (figure 55). The use of black outlines was a popular aspect of South Australian china painting in that period.

Gum also experimented with other bold colours and strong geometrical designs on small pieces of china, which, like her Egyptian plaque, were quite a different concept to her naturalistic landscape paintings. Her small jug featured a robust design of red and yellow shapes with a bright green background and a black handle and was much more modern than her landscape paintings (figure 56).

She was also one of the few South Australian china painters who painted miniature landscapes on porcelain brooches. On one of her landscape brooches she painted a country cottage scene with a foreground of riotous pink, red, orange and yellow blooms beside the garden path (figure 57). It would have made a bold statement on the clothing of any woman who wore it. As she was a professional artist who had to support herself financially, it was not surprising that she also painted and exhibited dainty floral images on small dishes and double pink roses on porcelain brooches at low prices (figure 58). Such pieces were eminently saleable to women who might be a little short of ready cash for large paintings, but could afford small original pieces of petty china painting. This was especially so in the depressed economy of the early 1930s in South Australia. It is hardly surprising therefore, that male critics of the era and subsequent writers on the arts and crafts tended to overlook much South Australian china painting of the late 1920s and 1930s. It was primarily produced for a feminine, small niche market and was associated with the romanticism of double pink roses as symbols of love. The Adelaide climate suited rose growing, and most home gardens contained a rose bush which was cared for by the woman of the house.

Gum was an enthusiastic china painter and over the next few years regularly exhibited china painting, as well as oils and watercolours, in the South Australian Society of Arts Spring and Autumn exhibitions, and also in solo exhibitions, in some of which she included a small amount of china painting by one of her students. Although it enabled her student to gain public recognition, it served also as a subtle advertisement to viewers that Gum taught china

painting. For example on 28 November 1933 Gum exhibited oil paintings, watercolours and china painting in her exhibition on the fourth floor of Edments Building, Adelaide, and included china painting by her student Miss Dot Binks. Art critic Mr. H. Fuller commented that Gum had a distinct flair for gum trees, and represented the majesty of the Australian timber impressively and artistically, but then, regarding her china he said that, 'a particularly fine exhibit is a plaque with a conventional bird and tree design, but amongst so much good work, both in originality of design and charming colour, it is difficult to differentiate' (figure 59 adjacent to figure 61).²⁹

In her mixed media exhibition in the Colonial Mutual Life Building on 29 October 1935, Gum included pieces of her own china painting and that of her student Miss Thelma Jennings. Fuller's critical review of the exhibition stated that Gum's work was 'quite up to her usual standard of work' and favourably mentioned her plaques, vases, tea and salad sets. He also complimented Jennings on 'some attractive china' with 'birds very naturally painted'.³⁰ The *Advertiser* included a photo of a section of the exhibition.³¹

By 1938 the fashion for china painting had declined somewhat and Gum did not exhibit it as regularly nor in the same quantity, as she had previously in the annual exhibitions of the (Royal) South Australian Society of Arts. Nevertheless, she had another solo exhibition that was opened on 14 October 1938 by the Superintendent of Technical Education Dr. Charles Fenner, and she again included hand-painted china. Fuller once more reviewed her exhibition, observing that she seemed 'to have come under new influences since her last exhibition, as her work is decidedly stronger, especially in her landscapes'.³² Of her oils, he stated that *Sentinels by the Stream* stood out prominently. That painting was retained by Gum's family and later reproduced on the cover of the Gum family history *The Gum Tree Branches*. (See Appendix 11.) However, in his 1938 review of Gum's exhibition, Fuller barely mentioned her china painting, remarking only that she exhibited a large collection of

hand-painted china, 'in which conventional designs or floral motifs are very daintily executed'.

After the 1939-45 war, Gum's style of painting remained much the same as it had been in the 1930s and she ceased to exhibit china painting. In 1950 she combined with Miss Constance Archer, Miss May Grigg and Mr. Walter Wotzke in an exhibition of paintings that opened on 3 July in the Curzon Gallery, (Laubman and Pank), Gawler Place, Adelaide. Critic Ivor Francis, stated that the paintings hung well as a group of work, but that, 'in comparing their work one could say May Grigg is the most accomplished, Walter Wotzke most interesting, Maude Gum most limited, and Constance Archer has yet "to arrive".³³ Francis classified Maude Gum as 'a descendant, many generations removed, of the Corot-Hilder ideal, and presents emotive fragments in heavy sentimental vein'. Thus by 1950 Gum's style of landscape painting was deemed unfashionable. She was not influenced by the current trends of contemporary painting in the 1950s, and did not join in with some of the younger, more avant-garde members of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts such as Ivor Francis, Jacqueline Hick, Shirley Adams and David Dallwitz.

As early as 1942, a splinter group of those younger members, including critic Ivor Francis, and interstate artists such as Victorians Arthur Boyd and Noel Counihan, had formed the 'Associate Contemporary Group' within the Royal South Australian Society of Arts and mounted an exhibition *First Exposition*. Their art was more inclined to an expressive abstraction of human emotions rather than a faithful depiction of rural landscapes, and the catalogue contained reproductions of David Dallwitz's entry no. 32 *Girl Reading* and Arthur Boyd's (Victoria) entry no. 24 *Progression* (figure 60). The catalogue also contained an article that made the beliefs of the exhibiting artists very clear, stating, in upper case text, that 'AUSTRALIAN CULTURE HAS BEEN IMITATIVE. IT MUST NOW BECOME CREATIVE'. Members of the group believed that the conservative attitude and nose-in-the-

air dismissal of contemporary art by the authorities, who made no effort to find out what the modern artists were after, just would not do! Nor did the Associate Contemporary Group mince their words in the catalogue on the 'Position of Art in South Australia'. They pointed out:

Art in South Australia affords an excellent example of how a major means of creative expression can be rendered so useless when under the control of imitation and imitators ... (it) exerts a negative and detrimental influence through the spread of wrong conceptions ... Art in South Australia HAS been imitative. It has been a dummy art founded on imitation of the past; founded on limitations of the closest-to-nature-trick-techniques of Royal Academicians, or, a bit closer home, to the romantic discoverers of the Australian palette: Heysen-and-gum-trees; Streeton-and-panorama; resulting in popular-imitative-romantic watercolour after popular-imitative-romantic watercolour right round the lumbering walls of exhibitions.³⁴

The art of those young artists was indicative of the Modern trend of art in South Australia in the 1940s. It was certainly different to the type of paintings that the Society's elderly lady artists such as Gum, Norton and Hough produced and taught to the later generation of china painters. Nevertheless, although critics and certainly the above young moderns, might decree that Gum's type of romantic art was out of touch with contemporary trends, her work remained popular in some areas. Her art reached a wide audience of children and school teachers when her painting *Australian Gums* was reproduced by the South Australian Education Department on the cover of the June 1942 edition of *The Children's Hour* - a publication for students of grades V & VI in primary schools throughout the state. (See Appendix 12.)

In October 1966 she became a life member of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts. (See Appendix 13.) A selection of her paintings was later organised under the auspices of John Hogan at the Malvern Fine Art Gallery, Victoria, opening on 20 July 1969. It contained no china painting but a diverse range of Gum's paintings depicting scenes from King William Street Adelaide, to the Victorian rampians, to Sydney Harbour scenes.³⁵ Only a small amount of Gum's paintings appeared in exhibitions after 1969. In the year before her death,

she exhibited one watercolour *Scene, Blackwood* at \$18 in the February 1972 Open-Air exhibition organised by the *Advertiser* in Elder Park, Adelaide.

On 1 March 1976 at the Sydenham Gallery, Norwood SA, Ken and Rachel Biven curated an exhibition *Some forgotten ... some remembered*. The exhibition featured paintings by South Australian women artists and coincided with the launching of Rachel Biven's book, *Some forgotten ... some remembered*. In April 1976, the Bivens took the exhibition to the Hamilton Art Gallery, Victoria. Two of Gum's watercolours and one oil, no. 57 *Unloading* at \$300, were exhibited there (figure 61). Since then, her paintings have appeared in several exhibitions in the Kensington Gallery, Norwood, SA, such as the *Collectors Exhibition* 26 July 1981 and *The Early Women Artists of South Australia* exhibition in the same gallery in August 1992.

Few of Gum's paintings now appear in exhibitions or at auctions. Although Gum was a prolific artist; many of her paintings, especially of the Amyton area and around Nairne where the Gum family originally settled, remain in possession of numerous Gum family descendants. She was not inclined to sell a few of her favourite paintings, but preferred to keep them for her own home, or gift them to selected relatives. Nor would Gum consider donating any of either her paintings or her china painting to the Art Gallery of South Australia; as she told her sister-in-law Marjory Gum "Oh no. They would just put them away somewhere and never display them."³⁶ Her china painting is held by Gum family descendants and other private collections in Adelaide and rarely for sale.

Maude Gum's Teaching Career

The first reference to Gum's teaching career was her 1926 business card that showed her address as 8 Wellington Road, North Norwood and that she was a Fellow of the South

Australian Society of Arts, also had an A.L.C.M., and taught classes or by private tuition (figure 62).³⁷ A short notice at the end of the catalogue for Gum's 1926 solo exhibition, informed people of her home address and that she held outdoor sketching classes.

Included in her August 1934 solo exhibition catalogue was a notice that Gum's private address was now 13 Wellington Road, North Norwood and that she taught still life and china painting on Tuesdays in Miss May Grigg's studio Y.M.C.A. Buildings, 48 Grenfell Street.³⁸ As mentioned in an earlier chapter, a studio in the city was the fashion for established female artists of the time and was a good business decision. Public transport by bus or tram into the cultural centre of Adelaide around the North Terrace, Grenfell and Rundle Street area, was the most feasible way for prospective students to access art tuition in the 1920-30s, unless they lived near a suburban teacher who ran classes in a home studio. Much the same information was on Gum's business card of the 1930s, with a small amount of additional information that her art field encompassed oils, water colours and china painting (figure 63).

In 1930 when Gum and Grigg shared a studio in Grenfell Street, Adelaide, Grigg was the art teacher at the Misses Brown's Wilderness School at Medindie, a close northern suburb of Adelaide, but left that post at the end of 1930 to take up a new position in Victoria. Gum was then appointed to fill the position as art teacher at Wilderness School, starting in 1931 and remaining there until she retired at the end of 1955.

At Wilderness School in the 1940s, Gum also taught art as an examination subject for students to take at the end of the third year of secondary schooling.³⁹ The exams for this were set and marked by the School of Arts and Crafts and required exacting work in object drawing, plant drawing and coloured design work. Successful students were issued with the appropriate certificate by the Education Department – School of Arts and Crafts. (See Appendix 14.) The Wilderness school also provided further optional art classes under Miss

Gum, where she taught additional drawing skills such as portrait drawing and occasionally consented to do small perspective drawings in autographs books proffered to her (figure 64). She also painted small watercolours for the Misses Browns to present as art prizes each year such as *Piccadilly Valley* as the 1944 art prize (figure 65).

Although Gum did not teach china painting at Wilderness, some art students from there also attended her private china painting classes in her home studio in the Norwood area or in a separate room in the home of one of her close relatives.⁴⁰ As she did not own her own kiln, most students left their china painting to be fired at Sands and McDougall's stationary and art supply shop in King William Street, Adelaide. Gum was a firm teacher. No studies were placed in front of students for them to copy and as many of her students had already been through her drawing and sketching classes, preliminary freehand drawing of designs on china was mandatory.⁴¹ She continued to teach china painting privately until the late 1950s.⁴²

Gum's china painting was often commissioned by other teachers to present as prizes to their own classes. For example cups and saucers, plates or jugs on which Gum painted the Wilderness badge depicting a Lion Rampant, were especially popular. For personal wedding presents to old scholars, the Misses Brown themselves often commissioned a pair of cup and saucer sets with Gum's hand-painted Wilderness Lion Rampant on them (figure 66).⁴³ There can be encoded messages in china painting, as in many other forms of art, and the fact that the Latin motto 'Semper verus' entwined around the Lion Rampant translates as 'Always true', could carry a message to the couple who drank tea together after the marriage. Gum deliberately painted the logo on the side of the cup that would face a right-handed user and the wording would be understood by all old scholars of the school.

Nonetheless, Gum was not the only artist, teacher and exhibitor of the 1930s who influenced the renewed interest in the revival of china painting in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Gwynith Norton, Gum's fellow-artist of the 1920-30s, was probably better known than Gum as a private teacher of china painting in the 1940-50s and played a significant but short role in the 1960s revival.

Case Study: Gwynith Norton

Norton's early art training was in the Adelaide School of Art, where she studied drawing over several years, and her pencil work in the elementary class of studies from casts received mention in a review of the 1913 students' annual exhibition.⁴⁴ In the published results of the May 1916 exams of the School of Art, she was awarded a 'Good' pass in second grade model drawing and later in the August exams, a pass in first grade freehand.⁴⁵

Later, Norton enrolled in Ashton's Academy of Arts where, in December 1924 she was awarded the gold medal for her still life watercolour.⁴⁶ By that time she was a member of the South Australian Society of Arts and her painting, no. 108 *Onions* at one guinea, exhibited in the Society's September 1924 Spring Exhibition, attracted praise from a critic, who stated that she had 'handled blues successfully in her old enamelled saucerpan, and the sheen on the onions skins is good'.⁴⁷ In the October 1925 Spring Exhibition Norton exhibited a still life painting of pansies, but also exhibited china painting. Painting lustres on china blanks was becoming popular and Norton exhibited no. 221 *Blue Lustre Vase* at one guinea, and also exhibited a vase no. 222 on which she had painted a figure and which was priced at two guineas. Figures were not often used as subject matter by South Australian china painters at that time, and the fact that Norton did so, indicated her drawing skills.

From 1925 onwards, Norton continued to exhibit varying amounts of china painting, as well as paintings, in the South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions. Many catalogue entries of china painting by Norton and other china painters listed the item, for example a sweets dish, a

brooch, a coffee set, a trinket box, but often did not include details of the subject matter painted on the pieces. However Norton did include details of some paintings that indicated the fact that she had a specific market in mind for her work. For example, like Gum with her paintings of the Wilderness badge on selected pieces of china, Norton also china-painted items associated with a specific private college, in her case the private boys' school of Prince Alfred's College (PAC). In the 22 April 1926 Autumn Exhibition of the South Australian Society of Arts, Norton exhibited entry no. 134 a PAC cup and saucer at eleven shillings and sixpence, in the 26 September 1929 Spring Exhibition entry no. 186 PAC cufflinks, and in her solo exhibition of July 1930 a PAC cup and saucer. As Norton had attended James Ashton's Academy of Arts and, for many years, Ashton had also been art master at Prince Alfred's College, that association may have been her connection with that college.⁴⁸ Norton and Gum appeared to be the only South Australian china painters who exhibited works specifically associated with Adelaide private schools. It indicated both niche marketing skills used by those china painters, and also is an indication of the social class of many viewers of the South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions.

For Norton, china painting was just one of many media skills in her art practice. Although Norton exhibited twelve entries of china painting in the SA Society of Arts Spring Exhibition in October 1926, she also exhibited still life painting and a blue scarf and a brown shawl that showed knowledge of weaving. Her entries of china painting in that exhibition included, as entry no. 196, a nine-piece coffee set for six guineas. The other eleven entries included vases, trinket boxes, and other items including three brooches, one of which was a Satsuma brooch, that indicated Norton's familiarity with Japanese design and colour.

Norton continued to exhibit paintings in the Society of Arts exhibitions, but as china painting became increasingly popular in the late 1920s, she also exhibited an increasing number of pieces of her work on china. Moreover she applied her china painting skills to a far wider

range of items than did the other exhibitors. It was a business-like approach, and a move calculated to appeal to female viewers who enjoyed entertaining or purchasing jewellery. For example, in the SA Society of Arts Spring Exhibition of October 1927, Norton exhibited a tea strainer and basin, a wash tray, butter dish, serviette ring, beads, gold ring, brooch, trinket boxes, art pot and a powder set.⁴⁹ Although many of her entries did not include a description of the images painted on them, one entry did; no. 296 *Old Adelaide* plate at ten shillings and sixpence. It depicted an old gateway between two buildings, possibly near the Destitute Asylum (figure 67). The plate had a border of black lustre, and as the painting was in the centre of the plate, it would have been used as a display item, and not for use under food. Norton was evidently fond of the architecture of old buildings in Adelaide, as she exhibited several paintings of the buildings around the old destitute asylum in her subsequent 1930 exhibition.

On 2 July 1930, Norton had a solo exhibition, opened by Sir William Sowden, in the SA Society of Arts Gallery on North Terrace, Adelaide. The exhibition contained eight oil paintings, forty-four watercolours and seventy-four exhibits of china painting. Such a large amount of china painting involved an enormous amount of work. Some china painting exhibits catalogued as a single entry, in reality consisted of a number of items; no. 10 *Green Bridge Set* for three guineas consisted of four cups and four saucers; no. 28 *Coffee Set* for three pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence possibly consisted of at least four cups and saucers with perhaps a small jug and sugar basin. Other single entries that also contained many pieces of work were no. 64 *Heliotrope Tea Set* for two pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence and no. 48 *Brooch Earrings and Ring (mounted in gold)* at four pounds ten shillings. Not all entries of china painting mentioned the subject matter painted on the china, though no. 44 *Brooch (Roses)* showed that Norton was well aware of the popularity of double roses on china. Although Venner, Gum and other china painters of the 1920-30s favoured double pink

or ruby red roses on brooches, Norton often painted double yellow roses on her brooches (figure 68). She also painted double yellow roses on coffee cups and saucers (figure 69).

The *Register* critic reported of that 1930 solo exhibition ‘the painting on china has special daintiness in finish and charm in colour. There is a variety of examples’.⁵⁰ The *Advertiser* critic stated that, amongst the china paintings, there were ‘some exquisite works of art, a green bridge set, and a coffee set being outstanding. Especially attractive are a set of spoons and a heliotrope tea set’.⁵¹ A notice at the end of Norton’s 1930 solo exhibition catalogue advised that she held day and evening classes (although the subjects were not mentioned) in room 24, Paringa Building, Hindley Street, Adelaide and that her private address was Main Street, Henley Beach.

By 1932 the catalogue of the SA Society of Arts Spring Exhibition in September contained a large notice that Norton taught china painting four times a week in her studio in Paringa Building (figure 70). A critic, reviewing the 1932 Spring Exhibition noted that, ‘Gwynith Norton has also some china work, well designed and coloured ...’.⁵² Norton’s advertisement regarding her china painting classes was timely. In the 1932 Spring Exhibition catalogue, the section titled ‘Craftwork’ listed a considerable number of entries by many china painters, which was an indication of the popularity of china painting at that time. Norton provided a good choice of class times for potential students.

Norton continued to regularly exhibit china painting once or twice a year in the Society of Arts exhibitions throughout the 1930s, with her work often drawing brief but complimentary comments from critics. However her output had dropped considerably, and by the Spring Exhibition of 1937 she exhibited only four pieces of china. In the 1940s she almost ceased exhibiting china painting, except for one entry of a trinket box for fifteen shillings in the Autumn Exhibition of April 1942.

Nevertheless, Norton continued to teach china painting in her studio in Paringa Building. Two of her students, Margaret Davey and Necia Birch, were subsequently involved with the revival of china painting in South Australia in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Miss Margaret Davey, born in 1915 in Laura, South Australia, was a teacher and demonstrator in the Biology Department at the University of Adelaide in 1939, when she heard about Norton and china painting from a friend. As Davey wanted a relaxing but interesting hobby, she joined one of Norton's china painting classes in the Paringa Building in 1939-40.⁵³

Although Davey had previously studied still life painting in the School of Arts and Crafts, Norton ignored such skills and taught china painting to her students by placing in front of them, a picture that they copied by first drawing it onto the china. They then painted over the drawing using the traditional techniques of china paints mixed with fat oil and turpentine. Norton did not have a kiln in her city studio, but took the china to her home at Henley Beach where she fired it, then brought it back by the next lesson. It usually took three firings to complete a piece. However Davey also had skills in clay modelling and soon modelled garden flowers such as hollyhocks, daffodils and anemones, using clay from Bennett's Pottery. Norton then glazed and fired the models before returning them to Davey for china painting (figure 71).

Those modelling and painting skills became very useful for Davey's work in the university during the 1939-45 war. Wax models from Czechoslovakia were used for teaching and demonstrating biology, but tended to melt in summer heat and became impossible to obtain during the war. Davey's skills were known within the University, so she was asked to make biology models from clay, have them fired, then appropriately colour them with china painting. Although some fine modelling work depicting blood vessels involved wire within

the clay and would not stand firing, overall the clay modelling, firing and china painting processes were successful. Some of those models, such as the human embryo, are still held within the University of Adelaide (figure 72).⁵⁴ Davey maintained an interest in china painting and was associated with the formation of the first organisation of china painters in South Australia in the 1960s, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Mrs Necia Birch (nee Staehr, born in 1922) was always interested in drawing and art, and as a young woman had private lessons in still life painting from Maude Gum without realising that Gum also taught china painting.⁵⁵ During the 1939-45 war Birch trained as a kindergarten and primary school teacher while teaching in a small Anglican school and subsequently became a kindergarten teacher at Girton, another private school for girls in Adelaide. In 1956 Birch became interested in china painting and had lessons from Gwynith Norton at Henley Beach for a year or so till Norton died.

Birch, like Davey, was also skilled in drawing before she started china painting under Norton, but also found that Norton merely put studies down in front of her, taught Birch how to mix the china paints with fat oil and turpentine and made her copy the studies. The first piece of china painting that Birch did under Norton was a copy of a study of pansies. However, Birch does not know if the study she copied was Norton's own painting of pansies, that Norton exhibited in the 1925 Spring Exhibition of the South Australian Society of Arts. Birch commented that Norton taught a soft style of china painting that required several paintings and firings to finish the piece. However by 1956 Norton did not do any firing for her students. Consequently Birch had to locate someone with a kiln, which is how she met Mrs Ada Hough who owned a kiln, and provided a firing service for china painters. After Norton's death, Birch studied china painting for a short time under Olive Atkinson, who had a kiln.⁵⁶ Like Norton, Atkinson merely put studies in front of her students and told them to copy the study. However Atkinson was an oil painter and taught her students to apply a

heavier layer of china paint for each firing, than had been the custom under Norton. Birch stated that, while she was a student under them, neither Norton nor Atkinson made their students paint from still life, nor did they require students to keep sketch books. That differed from Gum's method of teaching, where students usually painted from either their sketch books or from still life, and original work was expected.

Case Study: Ada Hough

Fanny Ada Hough (nee Drew, 1881-1973) was one of a family of six girls and three boys (figure 73). She was interested in art from an early age, but there is no record from whom, or where, she received tuition in painting and china painting.⁵⁷ However by 1915 her paintings were of a sufficient standard to pass the Federal Exhibition's selection committee and five of Ada Drew's paintings were exhibited in the eighteenth Federal Exhibition in 1915, two paintings in the 1916 Federal Exhibition and two in the 1917 Federal Exhibition. In c. 1918 she married Corporal Arthur Hough of the Australian Imperial Force, 43rd Battalion, who suffered battle injuries in France.⁵⁸ After marriage, Ada continued her membership in the South Australian Society of Arts for several more years.⁵⁹ She also exhibited seven of her oil paintings depicting Australian landscapes, flowers, fruit, still life and one painting on silk, in the *All-Australian Peace Exhibition* in 1920.⁶⁰ After that exhibition, she dropped out of the art scene as their son William was born in 1921, and family responsibilities took up all her time.

However in 1933 Hough again became an active member of the South Australian Society of Arts, exhibiting five entries of china painting that included three brooches titled *Roses*, *Japanese* and *Gretchen*, a fruit bowl, and a set of six cups saucers and plates in the 1933 Spring Exhibition. In the SA Society of Arts 19 April 1934 *Autumn Exhibition of Paintings and Craftwork*, Hough exhibited another three brooches at one guinea each and also no. 161

Vase for two guineas. The critic commented that ‘Mrs Hough has a delightful vase, no. 161’.⁶¹ From then on, Hough concentrated on her china painting, exhibiting it in at least one of the South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions for the next ten years or so.

Her best china painting was produced during the 1930s, when her work showed influence of the Art Deco style, albeit in the manner adapted by many South Australian china painters. Art Deco influenced china painters to use various lustres and to draw outlines a round conventionalised bright floral designs. Hough’s china painting in the 1930s exemplified her imaginative use of such practices, but unfortunately, she rarely dated her china painting. Nor, as was the case with most catalogue entries for china painting, was there an indication of the artwork on many of her exhibits, although occasionally the over-all colour scheme was indicated.

Hough’s signed green bowl is probably the one she exhibited as entry no. 99 *Green Bowl* for one guinea in the April 1937 Autumn Exhibition of the (since 1936 Royal) South Australian Society of Arts.⁶² The inside of the bowl has a background of brilliant, reflective green lustre, against which Hough painted dragonflies in mother-of-pearl lustre and used liquid bright gold around the rim of the bowl and to delineate the dragonflies (figure 74). The outside of the bowl is covered with iridescent yellow lustre. The overall effect is of shimmering moving light, suggestive of the flight of dragonflies over water. Hough painted the inside of another similar-shaped bowl with dark blue lustre. It effectively surrounds, and contrasts with, the six stylised, multi-coloured groups of blooms that she outlined with liquid bright gold lustre. She painted the outside of this bowl with copper-bronze lustre (figure 75). Other examples of her lustre work show that she did not confine her china painting to meticulous, realistic work but also experimented with bright colour and abstract shapes. A small signed vase by Hough has a sweep of orange lustre brushed loosely over the bottom half of a small vase, then pale blue and yellow lustres were dribbled down from the rim and allowed to mingle. After firing,

Hough then applied random pen work with liquid bright gold to emphasise areas where the blue and yellow lustres met and mingled (figure 76).

Other pieces of Hough's china painting reflect her attention to a more traditional approach of painting, such as her painting of a Middle East scene with buildings, minaret, spires and figures (figure 77). The shoulder of the plate/plaque is covered with green lustre that has fired with a pink tinge in some areas.⁶³ China painting that depicted scenes on the centres of plates, especially if lustre work was also added, was not intended for practical use on a dining table, and was sometimes described as 'plaques' which suggested the piece was to be hung on a wall or displayed. It is likely that this plate was no. 97 *Plaque* in the same exhibition as her *Green Bowl*. No price was listed in the catalogue for *Plaque*, which indicated that Hough did not wish to sell the piece. Hough did in fact refuse to sell some of her best pieces, preferring to keep them for herself.⁶⁴

By the early 1940s Hough was experimenting in a different style of painting again. A small piece signed by her and dated 1941, was in a looser, more painterly style and depicted a sailing vessel in stormy seas (figure 78). There is no evidence that she exhibited that item, as her one exhibition entry in 1941 was no. 91 *Tea Set* for three pounds in the 24 April Autumn Exhibition. In the following years Hough's entries in the Royal South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions decreased in number, and the items indicated a more domestic tendency as her exhibits included a teapot, hot water jug and a morning tray. A small jug on which she painted Gouldian finches would fit neatly on a morning tray, be eminently useful as a milk jug alongside a small teapot and was probably painted about that time (figure 79). The finches and the grass setting that Hough painted are reminiscent of Neville Cayley's paintings of Australian finches that were popular in the 1930-40s.⁶⁵

In the Royal South Australian Society of Arts 1944-45 annual report, she was listed as living at Watson Avenue, Toorak Gardens, Adelaide, and was an Associate of the Society. The years of 1944 and 1945 were traumatic for Hough. Her only child, William Hough, a pilot officer in the Air Force, was killed in the crash of a Royal Air Force Stirling Bomber over France during the night of 15 August 1944;⁶⁶ and her husband Arthur Hough died 25 April 1945. The effect of those losses seems profound, and the last time that she exhibited china painting was in the April 1945 Autumn Exhibition, when she entered a vase and a cup set, although the number of pieces in the set was not stated.

Nevertheless, although she ceased exhibiting, Hough did not cease china painting, but continued her practice as a private professional. She turned to her family network and relations for emotional support and painted many pieces of china for them as a form of social networking which will be further explored in a later chapter. It is also likely that Hough taught small classes privately in her home studio at Toorak.⁶⁷ As Hough provided a firing service for other china painters, she knew of the resurgence of interest in china painting and was aware of the American influence and use of studies for painting double pink roses, and made attempts to keep up with the trends of china painting in the 1960s.⁶⁸

Birch remembers taking her china painting to Hough for firing and asking, when she returned to collect it, if Mrs Hough thought it looked 'alright'.⁶⁹ However Hough would not be drawn into commenting, but replied that she never 'looked' at anybody's work. Birch thought, at the time, that it was rather a cheeky reply. However later, when Birch had her own kiln and fired work for students, she found that she too, gave the same reply to them; the time for a critique of students' work was in class, and not at the kiln. Hough was happy to talk generally on china painting with Birch, and gave the impression that she was glad to have such a visitor. Sadly, Hough developed a loss of eye and hand coordination and entered a nursing home some years before her death in 1973.

Conclusion

The women discussed in this chapter all played a part in bridging the gap between the demise of china painting as one of several skills held by professional artists in South Australia up to the 1940-50s, and its revival as an enjoyable form of hobbyist craft for a new generation of non-professional artists in the 1960s. Nevertheless, Gum, Norton and Hough did not embrace the modernistic trends of professional Australian artists who exhibited in the *First Exposition* exhibition of 1942. Instead, in their roles as bridging teachers and practitioners of china painting, they promulgated art to their students that was based on a conservative, faithful reproduction of the natural world, especially floral imagery. Some of those students subsequently became exhibitors and teachers of china painting in the 1960-80s.

There is a scarcity of information regarding how china painting was ‘kept a live’ in other Australian states between the late 1940s till the revival of the 1960s. As Grace Cochran stated in her seminal research on the Australian craft movement, ‘the years 1945-55 are often called the dead decade for the arts in Australia, largely because conservative opposition to contemporary efforts was supported by the establishment ...’.⁷⁰ It is difficult to find evidence that the situation in other Australian states regarding the conservative influence on china painting was different to that in South Australia. A publication by the Victorian Guild of China Painters includes photographs of their historical collection with brief biographical details of the relevant artists. Of the fifty-five china painters represented, only one, the Victorian teacher Ethel May Burrows (1882-1976), was mentioned as painting in the 1950s, namely, ‘in 1954 Ethel was still painting on the Limoges porcelain imported by her grandfather in 1877’.⁷¹ Adjacent photographs of her work show her meticulous skill, but very conservative subject matter. The item painted in the late 1950s, pictured in the same article, shows a lidded box with a thatched English cottage surrounded by traditional garden flowers. It is highly likely that it was a copied painting. Flora Landells with her penchant for painting Australian wildflowers, was an influence on Western Australian china painters, as will be

discussed in the next chapter. In New South Wales, multi-skilled artist and teacher Ethel Atkinson (1887-1991) gave up china painting in 1949.⁷² Although some of her former students were probably still china painting in the 1950s, research to date has not revealed useful relevant information on them, or how they may have influenced the practice of china painting in the mid 1960s.

Maude Gum taught as a professional art teacher in several private secondary schools in South Australia, where she prepared students for art and design exams set by the Education Department of South Australia. She also conducted art classes in a private professional capacity, and her influence on how to look at, and understand china painting, was the initial impetus for this thesis.⁷³ As a result of tuition by Gum, the author taught china painting in Broken Hill at various times from the mid 1960s to the late 1980s, became a member of the New South Wales branch of the International Porcelain Art Teachers Inc. and actively participated in many of the Australian conferences as a demonstrator and exhibitor.

When Ada Hough was a private professional, she provided an essential firing service to china painters at a time when kilns were a scarce commodity. Without a kiln there can be no china painting. Hough not only provided friendship and encouragement for Birch to continue china painting, but when Birch started teaching china painting, Hough fired the students' work.

Professional artist Gwynith Norton's initial teaching resulted in Necia Birch becoming a leading teacher of china painting in South Australia, and one of the driving forces behind the formation of a Teacher's Guild in that state and the South Australian China Painters' Association. Norton made her students learn by copying the work of others, and this practice became firmly entrenched in subsequent South Australian china painting.

How china painting emerged as a very popular art/craft in South Australia and how Birch was involved in a liaison with many leading American china painters, will be explored in the next chapter.

¹ Ray Gum, *Life Story of Maude Gum. F.R.S.A.* Unpublished document. Ray Gum (dec.) was a brother of Maude Gum. Amyton was a staunchly Methodist community and the school was at that time conducted in the Methodist church. Maude was active in most of the church activities. The author holds a photocopy of Ray Gum's 2-page document, compiled and written 4 June 1976 and given to her in August 1992 by Ray Gum's son Basil (dec.). Conversation with Maude Gum's great-nephew, Dennis Gum, July 2007 confirmed many facts regarding the conditions experienced on those early farms. Amyton is situated north of Goyder's Line and many farms in that area faced financial stringencies because of droughts.

² Ray F. Gum, *Artist. Maude E. Gum. F.R.S.A. A.LCM.* Unpublished document compiled and written by Ray F. Gum, 43 Barker Road, Prospect, South Australia 10 October 1970 and counter-signed by Maude E. Gum March, 1971. A photocopy of this document is in the author's possession. The original is held within the Archives of the Wilderness School, Adelaide

³ Dennis Gum, *The Gum Tree Branches*, The Gum Reunion Committee, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, 1988, pp. 99-102. The section on Maude Gum is based on much of the research written by Ray Gum.

⁴ Allan Sierp, 'Ashton, James (1859-1935)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography vol. 7 1891*, p. 109-10. Ashton arrived in Adelaide in 1884, became art master at Prince Alfred College, Adelaide in 1885, and established the Norwood Art School in 1886. He returned to England in 1895 and took lessons under marine painter Henry Moore, before returning to Adelaide and establishing Ashton's Academy of Arts in 1896.

⁵ Education column, 'Ashton's Academy of Arts', *Advertiser*, Saturday 11 April 1896, p. 3.

⁶ Royal South Australian Society of Arts archives. Ivor Francis, 'James Ashton, R.S.A., R.D.S. – was this your life?', *Kalori Vol. 17, no. 2*, June 1979, p. 9.

⁷ James Ashton, 'The Art Class', *Prince Alfred Chronicle, Vol. 5 – no. 49*, 1 July 1896, no page number stated. From the archives of Prince Alfred College, Adelaide.

⁸ Dennis Gum, p. 99. In an interview by the author with Dennis Gum July 2007, the whereabouts and title of this painting are now unknown.

⁹ 'Mr. James Ashton's Studio. A Happy Gathering', *Register*, Tuesday 19 December 1922, p. 8

¹⁰ 'Art in London. Successes of Adelaide students.' *Advertiser*, 30 May 1923, p. 10.

¹¹ Dennis Gum, p. 100. This page features a rather blurred photograph of the painting.

¹² 'Miss Gum's Exhibition. Opened by Sir William Sowden.', *Register*, Saturday 4 September 1926, p. 7.

¹³ 'Mr. James Ashton's Studio. Annual prize-giving.', *Advertiser*, 18 December 1924, p. 6.

¹⁴ 'The Social Round', *Register* 19 February 1925, p. 3. Gum family's own archives. Newspaper clipping.

¹⁵ Title attributed by author.

¹⁶ Title attributed by author. In July 2007 the author was privileged to view nineteen watercolours and oils by Gum held in two private collections of the Gum family descendants. The difference between her early oils and her later watercolour landscapes was very marked. The term 'low key' refers to a predominance of darks in a painting, as in her early oils. The term 'high key' refers to many whites and light greys in a painting, as in many of her watercolours.

¹⁷ The earliest surviving record that the author could find of her membership in the South Australian Society of Arts was in the *Society of Arts Leger 1908-1919* where, in the subscribers' list, the author noted an entry that she paid ten shillings on 30 July 1920. SA Society of Arts catalogues show she exhibited in 1920, 1921, 1922.

¹⁸ The author has viewed another brooch on which Gum china painted a rural scene with a creek and a small boy sailing a boat in the water by a stone bridge, as he is watched –over by a woman wearing an apron. A house is in the distant background. It epitomises a caring rural mother.

¹⁹ Title attributed by the author. Other members of the Gum family owned farms in the Adelaide Hills.

²⁰ Title attributed by the author.

²¹ 'Pleasing Landscapes. Art of Miss Gum.' Paper not noted, this article was dated 2-9-1926 and pasted in the Gum family archives, loose pages.

²² Louise Brown, Beatrix Ch: de Crespigny, Mary Harris, Kathleen Thomas & Phebe Watson (eds) *A Book of South Australia. Women in the First Hundred Years*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1936. Gum's painting is facing p. 62. A painting by Gum's friend Leila McNamara, with whom Gum travelled to NSW, is above Gum's painting on the same page. The book was published for the Women's Centenary Council of S.A.

- ²³ ‘An Art Exhibition’, *Advertiser*, Friday 10 September 1926, p. 10.
- ²⁴ Gum had exhibited just a few pieces of china painting in a Society of Arts exhibition earlier in 1931.
- ²⁵ ‘Gratitude for Living Artists. Plea at Exhibition Opening.’, *Advertiser*, Thursday 29 October 1931, p. 8.
- ²⁶ ‘Maude E. Gum’s Paintings’, *Advertiser*, Wednesday 28 October 1931, p. 8.
- ²⁷ It is now in the art collection of the *Wilderness* although no sales receipt is with it, so the actual date of purchase can not be ascertained. As far as the author can check from Gum’s catalogues, it was the only delphinium brooch she ever exhibited.
- ²⁸ Jeanette Eames, ‘Tribute to the late May Grigg’, *Brush & Palette*, June 1969, pp. 3, 4. May Grigg was a member of the South Australian China Painters Association formed in 1965, but did not take an active role in the 1960s revival of china painting.
- ²⁹ ‘Landscape Studies and China’, *Advertiser*, Tuesday 28 November 1933, p. 10.
- ³⁰ ‘Oils, Water Colors and China. Exhibition to be Opened Today’, *Advertiser*, 29 October 1935, p. 11.
- ³¹ ‘An attractive section of the picture and china painting exhibition...’, *Advertiser*, 31 October 1935, p. 12.
- ³² ‘Water Colors, Oils and China. Miss Maude Gum’s Exhibition’, *Advertiser*, 13 October 1938, p. 10.
- ³³ ‘Group art exhibition’, *News*, Tuesday 4 July 1950, p. 4.
- ³⁴ Catalogue *First Exposition. Royal S.A. Society of Arts Associate Contemporary Group*. Art Gallery of South Australia archives. Artists exhibiting in this exhibition included Violet Buttrose and Charmian Kimber both of whom had studied china painting in the SA School of Arts and Crafts, Shirley Adams, Jacqueline Hick, Jeff Smart, Sali Herman, Douglas Roberts, James Gleeson, David Dallwitz and a host of others from SA, Victoria and NSW.
- ³⁵ No. 1 *King William Street, Adelaide* at \$150; no.10 *The Murray* at \$60; no. 11 *The Grampians* at \$85; and Sydney scenes such as no. 24 *Lane Cove Boatshed, Sydney* at \$150; no. 26 *Pinchgut, Sydney Harbour* at \$125.
- ³⁶ Personal communication to the author from Marjory Gum, wife of Ray Gum and sister-in-law of Maude, at Barker Road, Prospect, 20 August 1992. Marjory’s son Basil, photocopied much of the Gum family’s file on Maude Gum and gave the copies to the author for research.
- ³⁷ Gum studied elocution under Mr. Edward Reeves, but there is no evidence that she went on to teach elocution, or that she used the millinery skills that she acquired c. 1908 in Perth.
- ³⁸ It appears that the studio remained known as May Grigg’s Studio, although Grigg was by then senior art mistress in the Ballarat Art School, Victoria.
- ³⁹ This was called the Intermediate Certificate, and by then most students had reached an age when they could, if they wished, leave school and seek employment.
- ⁴⁰ Interview by the author with Basil Gum, August 1992. Basil was Maude Gum’s nephew and the son of Ray and Marjory Gum. As a young boy in his parents’ house, he remembered being told to “Be Quiet! Your Auntie Maude is teaching here today!”
- ⁴¹ The author makes this statement from personal experience as a student in Gum’s 1947 classes.
- ⁴² The author’s conversation with Gum in 1958.
- ⁴³ Interview by the author with Jeanette Chapman (nee Chennell), Perseverance Road, Tea Tree Gully, on 12 February 1998. She was a student at Wilderness School in the early 1940s and was awarded, as a music prize, a plate with the Wilderness logo china-painted by Gum. Her sister was given a pair of Gum’s china-painted Wilderness logo cups and saucers by the Misses Brown as a wedding gift.
- ⁴⁴ ‘Adelaide School of Art. Students’ Annual Exhibition’, *Register*, Friday 23 May 1913, p. 9.
- ⁴⁵ Undated newspaper clippings pasted in the Jessamine Buxton file, South Australian School of Art. It is not clear if the year was 1915 or 1916; Norton’s year of birth is, so far, unavailable, and the exact year of her death has proved difficult to find. The author of this thesis believes she was born in the 1890s and died in the late 1950s.
- ⁴⁶ ‘Mr. James Ashton’s Studio. Annual Prize-giving’, *Advertiser*, 18 December 1924, p. 6.
- ⁴⁷ ‘South Australian Art. Annual Spring Exhibition’, *Advertiser*, Friday 12 September 1924, p. 15.
- ⁴⁸ Further information regarding a Norton family member’s connection with the college is hard to find.
- ⁴⁹ Catalogue of *South Australian Society of Arts Spring Exhibition* 6 October 1927, p. 19. Norton exhibited four paintings in this exhibition, but there is no indication if they were oils or watercolours. China painting was included in the ‘Craft Work’ section where Norton’s entries were nos 286-297 inclusive. Most of her prices were under one pound and slightly less than the items by other china painters. China beads were available for china painting and small round or oval white porcelain blanks could be china-painted and set into gold rings, although such items were uncommon in that era. However such beads and rings became popular in the 1970-80s revival of china painting.
- ⁵⁰ ‘Oils, Watercolours, and Painting on China. Exhibition by Miss G. Norton’, *Register News-Pictorial*, 2 July 1930, p. 8.
- ⁵¹ ‘Exhibition of Paintings. Art of Gwynith Norton’, *Advertiser*, Wednesday 2 July, 1930, p. 5.
- ⁵² ‘Society of Arts Exhibition. Higher Standard at Spring Show’, *Advertiser*, Thursday 22 September 1932, p. 12.
- ⁵³ Interview by the author with Margaret Davey, 16 March 2002 when she lived at 183 Payneham Road, St. Peters. SA. The information regarding Davey in this chapter is from her March 2002 interview.

⁵⁴ This particular model was exhibited in the exhibition *Public Moments, Private Lives: Costume from the Davey Family*, mounted in the Migration Museum, Adelaide, March 2002.

⁵⁵ Interview by the author with Necia Birch, 9/125 Montacute Road, Campbelltown SA, on 12 January 1998 and on 30 August 2004. The information regarding Birch in this chapter is from both interviews, but Birch was a little hazy regarding the exact dates for some events.

⁵⁶ Birch thought Norton died a year or so after 1956, and that Olive Atkinson's china painting classes also lasted for only a year or two. The author was unable to obtain more accurate dates. Birch went to both teachers with a friend, Antoinette Miller, who, in 2007, was in a Nursing Home at Hahndorf. The author contacted Miller but she was also not sure of dates.

⁵⁷ Interview by the author with Mrs Joan Drew, Vale Park, Adelaide, 14 March 2003. The author has looked closely at many pieces of Ada Hough's work and the standard indicates that she possibly attended an art school for several terms at least, but her name (Drew or Hough) does not appear in any School of Design Students' Exhibition. It is possible, but can not be proved, that she may have attended Ashton's Academy of Arts for a term or so.

⁵⁸ SLSA PRG 1055 Hough File. The file was donated to the Mortlock Library by Mrs. Joan Drew. Her husband Murray Drew was a nephew of Ada Hough and Joan found the records in a box in a garage after her husband's death. Although army records are beyond the scope of this thesis, the Hough file makes very interesting reading and provides background information to events in Ada Hough's life that probably influenced her art life. The Hough file contains Arthur Hough's Australian Imperial Force pay book in the 1914-18 war, his Field Medical Card, his AIF Trench warfare and grenade school certificate for A/Sgt A Hough and a hand-written letter on Buckingham Palace notepaper, dated 1918 and signed 'George R.I.', wishing him 'God-speed, a safe return to happiness and joy of home life with an early restoration to health ...'. There is no recorded date of Arthur and Ada's marriage in this file.

⁵⁹ RSASA archives. Royal South Australian Society of Arts Leger, 1908-1919. In the subscribers section, Ada Hough paid ten shillings on 31 December 1919, and ten shillings on 2 September 1920. (These were the fees for associate membership.)

⁶⁰ SLSA Z Per.607.34 I 42a. Catalogue. Hough entered paintings into Group 1. Fine Arts, Classes 401, 406, 407 and also exhibited a painting on silk in Class 493. Her address was 22 Euston Terrace, Croyden.

⁶¹ 'Art Exhibition. Some of Today's Pictures', *Advertiser*, Thursday 19 April 1934, p. 12.

⁶² The author checked many catalogues of the South Australian Society of Arts Autumn and Spring Exhibitions of the 1920-40s exhibitions and, although it is impossible to be 100% accurate, this was the only exhibition catalogue in which Hough's entries mentioned a green bowl.

⁶³ This plate had multiple firings and the pink spots, that give rather a 'painterly effect' to the plate, can indicate a 'hot spot' in her kiln. The plate, once in the author's personal collection, is now in the historic collection of the Porcelain Art Centre, Buttery reserve, Norwood, and has been subject to close scrutiny by many china painters who have electric kilns. Hough's kiln in the 1930s was probably a gas kiln. The discussion of firings and technical details are outside the parameters of this thesis, but they are, nevertheless, an important component of china painting.

⁶⁴ Phone Interview by the author with Mrs Phyl Branson, 24 June 2005. Phyl Branson was Ada Hough's niece and was married in 1936. Branson stated her husband wanted to buy the 'plate with an Egyptian scene' but Ada Hough would not sell it. Entry 97 in the 1937 exhibition was the only piece of china painting by Hough that was ever catalogued as a plaque. After Hough's death the plaque/plate eventually came into possession of her great-niece Judy Evans, from whom the author obtained it.

⁶⁵ The first edition of Neville Cayley's illustrated book on Australian birds *What Bird is That?* was published in 1931.

⁶⁶ SLSA PRG 1055 Hough File. It is not clear if Pilot officer Hough was in the RAF or the RAAF. The file contains a letter on note paper 'Commonwealth of Australia Department of Air' with details of his medals and awards for 'services with Armed Forces Second World War 1939/45'. The file makes for very poignant but interesting reading. Families of the aircrew killed in the crash contacted each other after the event and seemed to be English families. The Houghs were evidently English, as Arthur Hough's closest relative in 1916 when he was in the AIF was his brother Ernest who lived in Manchester, England. In the file is a letter, in French, to 'Chere Madame Hough' dated 21 October 1951 from a person who witnessed the crash as the aircraft was flying low, was hit by anti-aircraft fire, crashed, exploded and the crew was incinerated. The writer stated that he/she had put roses and chrysanthemums on Bill's tomb and ended the letter with 'do not worry about the tomb of your child. I regard it as if it belonged to me. With my most sincere sentiments and affection, J Cazale'. The file also contains other letters and records of the crash of that aircraft and they must have affected Ada Hough greatly.

⁶⁷ Interview by the author with Mrs Judy Evans, Flinders Park, Adelaide, 5 June 2005. Ada Hough was her great-aunt and Evans remembers visiting her as a child, admiring the array of colourful china in the house and the smell of the china painting oils, as 'Great-Aunt Ada' kept on with her painting in the 1950s. However neither Evans, Drew nor Branson actually saw Hough teaching china painting, although they think she did teach. There are no surviving paper records of Hough's teaching activities.

⁶⁸ When the author called to interview Judy Evans in 2005, a dining table was covered with pieces of Ada Hough's china painting for inspection. The author recognised many of the double pink roses as copies of American studies being pushed onto the Australian market in the 1960s. Hough may have closely observed such roses when she fired for South Australian china painters in the early 1960s, or she may have purchased some of the American studies herself.

⁶⁹ Birch, interview 12 January 1998.

⁷⁰ Grace Cochrane, *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, NSW, 1992, p. 60.

⁷¹ 'Ethel May Burrows', *Victorian Guild of China Painters: The Historical Collection 2004*, published by the Victorian Guild of China Painters, Burwood, Victoria, 2004, p. 14.

⁷² Alisa de Torres, 'Pottery and Handpainted Porcelain', *Australian Decorative Arts*, Trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1991, p. 7.

⁷³ In 1947 the author had one year's tuition in china painting in Gum's home studio before embarking on a different professional career.

Introduction

Since the last decade of the nineteenth century, there were women in South Australia who practised china painting in the privacy of their home. Some, such as Miss Palmer before she was engaged to teach china painting in the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art in 1906, practised as a private professional in her home, painting commissions such as wedding gifts, and teaching a few pupils. However most women who learnt china painting in such small, private classes, tended to view china painting as an accomplishment, and continued the practice of china painting intermittently, without the intention of selling or teaching. When interest in china painting declined in the late 1940s, few private professional teachers remained active. As a result, by the early 1960s, china painting was mostly an unknown form of decorative art or craft to the emerging group of young women who were either married or at the marriageable age. However a meteoric revival in the popularity of china painting occurred in the mid 1960s, and by the end of the 1960s, one visiting American teacher estimated there were about 700 china painters in South Australia.

There were several contributing factors to this increase of interest in china painting in the 1960s, which occurred around the time of increased prosperity in the state. By the 1960s, South Australian culture and social customs had changed in many aspects from the situation during the depression of the late 1920s and 1930s. As will be discussed in this chapter, after the Second World War, women had wider choices in education and career structures, but they also had the option of relinquishing any career and paid employment after marriage. Such women, predominantly of the affluent middle-class, chose to retain the traditional conservative feminine role and enjoyed a life of domesticity, respectability and service to others, while being financially supported by their husbands. Most of them had some spare time in which to pursue personal interests in, for example, the arts and crafts. Nevertheless, their marriage and children came first, and they did not, initially, envisage becoming professionals within their chosen outside interests. I will point out in this chapter that most of

the new students and practitioners of china painting emerged from this cohort of women. Although they might well fit the earlier definition of 'public amateurs', the terms of 'amateur' and 'polite accomplishment' did not necessarily hold the same meaning in the 1960s, as they had in the early nineteenth century. In the 1960s and onwards, it was appropriate to list people's leisure activities that they enjoyed and conducted outside their professional career or working life, as 'hobbies'. Likewise the definition of 'professional' was layered. Although a 'professional artist' could denote a low social class occupation in the early nineteenth century, it underwent changes as formal training in various art schools became available near the time of Federation and thereafter. During the twentieth century, 'professional artist' carried notions of approbation, an indication of some type of formal art training, and by the last decades of the twentieth century, it was immaterial whether a professional artist practised privately or publicly, or even if it were his/her sole financial means of support.

Nevertheless, in the 1960s there were problems in locating teachers with the required skills in china painting, let alone having the additional training in drawing and design as had been the case in the School of Arts and Crafts. Two South Australian women, Necia Birch and Valda Ellis were in the forefront of the Australia-wide revival of china painting in the 1960s. Although neither had received an extensive formal education in art, each possessed organisational abilities, innate drawing skills, and had teaching experience in other areas. I will show how Birch and Ellis tackled problems of supplies and sought out, and were influenced by, American china painting teachers. As the numbers of South Australian china painters increased, they looked not at South Australian art schools for guidance, but at American china painters as the leaders in the field, although most of those Americans had not been educated at an art school. I argue that the type of student attracted in South Australia, and the American influence, was the major factor as to why china painting diminished in status and became a social hobby practised by married, middle-class women, instead of the more professional art/craft standing it had reached before the Second World War.

The Post Second World War Years and Middle-class Social Culture

Although women had certainly emerged from the home and entered public life in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century, wider opportunities appeared during the Second World War. Many Australian women played a role in the war effort. Some took on volunteer work such as fund-raising; others replaced male workers on farms and other traditionally-male occupations; joined women's services, or worked in war-orientated factories such as munitions. For many women, married or single, it was a chance to earn money, manage their own financial affairs and wear trousers for the first time. However after the war ended, men expected to resume their role as bread winner and head of the family. Prime Minister Menzies of the Liberal Party openly stated the importance of wives and mothers and their protective but unpaid role – a traditionally conservative view on appropriate feminine behaviour.¹ Menzies' statement implied that women would happily resume a full-time domestic and child-bearing role in which they would be adequately supported financially by their husbands.

However not all women fitted that pattern. Some preferred to continue in paid employment, and merely shifted to jobs in the manufacturing sector. An economic boom was particularly buoyant in the 1950s and fed the demands of increasing consumerism. In South Australia for instance, under the Playford Government (1938-65) increase in manufacturing employment was higher than any other Australian state.² Paid employment opportunities provided a measure of financial independence for single women to engage in any desired hobbies such as china painting outside their working hours, and even possibly to purchase a vehicle that enabled them to travel easily around the suburbs to attend, for example, classes and demonstrations by visiting china painters. Whereas before the Second World War, private cars were a luxury for a few of the middle-class, from the late 1940s and especially after petrol rationing ended in 1950, car ownership in South Australia boomed.³ Married women

in paid employment were able to contribute to the purchase of a family home, a car or many domestic labour-saving devices that were becoming available.

But such freedoms that enabled married women to enjoy paid employment, did not meet with universal approval. While married women of the working class had traditionally expected to enter paid employment as they had always done, many Australians still held the conservative opinion that married middle class women should enjoy a lifetime of domestic bliss at home, with the opportunity of pursuing suitable feminine hobbies once family duties had finished. Carol Bacchi commented that, although many women were drawn into employment during World War II and remained in employment for some time after, the precedent of the previous one hundred years persisted, namely that the proper labour of a 'true woman' still lay in the home and indeed that this viewpoint seemed well established in South Australia.⁴

This viewpoint was promulgated by articles in the influential *Australian Women's Weekly* (known simply as the *Women's Weekly*) which had, since its foundation in 1933, enjoyed immense popularity that peaked in the 1950-60s. It sought to represent every-day Australia to its readers, especially during the radical social changes that occurred after World War Two.⁵ In 1959 it published an article 'My wife works and I hate it' which drew many letters, most of which supported the husband.⁶ Barbara Baird observed that articles in the *Women's Weekly* were directed predominantly to a middle-class readership, with assumptions that, in the middle-class, the male is the main breadwinner, the 'Head of the Household', while the woman was expected to carefully budget the housekeeping finances.⁷ The home was a status symbol, reflecting his income and her managing and decorating skills, where the woman was encouraged to see her home and the furnishings as an expression of herself – the epitome of domestic femininity.⁸ Advertisements in the *Women's Weekly* showed the plethora of labour-saving equipment she could buy to keep the house clean and provide her with so-called leisure time to pursue her own interests.⁹

Such a viewpoint regarding woman's place in the home had been one of the hallmarks of the middle-class in Victorian England of which many white South Australians were descendants. In examining the rise of respectable society in Victorian Britain, F. Thompson stated that the Victorian middle-classes were the most home-centred group in British history and elevated the cult of the home almost into a religious institution.¹⁰ Furthermore, he argued that religion was the centre of middle-class lifestyle and the field of charitable works was 'primarily the work of womenfolk, a product of their servant-keeping leisure'.¹¹ In the 1960s servants were scarce, but the plethora of labour-saving devices supposedly took their place. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall also expounded on the mores of the English middle-class, including the importance of prudent budgeting, directing the servants, and account-keeping by the mistress of the house.¹² They also listed various societies that the English middle-class organised to improve the labouring poor, morally and physically, as 'no serious Christian would have disputed the need for women's charitable endeavours'.¹³ Middle-class women might work – but it was unpaid and in the service of others.

Nonetheless, the question regarding married women working for money, did not go away. In 1964 the *Women's Weekly* published an unsigned article querying whether women 'in the middle ground of society' should feel guilty for staying home instead of going out to work? The writer made the point that previously, married women working were made to feel they were neglecting their duties to husband and children, whereas now it seemed that women who remained at home were 'letting down the cause of modern women' by being happy to be domesticated. The *Women's Weekly* still chose to take the middle path, observing that 'women now have the freedom of choice'. They could either remain happily at home if they chose, or could combine career with marriage: neither decision should make them feel guilty.¹⁴

The combination of a professional career with marriage was not seriously addressed by the *Women's Weekly* until the 1970s. In the 1960s the *Women's Weekly* did not actively promulgate tertiary education for women and indeed an article 'Do women really benefit from a university degree?' indicated that a university education could even reduce a woman's chance of a marriage and a happy family life.¹⁵ Thus it was that, despite the opportunities for secondary and tertiary education in the post Second World War years, many middle-class girls were happy to leave school in their mid teens, obtain work in the buoyant employment market and either cease employment on marriage, or continue with only short-term or casual employment after marriage. As will be shown in this chapter, the revival of china painting in the 1960s was overwhelmingly popular with such women. Moreover as a hobby it was often associated with the traditional middle-class mores of charitable endeavours, interwoven with meetings in church halls and church connections.

Case Studies: Necia Birch and Valda Ellis

The case studies of these two women are closely intertwined. Necia Birch (nee Staer, b. 1922) and Valda Ellis (nee McFadden, b. 1930) worked closely together in the 1960s to publicise, encourage and maintain china painting as an enjoyable, interesting form of social art/craft that could be practised in the home.

Birch was interested in art from an early age. Her father was an artist who travelled around the South Australian countryside in the 1920s to paint backdrops for stages in public Institutes and other commissions.¹⁶ The Staer family had a busy social life; Birch's interest in decorated china can be traced back to her childhood training when social rituals surrounding birthday celebrations and afternoon teas involved using the best china, the best aprons and special recipes to mark the importance of the occasion.¹⁷ Her schooling was at Poltoonga School, a private school run by Miss Henderson in the Adelaide suburb of St. Peters. There

she came under the influence of the art teacher, Ida Hamilton who was a Fellow of the South Australian Society of Arts, a member of the Royal Drawing Society, London and could teach a wide variety of art and craft skills, including china painting.¹⁸ At that time, Birch was unaware of Hamilton's wide range of teaching skills and left Poltoonga in her mid teens in 1938 without seeking further art training and without a firm career in mind.

However she had received some private tuition in photographic retouching, and soon found employment in a photographic studio in Moore's department store, Adelaide. Her first task was to vacuum the studio carpet. Such a menial duty upset her aunt, who thought it was not a suitable occupation for a talented, middle-class, young woman, and Birch resigned after one week.¹⁹ In 1939, Birch was offered a position as a trainee kindergarten teacher in All Soul's Anglican School, followed later by employment as a kindergarten teacher at Girton Girls' School in suburban Adelaide. She resigned her teaching position when she married in 1951. From then on, apart from an occasional few weeks of relief kindergarten teaching, Birch enjoyed a domestic and family life that also provided time to pursue her interest in drama, elocution, floral art, church activities and her subsequent involvement with china painting.

It was through her church connections that Birch started to teach china painting. A fellow church-member asked if she would teach a few students, although at the time Birch herself was still learning china painting from the elderly teacher Olive Atkinson. Birch agreed, but added that she 'did not know much about it'.²⁰ Valda Ellis was one of Birch's first students.

Ellis was born in Nambour, Queensland where her father, who published a newspaper *Nambour Chronicle*, encouraged her to finish her secondary education in Nambour in order to enter university and obtain a professional qualification. She attended the Teachers' Training College in Brisbane and finally graduated from Queensland University with a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Home Science in order to teach useful feminine subjects such as dressmaking and cooking to secondary school students.²¹ However when she was sent to

teach at a High School in northern Queensland she found that she was expected to teach biology, chemistry and physics in which she had minimal knowledge, so sought help from the most likely source, nearby medical practitioner Doctor Howard Ellis. They married and in 1950 shifted to Adelaide. After her marriage, Ellis continued to intermittently teach, and taught home science at Girton Girl's School, Kensington Park, from 1964-72.²²

Ellis was always interested in art, so when an elderly woman who had ceased china painting offered her supplies to Ellis and her friend Jane Penhall, they were pleased to receive the items. However they were not provided with the necessary information regarding how to use the paints. Penhall knew of Birch's involvement with china painting, so the two women decided to learn from Birch. After three lessons, Birch told Ellis "I can't teach you anything more!" but to Ellis, china painting was an interesting new hobby and by then she had the necessary skills to continue the practice at home in her spare time.²³

Birch and Ellis became firm friends and enthusiastic china painters. There were several women in Adelaide who had kilns, provided a firing service to Birch and Ellis, and they knew of other South Australian china painters.²⁴ It became obvious that there were women who were interested in china painting, but practised it in isolation. Information regarding Birch's china painting in her home studio soon spread by word of mouth, and Birch concentrated on teaching an increasing number of students. Although in 1965 Ellis did not wish to start teaching china painting, she had good organisational and communication skills. Ellis, Birch and several of their friends decided to bring South Australian china painters together.

On 8 March 1965 Ellis held a meeting in her home at Toorak Gardens.²⁵ It was the catalyst for the revival of china painting in South Australia. About thirty women who were interested in china painting attended the meeting and decided to form a club called the South Australian China Painters' Association (hereafter called SACPA or the Association). Necia Birch was

elected as President, with Ellis as Vice President. It was the second china painters' organisation in this decade to be formed in Australia; another one was organised in Western Australia the previous year. By August 1965 membership of SACPA had passed the 100 mark, a Constitution had been drafted and adopted, and from August 1965 a monthly *News Letter*, re-named the *Brush and Palette* from the February 1967 issue onwards, was organised to inform and maintain contact between members. The object of the club was stated to be 'the practice of, the instruction in, and the enjoyment of, painting and drawing; and the encouragement and appreciation of the Arts.'²⁶ It was to be a non-profit organisation, with membership open to any person who was in sympathy with the objects for which the group existed. Despite the omission of the words 'china painting' in the stated objectives, the organisation was, in fact, formed solely by china painters to specifically advance that form of art, and as such was the first of its kind in South Australia. Socialite and china painter Miss Margaret Davey who had studied under Norton and was known to Birch through church connections, agreed to be patron of the Association.

Enthusiasm ran high. At that stage there were three issues to be tackled; the promotion of china painting to increase club membership, the availability of china painting supplies and the lack of teachers. Executive members of the Association decided on a publicity campaign to promote china painting. The promotion of china painting by SACPA was predominantly aimed at young to middle-age women in a wide section of the community and who were not interested in art as a career but might enjoy an interesting, 'arty' and possibly useful hobby. The word 'hand painted' carried the connotation of being an artist, and small hand painted objects such as little vases and mugs could decorate the home or be given as personal gifts.

Promoting China Painting

SACPA's target audience and methods of promoting china painting differed from those used in the 1890s by Gill in the School of Design and by Howie in the School of Arts and Crafts in the 1920-30s. China painting, in Gill and Howie's eras, was primarily advertised in the major daily newspapers as one of a number of formal, special classes taught in the Art Schools for serious students. In the 1920-30s it also received considerable exposure to the cognoscenti of the South Australian art world by being exhibited alongside the fine arts of painting and sculpture in Royal South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions. As mentioned in previous chapters, private tuition in china painting in South Australia was also advertised by some professional women artists who placed their own advertisements in newspapers.

By contrast, Birch and Ellis decided to publicise china painting by displaying and demonstrating china painting in various public locations frequented predominantly by women, such as suburban shopping centres, domestic and craft sections of country shows and at charity functions - especially those organised by church groups. Most women attending those venues would be involved with the domestic rituals of entertaining, cooking and decorating the home, were probably married or at a marriageable age, and would have a certain amount of time to spare during the day. To them, china painting was promulgated by Birch and Ellis as an interesting hobby and neither as a means of employment in an industry, nor as an adjunct to a full-time art career. Ellis's tertiary training in Home Science provided her with excellent background knowledge and skills of communication with such women. Birch, with her abilities in amateur dramatics, and with her skills in drawing and painting honed by her initiation into teaching china painting, was an assured and entertaining demonstrator. Assisted by a few other SACPA members, they set about organising trips to country areas to demonstrate assiduously where they could expect crowds to gather. For example they travelled to Renmark and other country towns to demonstrate at fetes where they could have a stall.²⁷ In the October 1965 *SACPA News Letter* they informed country

members that, if they 'would like the Association to give a china display at their local show, please write to our Secretary, giving her dates, etc.' The scheme worked well.

The August 1965 SACPA *News Letter* provided details of a forthcoming china painting display at the Strathalbyn Show in October.²⁸ A subsequent account of the Strathalbyn Show display stated that it was a successful venture and that, 'not only women but many men as well, spent some time looking at our display and even the children and teenagers were very interested.'²⁹ Other country shows soon followed, such as at Angaston where they had a limited display of only sixty pieces, and then Tanunda. By March 1966 there were, 'a number of such shows coming up later this year. We have been asked to take displays to many of them ... let us keep up the wonderful response for china that we have received ...'³⁰ On further occasions in the 1960s Birch, helped by Ellis, packed pieces of hand-painted china and drove to many country shows near Adelaide such as Golden Grove, Gumeracha and Uraidla where they set up exhibits in the women's work and handicrafts section.³¹

Other members demonstrated china painting in Adelaide suburban shopping centres where they were happy to talk with anyone who stopped to watch them, and would suggest names of china painting teachers to anyone who enquired. Their displays proved popular and within a few years, they had as many requests to mount displays as they could handle. For example in mid 1969 the manager of the Large Ardale Shopping Centre wrote and invited the Association to mount a display in August or September 1969. The Association thanked him but requested that, due to their prior commitments, the display be postponed till 1970.³²

The Association also displayed china painting in other locations. In keeping with the established precedent of the Victorian era, when it was a socially accepted activity for financially-supported, middle-class women to donate much of their time to charitable works, Ellis, Birch and many other members of SACPA, used their china painting accomplishments

in voluntary fund raising displays for worthy charities. Such activities not only served to publicise china painting, but also enhanced the reputation of the china painters as worthy and socially responsible citizens. Charitable displays could also provide discreet opportunities for the sale of their china painting, even though such items were not advertised and marked for sale. Caroline Jordan, in discussing different levels of women's amateur art practices in Australia during the nineteenth century, defined those who networked through similar social groups and selected displays as 'public amateurs' and added that, although those women provided a community service, 'ambition was not entirely absent'.³³ It seems that little had changed between the outlook of Jordan's 'public amateurs' and the emerging china painters of the 1960s.

Initially there was a somewhat cool reception by the committee to the idea that members might wish to sell their work. Such an attitude bore similarities to the idea of 'lady amateurs' in the Victorian era when middle-class women were expected to be financially maintained by their husbands and painted as a social accomplishment and not for money. Such an attitude contrasted to that of the self-supporting artists and china painters such as Rosa Fiveash and other professional women mentioned in previous chapters, who exhibited their work for critical review, public recognition and potential financial gain, without the intention of donating to a charity.

The Association's first large exhibition of hand-painted china where a donation to charity was made, took place during the Adelaide Festival of Arts in March 1966. The manager of the Adelaide branch of the Tasmanian Tourist Bureau provided a small room in their offices on the first floor of their building in King William Street, Adelaide, for the exhibition, which was opened by the Association's patron, Miss Margaret Davey.³⁴ Although a catalogue was printed, no work was marked for sale on that occasion, but a charge of 20c admission was made. Over the period of the Festival of Arts, the door takings amounted to \$386. After

expenses were deducted, a \$20 donation was made to the Good Friday Appeal. President Birch reported that there had been little advertising of the event 'but it has been a worthwhile venture'.³⁵ SACPA presented a plate on which member Judy Blaskett had painted a grey kitten, to the wife of the manager of the tourist bureau as a way of expressing thanks for the bureau's help.

However the matter of sales was subsequently raised and eventually the committee passed seven rules for work submitted in the Association's exhibitions.³⁶ They ruled that china was not priced for sale, but that the exhibitor's name and phone number be supplied instead. Only the Exhibition Committee was to handle the china, which could not be removed or replaced during the exhibition. There was to be a selection committee and before the exhibition, the value had to be placed on each item for insurance purposes only. There were also stringent rules regarding the delivery, packaging and collection of the china. Exhibitions of china painting mounted by the Association in subsequent Festival of Arts followed those rules, but a different charity was chosen to benefit on each occasion. Their intention to use china painting to benefit worthy charities was clear.

Ellis was delegated as Publicity Officer in June 1966 and, with President Birch, was untiring in seeking suitable venues to display members' china painting and make donations to various charities. For example, Birch announced in July 1966 that the David Jones Gallery was willing to let the South Australian China Painters' Association have the gallery for an exhibition for a charitable institution in October 1966, and that the Diabetic Children's Association would be the chosen charity. Furthermore, Lady Bastyan who was patroness of that Diabetic Association and wife of Sir Etric Bastyan the Governor of South Australia, would open the exhibition.³⁷ It was a prestigious social occasion, with tickets for the opening at \$2 each. There was no mention of sales of work, but donations were requested from

viewers of the exhibition, which resulted in a sum of \$378.85 raised for the Diabetic Association.³⁸

After that success, all members of the Association banded together for one major annual fund raising effort that took place every September or October. Those fund raisers always contained an entertainment that would appeal to women; such as a mannequin parade in the 25 September 1967 fund raiser for the Spina-Bifida Association, which was held in the YWCA hall, North Adelaide, with an admission fee of \$1, including supper.³⁹ Members were asked to submit two pieces of their very best work for display purposes inside china cabinets in the hall, and the committee also arranged for eight pieces of china to be painted by selected members as gifts for the mannequins. Only a few tables for sale of work were allowed in the foyer. However those selling china had to have at least thirty-six pieces of china on each table and the owner of the china was responsible for setting up, manning the table, the sale and safety of the items. Sales were only possible for a few hours on the one evening. It was the major annual event of the china painting members, and clearly indicated that the actual sale of work was a minor and not the prime function of the occasion. It was a 'show off' occasion and suggested that china painting was aligned with women's interests such as glamorous clothing and as such, was merely an enjoyable *hobby* allied with the decorative social aspects of women's culture. Such an attitude by china painters in the 1960s revival was in marked contrast to that of the serious china painters of the 1920-30s, whose work, *grounded in professionalism*, was exhibited at Royal South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions, appropriately priced and listed for sale in exhibition catalogues, and was on public view for several weeks.

The committee of S ACPA held many other exhibitions or displays during the 1960s but followed their own established exhibition rules. Apart from exhibiting china painting in the Adelaide Festival of Arts every two years, most displays were relatively small, minor events,

often only for one day, and displayed in the premises of the charity who approached SACPA. For example the Association was approached by the Helping Hand Centre of North Adelaide, and mounted a one-day display and sale of china painting there on 12 July 1967, donating 5% of the proceeds to the Helping Hand Centre.⁴⁰

Ellis, when President of SACPA in 1969, was in charge of a display and sale of hand-painted china held in the Gartrell Memorial Church for four hours on 30 April 1969.⁴¹ Birch made a point of organising a yearly exhibition of her own and her students' work, usually in her home studio situated in the back garden of her home at St. Peters, but sometimes in various church halls and occasionally in a local town hall.⁴² However her exhibitions only lasted a few days, were not widely advertised, and did not feature catalogues or reviews of the exhibits. Nor were the pieces necessarily for sale. Many teachers who were members of SACPA had one-day exhibitions of their own china painting and that of their students. Such events were usually held in their home studios and either the entry donations or a percentage of any sales made, were given to a charity. For example the elderly teacher Jean Hughes held an exhibition and sale of work at her home in Brighton for eleven hours on Friday 24 October 1969, when an entry donation of 30c was requested for Austcare.⁴³

In March 1970 Ellis, in her report as President of SACPA, stated that the organisation now had 140 financial members and 'the request for public exhibitions has been constant ... we are now a respected organisation within the community.'⁴⁴ Indeed in the June 1970 issue of *Brush and Palette* members were told that SACPA required an idea of the number of exhibitions given by members to aid charities. However this request was not merely to spread the word to other members in order to increase attendance at the charitable displays; it also had financial implications for a prudent fiscal policy of SACPA. In July 1970 a subsequent notice stated:

From 1st January, 1970, any member who has had an exhibition or demonstration for charitable purposes is requested to hand to the secretary the following information:-

1. Name of member
2. Name of Charity
3. Approximate amount raised

This is most important as it will help us to keep the type of bank account which is of most benefit to our association.⁴⁵

Thus by the end of the 1960s, china painting in South Australia was established as a respectable, popular hobby enjoyed by increasing numbers of white, married, middle-class women who were prepared to use their skills to benefit worthy charities. Their china painting offered for sale during exhibitions and displays for charity was not really a profitable form of art/craft.⁴⁶ The most likely source of profit came through teaching or establishing a retail shop that catered for the necessary china painting supplies. The mention of china painting in conjunction with charities and the benefit of an appropriate type of bank account, reinforces the hobbyist approach to china painting in the 1960s. Once again, this contrasts with the professional women artists who earned an income and are mentioned in previous chapters of this thesis. Catherine Speck, looking at the careers and professionalism of, mostly single, women artists/art teachers from the 1880s to the 1960s, focussed on their constraints, skills and determination as they successfully negotiated their careers between the need for exhibiting and selling their artwork, and remunerative teaching commitments.⁴⁷

Supplies and the Infiltration of the American Influence

The lack of suitable supplies was one problem faced by Australian china painters in the 1960s as no china or porcelain blanks of a suitable quality were produced in Australia. Because of the 1939-45 war and subsequent decline of china painting, supplies for china painters were scarce, and certainly not sufficient to cater for the emerging demands in South Australia in the 1960s. Coarser ceramics such as earthenware or flat ceramic tiles could be used for china painting, but tended to crack in the kiln with repeated firings. However the improved

economy of the 1950-60s enabled easy and rapid communications to be established between china painters in various Australian states. Western Australian china painters banded together to form the West Australian Guild of China Painters Incorporated in March 1964, South Australian china painters formed SACPA in 1965 and in July 1966 the New South Wales China Decorator's Association was formed.⁴⁸ Although individual china painters were active in Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania, organisations were not formed in those states till later. (See Appendix 15) Nevertheless, during the 1960s, information was readily exchanged between china painters in all states regarding supplies and teachers who were prepared to travel interstate to take short workshops.

Ellis and Birch contacted Western Australian china painter Elsie Manning who ran a shop called Cynthia's in Cottesloe, that stocked the required items. They purchased supplies from Cynthia's for South Australian china painters, and added a mere 5c to each piece to cover the cost.⁴⁹ Manning then made a visit to Adelaide and met SACPA members in late 1965.⁵⁰ She not only carried china and paints in her shop, but knew the Western Australian china painters Kitty Drok, Amy Lakides and Eugene (Jean) Menz who were capable teachers and prepared to travel.

Menz (1887-1981) was one of the first key figures instrumental in popularising the American style of china painting, especially of double pink roses, to Australian china painters. She was born in Burra, South Australia, but moved to Western Australia after her marriage, where she started to china paint under the Creeth sisters c. 1918 and later studied under Flora Landells.⁵¹ Menz had the financial resources to travel widely, so in 1961 and again in 1962, visited the west coast of America to study china painting under Sonie Ames who specialised in painting double pink roses. Although Ames had never been to art school, she was often featured in a popular American monthly magazine the *China Decorator* that was gaining circulation

amongst Western Australian and South Australian china painters.⁵² The SACPA committee decided to invite Menz to visit and conduct some classes for South Australian china painters.

SACPA's first *News Letter* issued in September 1965, informed readers that the committee met Mrs Menz at the Adelaide Railway Station on 14 August 1965, and that vice-president Ellis had invited members to her home on 15 August to meet Mrs Eugene Menz and view some of her lovely china, including a plate painted by Sonie Ames.⁵³ Menz taught the Ames' technique to the South Australian china painters, following which Birch reported that they had experienced a most interesting three weeks with lessons from Menz and considered that they 'gained valuable knowledge and will progress to higher standards' as a result of Menz's lessons.⁵⁴ Ellis, although unable to attend the classes, watched Menz demonstrate the double pink rose technique and considered that she learnt a lot by just watching Menz as 'she was the first to introduce a square shader and therefore filtered backgrounds'.⁵⁵ Applying a blending backgrounds with a type of brush called a square shader, was in fact an oil painting technique. The fact that the South Australian china painters of the 1960s were not familiar with such brushes, was another indication of a difference in their background and art training compared to the 1920-40s practitioners who were professionally trained in a wide range of art media and exhibited with the Royal South Australian Society of Arts.

Menz sold a few pieces of her own china painting on that trip to Adelaide.⁵⁶ A painting of her double pink roses, signed and dated 1963, sold on that occasion, was on the old-fashioned design of china so favoured by American china painters of the 1960s (figure 80). The china had elaborate curves and pierced edges through which Menz threaded a piece of narrow green velvet ribbon that enabled the piece to be hung on a wall, thus suggesting a role for china painting as an object of contemplation instead of practical use on a table.

Subsequently in October 1965, country members of S ACPA were advised that, for two shillings, the Association could forward printed china painting notes by Sonie Ames, containing some valuable information and how to draw a rose.⁵⁷ At no time was it demonstrated or advised that the best way to draw a rose was to pick one and draw the real thing. This was another point of difference between the training of South Australian china painters in the 1960s and the formal art school training that included plant drawing and underpinned work by well-known china painters of the 1920-30s.

After Menz's departure, there was an increased interest in china painting in South Australia, and especially in the subject matter of double pink roses painted according to the Sonie Ames notes. Whereas plain white china cups, saucers and plates had previously been popular as blanks, there was now a demand for the style of china blanks used by Menz, that featured pierced rims and elaborate curves, and other fancy items such as perfume bottles, so favoured by American china painters and which were redolent of the Victorian era.

Such demands by china painters were soon met by a few entrepreneurial South Australian women who saw a niche for earning money by opening a supply shop for china painters. Miss Bev Wesley opened a small shop called 'Lee-line' on the third floor of Edments Building, Rundle Street, Adelaide, and thus became a professional business woman. By December 1965 she advised that she had painting supplies and a new range of china in stock, including perfume bottles and vases.⁵⁸ By March 1966 Wesley was on the S ACPA committee and in a good position to know the requirements of fellow china painters.

Teachers who lived some distance away from city suppliers also started to carry small amounts of china blanks and paints for sale to their students.⁵⁹ Influential, well-established American suppliers such as the Campana Art Company who advertised in the *China Decorator*, posted their catalogues on request and were pleased to deal directly with

Australian china painters.⁶⁰ (See Appendix 16) Campana's catalogues listed single studies and also their own instruction books such as *Teacher of Rose Painting* that contained many pretty reproductions of the early twentieth century paintings by the original founder D. M. Campana, including detailed instructions on how to paint them (figure 81). Similar instruction books on how to paint double roses were produced by other American china painters and advertised in *China Decorator*. They were popular with Australians who found it much easier to copy such work, rather than paint real roses.

Supplies became easier to obtain in Adelaide during the next few years as several other china painters opened shops, such as Mrs Phil Bullock who opened Argana Arts on 8 November 1967 – a fact that warranted a later article in the *China Decorator*.⁶¹ Her daughter Joan Bullock had previously gone overseas, visited Sonie Ames, and met the editors of *China Decorator*. The demand for studies and books produced by American china painters increased as membership of SACPA grew, and more china painters read *China Decorator*. Ellis, who in 1966 was the publicity officer, proposed that SACPA form a lending library, with a suggestion that a subscription be sent to the *China Decorator* and an attempt also be made to procure back numbers.⁶² The July 1966 edition of that magazine was the first issue with mention of South Australia, when it published an item submitted by Birch in which she stated that the South Australian China Painters Association had over 100 members and that 'we all look forward to receiving our *China Decorator*. I have found it very interesting and helpful'.⁶³

At that time there were no magazines published in Australia especially for china painters, nor were there many contemporary books on the subject. The *China Decorator* filled the void, and some china painters had subscribed to it before SACPA was formed. The monthly magazine became a very strong American influence on china painting in South Australia in the 1960s. It contained an enormous number of designs that china painters could trace and

copy onto china without infringing any copyright, and some designs even included brush-stroke-by-brush-stroke instructions and the colours to use. Moreover the designs were often printed in suitable sizes that potential china painters could trace and fit neatly onto china blanks. The magazine was printed in black and white, although by 1965 just one or two pages in colour appeared, such as the double pink roses study, a artist not stated, but in the style favoured by nineteenth century artists such as Catherine Klein.⁶⁴ The preference of the magazine's editors was to include studies based on paintings of 'yesteryear', and tracing and copying were encouraged. Simple black and white drawings and designs were often printed so that readers could trace and use them on china that was to be painted for special occasions, such as Christmas gifts, Easter or for birthdays

Cottage garden flowers such as roses, violets, daisies and forget-me-nots became the preferred subject matter, and were featured to some degree in every issue of *China Decorator*. Moreover with the exception of double pink roses, those flowers were exceedingly easy to copy and paint. It was a comforting support for many of the Australian women who desired to learn china painting and did not have drawing and design skills or a background of art training. They could buy the *China Decorator* or any of the 'pretty' American studies advertised therein and master the basic techniques of mixing and applying china paints to their chosen piece of china, have it fired, and then be looked on by their social peers as 'artists'. The merits of drawing and painting flowers from life were scarcely mentioned

The magazine became immensely popular for all Australian china painters and was very influential in promoting the American viewpoint on what was fashionable to paint on china, how to paint it and what to do with it. It was especially useful for the increasing number of South Australian students who, after a short time learning basic techniques and copying studies from the *China Decorator*, and usually without any prior art training themselves, took

up teaching a few of their friends even though they lacked teaching, painting and design experience.

Possibly without South Australian readers being conscious of the fact, the magazine also continually reinforced the American china painters' philosophies of what they deemed to be suitable feminine behaviour of the 1960s. This particular group of Americans ignored the second-wave of the feminist movement that was gaining momentum in the 1960s, but opted instead for a middle-class, conservative feminism, reinforcing the concept of women's domesticity, modesty, religious convictions and service to the family. Painting china for family and friends was laudable. Augusta Purcupile wrote that, 'there is no reason why every china painter, if she chooses, shouldn't paint her own lovely table settings to be handed down to her children and grandchildren as priceless heirlooms'.⁶⁵ The duty of middle-class women to entertain appropriately for the occasion was exemplified by an article that advised:

Few things are endowed with such gracious charm as a beautifully appointed dinner table. For out of its lavish play of colour and its luxurious air of bounty rise the twin graces of formality and glamour.⁶⁶

Articles in the *China Decorator* continually perpetuated china painting in the 1960s as a feminine activity allied with attributes of modesty and the desire to help others. In January 1965 an article on china painting teacher Mary Nokes stated that her 'zest for helping others and her love for her high school students as well as her continuous help in community affairs' endeared her to all and that she enjoyed 'the dainty feminine types of work as in her china painting'.⁶⁷ The same article eulogised her modesty in showing her work, 'she is always modest in showing hers – the students must come first.' In 1968-70 Nokes was American President of the International China Painting Teachers' Organisation and was mentioned as active in school, church and civic affairs and added to the list of 'Who's Who of American Women and University Women'.⁶⁸

God was also mentioned in a number of articles in the *China Decorator*, as was reference to short exhibitions of American china painting, often for only a day, in various Protestant church halls. Gladys Burbank, a member of the editorial staff, wrote in 1964 that becoming an artist could not have been gained 'without that God-given talent' and furthermore 'I shall continue to learn because I have a God-given desire'.⁶⁹ An article written by members of the Columbus China Guild on teacher Mr. Hopkins stated that he helped his class see the beauty of God's world and that 'he is humbly grateful for the gift God has given him and uses it in every way he can to bring joy to others.'⁷⁰ An American student Mildred Wolfram contributed an article to the magazine regarding her teacher Mrs Harvard Karp in 1968 and wrote:

This shy and modest little woman has truly been touched by God. He gave her an abundance of talent and He also gave her the sweet disposition, deep understanding, and sincere all-embracing love that He saves for his Chosen.⁷¹

Such outpourings of sentiment and heavenly inspiration by American china painters, allied with reference to modestly exhibiting in church halls and their practices of copying pretty American floral studies onto china for the home, comfortably resonated with the values espoused by most South Australian china painters of the 1960s. This was in marked contrast to the previous professional approach of South Australian china painters in the 1920-30s, and how china painting was taught in the School of Arts and Crafts.

The difference was partly due to the type of students attracted in the 1960s and partly to the lack of tertiary art education of most teachers of china painting in the 1960s. The students were overwhelmingly women without any previous art training and little or no knowledge of contemporary art, although some were competent in craft skills such as traditional embroidery and many were interested in cooking and entertaining. They all liked 'pretty' china and enjoyed learning in class situations where they could chat around the table to other women, copy designs, and there would not be exams to test their skills. Such women were readily

influenced by the *China Decorator* and impressed by the fact that it came from America which they regarded as the leading china painting country in the world. The Australian china painters of the 1960s enjoyed and learnt from their subsequent contact with visiting entrepreneurial, but conservative, middle-class American female teachers who encouraged students to trace and copy coloured studies by other painters. Most students, whether in America or Australia, were not interested in learning how to draw. American teacher Gladys Burbank, writing in the *China Decorator* commented that, in her long experience of teaching china painting, she quickly found that most students could not make a passable freehand sketch and told her that ‘all they wanted to do was paint a few pieces’. Burbank solved the problem by introducing tracing paper and pictures into her classes. It worked and ‘the class settled down to a contented chatty group, which was able to take home a finished piece after about three sessions’.⁷²

Influences on Teaching China painting in South Australia in the 1960s

Ellis and Birch had promoted china painting with displays and demonstrations at various country shows for several years without fully realising the possible implications; namely that should the viewers desire to learn, just who was able to teach them? Not all country women could travel to Adelaide for regular lessons and moreover firing was additionally required and it was not always easy to find someone with a kiln. In April 1966, Birch started an annual ‘paint in’ weekend for china painters at Goolwa to which some country women went, but there was no formal instruction there. It was predominantly a social, networking occasion, with the pleasure of everyone painting together and looking at each other’s work. After Ellis became President in 1968 she commented that teachers were urgently needed for the country. However the shortage of teachers existed not only in the country, but also in Adelaide.

The *China Decorator* was a useful reference magazine, with a few articles on how to mix china paints, and every issue carried some designs for china painters to trace or copy. Stroke-by-stroke accounts of which colours to use were included with some studies, especially of double roses. But there was no really satisfactory substitute for a personal teacher, let alone one who could teach students how to paint Australian wild flowers.⁷³

Despite the overwhelming American influence of copying studies of double pink roses and cottage garden flowers, there were a few Australian teachers of china painting in the 1960s who favoured Australian native flora and were known to Ellis and Birch. Of particular influence were the two Western Australian china painters Amy Lakides and Kitty Drok, who were invited to travel to South Australia at different times to teach and/or demonstrate during the periods when Birch, then Ellis, held the position of President of SACPA. Menz, Lakides and Drok not only influenced South Australian china painters regarding floral subject matter to paint, but the Western Australians were role models for the South Australian teachers who watched them.

Lakides had been taught china painting in Western Australia by Flora Landells, who was also interested in painting Australian wildflowers on china in a naturalistic style, as shown by her painting of *Kennedia prostrata* on a small dish, titled *Red Runner Western Australia Wildflower* and signed but undated (figure 82).⁷⁴ Lakides subsequently produced for sale her own small book of black and white sketches of wild flowers for china painters to copy. In September 1965 two South Australians, Marjorie Brook and Jill Haskard, visited Perth to take lessons from Lakides and showed the results to SACPA members on their return. Brook spoke highly of Lakides' painting and personality and suggested she might come to South Australia in early 1966.⁷⁵ However the SACPA committee decided that the Association was not in a position financially at that moment for such a venture.

Lakides was an astute business woman, had good networking skills with American china painters and was aware of the importance that Australian china painters attached to American teachers and techniques. She sailed for America in 1967 and learned the techniques of gold acid etching to add to her skills.⁷⁶ She then contacted Adelaide china painters and offered to give a lecture and demonstration for two hours on 13 March 1967 during the short time the ship in which she was travelling back to Perth, docked in Adelaide.⁷⁷ In the April 1967 *Brush & Palette* Lakides wrote to say how much she enjoyed meeting everyone in Adelaide and ‘our painting is such a lovely bond between us and we must keep it like this always’. Birch was President at that time, and arrangements were made for a return visit by Lakides to conduct three schools, each of four days duration, at the end of January 1968. The schools filled well beforehand and of the forty-two women who enrolled, thirty-nine were married.⁷⁸ It clearly indicated that china painting in South Australia was practised by married, middle-class women who had spare time during the day in which to attend classes and the financial resources for what was becoming rather an expensive hobby.

In those 1968 schools, Lakides, capitalising on the current passion for painting double roses, included demonstrations of her own quick, loose technique of painting double roses, painting the work to the first stage, then signing it before firing, and on the next day donating the fired plate to one of the students in her class as a free sample of her first-stage work (figure 83). She did this in a number of her classes, with the result that many women went away with a Lakides plate that was taken to a first fire only and not finished. The donated plates were excellent promotional material. Lakides also donated a number of her demonstration tiles to the SACPA library.⁷⁹ For those who wished to own some of her finished work, she had for sale, small fancy dishes with paintings of Australian wildflowers such as *Leschenaultias* (figure 84). Lakides returned to America in June 1968 and contacted SACPA in 1969 to ask if members would be interested in an Adelaide seminar in February 1970. However SACPA decided they would want demonstrations only by Lakides, and not a seminar.⁸⁰ By 1975

Lakides had taken up residence in America and articles about her work started to feature in the *China Decorator*. (See Appendix 17) In 1977 she was promoted in *China Decorator* as 'Lakides of Australia and Atlanta' and producing colour studies not of Australian wildflowers, but of roses, daisies and chrysanthemums.⁸¹

In 1969 SACPA decided to invite another Western Australian china painter, Kitty Drok, to South Australia. Drok, who was held in a prison camp in Indonesia during the Second World War, migrated to Australia after her release, and became interested in Australian flora which she used extensively as subject matter for her china painting.⁸² She was a member of the Western Australian Guild of China Painters, taught china painting to Elsie Manning of Cottesloe and set up the china painting supply venture with her in 1964. However she soon withdrew from the business, leaving it to Manning to run.⁸³ Ellis became President of SACPA in March 1969 and Drok's first demonstration after arriving in Adelaide, was held in Ellis's home studio on the morning of 25 August 1969, over a two and a half hour period. Drok did another demonstration that evening in Birch's home studio, followed by two further demonstrations the next day back in Ellis's studio. It was a heavy schedule for Drok, and the fee charged to watch each demonstration was \$2.50 for SACPA members and \$3.50 for non members. She was a very competent china painter and particularly enjoyed painting the blue *Leschenaultia* blooms for which Western Australia was noted, with a preference for choosing ornate china such as her *Leschenaultia* jug (figure 85). This was signed and dated 1977 and exhibited in one of the later International Porcelain Art Teachers Inc. exhibitions, held in Adelaide.

SACPA's efforts at bringing in interstate teachers to take seminars in Adelaide, widened the knowledge of South Australian teachers in current popular techniques and subject matter – especially of double pink roses. Attendance at those seminars/demonstrations combined with the presence of many *China Decorators*, printed studies and lessons in SACPA's library,

increased the desire of many novices to learn more about china painting. The result was that most South Australian teachers had waiting lists of prospective students. In October 1965, *Brush & Palette* printed a list of seven South Australian SACPA members who were teachers of china painting. In the November 1965 issue, Mrs Miller, who was a close friend of Birch, notified readers that she had sufficient pupils for the moment!

By July 1966 Birch had nearly eighty students and was holding seven lessons a week in her garden studio.⁸⁴ Birch's own favourite subject matter to paint on china was landscapes, which she either first sketched on location or took a photograph (figure 86).⁸⁵ She was one of the few teachers who did not usually allow her students to trace the designs of other artists, unless doing portraits.⁸⁶ However Birch found that most of her students preferred painting flowers on china. In her President's Report for 1966-67, Birch stated that, 'the interest that has grown this year leads to the problem of more accomplished teachers'.⁸⁷ In July and August 1967 Birch was engaged to give ten 'lectures' on china painting at the Workers' Education Association (WEA) in Adelaide and by then SACPA had a list of eleven South Australian china painting teachers connected to the association.⁸⁸ The demand for places in classes outstripped the availability, and most teachers had waiting lists. That resulted in many prospective students turning instead for instruction to friends who themselves were just beginners, and not really equipped to teach. Copying was rife.

Consequently, towards the end of the 1960s, an increasing amount of badly painted china started to appear in public displays, or for sale at charity functions and 'op' shops. The more experienced South Australian teachers such as Mrs Jean Hughes became alarmed and realised that teachers needed help. Hughes, one of the oldest members of SACPA, was introduced to china painting in 1918 and did not start to teach till about 1950.⁸⁹ On 5 May 1968 the formation of a teacher's guild was discussed at her Brighton home, with the stated objective, 'to help teaching in general and to assist those who have just begun or intend to teach in the

future.’⁹⁰ The China Painting Teachers Guild of South Australia was then formed with Hughes as President and Ellis and Birch among the members. The Guild was to be affiliated with SACPA and would publish news in the *Brush & Palette*. Requirements for joining the Guild required submission by the candidate of three pieces of hand-painted china, followed by a secret ballot by all members attending the meeting to decide if the standard of work was of sufficient merit to warrant membership. Failure of acceptance did not preclude the person from teaching.

But the Teachers’ Guild was not the only organisation seeking to gain members. The large American group of teachers called the International China Painting Teachers Organization (ICTPO) to which many of the leading American china painters mentioned in *China Decorator* belonged, was also actively seeking new Australian members in order to extend ICTPO’s influence overseas. ICTPO admitted South Australian teachers Birch and Helen Burnett to membership in 1967 and by 1968 correspondence was taking place between some American and Australian teachers. It alarmed the South Australian Teachers Guild. In her 1968/9 report, SACPA President Ellis’s 1968-9 stated:

There have been worries expressed that the International China Painting Teachers’ Organization to which many of our active members belong, will eclipse the activities of our Association ... I regard the SACPA as the established parent body of painters within the State, and the ICTPO members as the enthusiastic of f-spring bringing the life blood and necessary stimulus of new ideas to the Club ... As we pay tribute to the ICTPO and recognise America as a leader in the China Painting field, let us not lose sight of the American ability of self-advertising ...⁹¹

In 1968, Ruth Little, who was a well-known American teacher of china painting, came to Australia. She was also a member of ICTPO and officially acted as their ambassador. Moreover the Board of ICTPO gave Little the authority to accept Australian and New Zealand members into ICTPO and appoint Regional Chairmen in Australian states.⁹² Although Little’s trip to Adelaide, including her lectures and demonstrations, was arranged by her agent in Perth and not by SACPA, she was invited to speak at a well-attended SACPA meeting in

September 1968. Little was taken out to dinner afterwards by a group of sixteen South Australian china painting teachers, many of whom became ICPTO members that evening. To become a member, teachers must have taught for two years and be nominated. Birch was officially appointed as Regional Chairman of the newly-formed South Australian branch.

Little had done a considerable amount of groundwork before her visit to Australia. She had been in contact with a scattering of teachers throughout Australia since 1964, including the author of this thesis in Broken Hill, and wrote to many Australians in the lead-up to her departure, mentioning membership of ICPTO. (See Appendix 18) The trip was a good business opportunity for Little as her book *Painting Roses for Pleasure and Profit* had ready sales and was being used as a teaching manual in four Australian states and also New Zealand.⁹³ She had shipped additional book supplies off to Harry Jackson's Drawing Supply of Perth, two months before she left America. Various china painters in Australia had also written to her and asked to purchase some of her china painting for which she agreed to paint her famous double pink roses on special pieces of china and bring the items with her.

After her return to America, she wrote a long account of her trip in the *China Decorator* and described the situation in each state.⁹⁴ Little taught for eight days in Adelaide, with classes in the retail shop Lee-Line, in Birch's studio and in Argana Arts. She believed there were 700 china painters in South Australia with thirty teachers, only three being members of ICPTO but she signed up seven more new ones.

Double pink roses were overwhelmingly Little's favourite subject to paint. She had a warm, friendly personality and her visit was notable for the enthusiasm she generated wherever she taught. Her generous nature resulted in a number of small demonstrations and gifts. Often, if asked how she painted a specific subject such as rose stems, thorns or the first fire of double

roses and was then handed a china blank, she would do a quick demonstration on the china, then give the piece back to the person concerned to take away, fire, and keep (figure 87).

In 1968 Little was selected to be named in the next edition of *Who's Who of American Women* because of her involvement with china painting and restoring and decorating glass lamps.⁹⁵ Her influence on the teaching of china painting in Australia was considerable, although she did not have an art school background. The 1968 trip was the first of Little's visits to Australia. Over the next two decades many other American china painting teachers made a trip to Australia, but Little returned several more times. Her name became almost synonymous with double pink roses and each time she was greeted with great enthusiasm. She became firm friends with Birch and Ellis, stayed with them on some occasions and also offered them hospitality when they subsequently visited America.

Visiting American teachers such as Little were vaunted as leaders in their field by their American counterparts and certainly by the majority of Australian china painters of that time, who viewed them as great artists. The methods used by American teachers such as Little were adopted as gospel by the emerging South Australian teachers. However the Americans taught china painting by an outmoded method of faithfully copying 'studies', the work of the teacher or others. Copying was a method widely used to teach various divisions of drawing and painting to male and female students throughout most of the nineteenth century. Francina Irwin, when writing about the avenues of art instruction available for women amateurs in England during the nineteenth century, noted the popularity of copying the drawings and paintings from printed studies and instruction manuals, especially those dealing with flower drawing, which was subject matter considered eminently suitable for female artists.⁹⁶ This type of instruction was done out of necessity, since women could not gain access to Art Schools till the latter part of the nineteenth century.⁹⁷ Irwin pointed out that publishing illustrated instruction manuals was one way a woman such as Mary Gartside, who specialised

in a botanical approach to flower painting, could establish a name for herself as an artist and teacher in the nineteenth century.⁹⁸

Copying was also a method used to teach painting in the Schools of Design and Painting before Gill and Tannert took over in the 1880s, but had long since been *redundant* in South Australian art schools. Indeed, as pointed out in an earlier chapter, by 1885 Tannert's pupils in the School of Painting were encouraged to produce original work for the students' exhibition and Fivash certainly painted from botanical specimens while studying under Tannert. Although copying might produce pieces that were beautiful to look at and admired by many women, china painting by copying studies in the 1960s was consequently viewed as an inferior, hobbyist type of painting aligned with a low level of art, and certainly not acceptable as fine art in Australia.

Nevertheless at that time few South Australian china painters either knew about, or were worried regarding the attitude of the fine arts world towards china painting in Australia. Instead, they were far more concerned about gaining recognition in America. In this, they were supported by Little, who encouraged Birch, Ellis and several other South Australian china painters to visit America and take part in the large ICPTO exhibitions and conventions. The travels by Australian teachers to the large American conventions influenced how china painting was subsequently exhibited and promoted in Australia during the next few decades. How this came about and the subsequent debates regarding the position of china painting as one of the fine arts, will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹ Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath, Marian Quartly, *Creating a Nation 1788-1990*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, 1994, pp. 266-8.

² David C Rich, 'Tom's vision? Playford and industrialisation', in *Playford's South Australia*, eds Bernard O'Neil, Judith Raftery, Kerrie Round, Association of Professional Historians Inc., Adelaide, 1996, pp. 94, 95.

- ³ Peter Donovan, 'Motor cars and freeways: measures of a South Australian love affair', in *Playford's South Australia*, eds Bernard O'Neil, Judith Raftery, Kerrie Round, Association of Professional Historians Inc., Adelaide, 1996, pp. 202-5.
- ⁴ Carol Bacchi, 'The Woman Question', *The Flinders History of South Australia (Social History Volume)* ed. Eric Richards, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1986, pp. 423-4.
- ⁵ Susan Sheridan, Barbara Baird, Kate Borrett, Lyndall Ryan, 'Introduction' *Who Was That Woman? The Australian Women's Weekly in the Postwar Years*. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2002, p. 1.
- ⁶ Denis O'Brien, *The Weekly*, Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood, Victoria, 1982, p. 115.
- ⁷ Barbara Baird, 'The housewife as consumer' in *Who Was That Woman? The Australian Women's Weekly in the Postwar Years*. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2002, pp. 23, 24.
- ⁸ Kate Borrett, 'Satisfaction guaranteed! Domestic Femininity' Susan Sheridan, Barbara Baird, Kate Borrett, Lyndall Ryan, *Who Was That Woman? The Australian Women's Weekly in the Postwar Years*. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2002, p. 106; Baird, p. 28.
- ⁹ *Ibid.* Baird, pp. 27, 28. Definitions of what was a luxury and what was a necessity changed during the 1950-70 period.
- ¹⁰ F. M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society. A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900*, Fontana, London, 1988, pp. 250-1, 152.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 251.
- ¹² Leonore Davidoff, Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes. Men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987, pp. 383-4.
- ¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 420-1, 429.
- ¹⁴ O'Brien, pp. 131-2.
- ¹⁵ Lyndall Ryan, 'First Interlude. Remembering *The Australian Women's Weekly* in the 1950s', Susan Sheridan, Barbara Baird, Kate Borrett, Lyndall Ryan, 'Introduction' *Who Was That Woman? The Australian Women's Weekly in the Postwar Years*. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2002, p. 64.
- ¹⁶ Interview by the author with Necia Birch, 30 August 2004.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* During the interview, Birch showed special aprons and antique china used by her family on such occasions.
- ¹⁸ 'Education' advertisement, *Advertiser*, Tuesday 24 May 1923, p. 1.
- ¹⁹ Birch interview, 30 August 2004.
- ²⁰ Interview by the author with Necia Birch, 12 January 1998. Birch was a little vague as to the exact year in which she started to teach china painting, nor was Ellis sure of the year. I presume it was c. 1962-64.
- ²¹ Interviewed by the author with Valda Ellis, 26 November 2003.
- ²² Conversation with Mr R. Fricker, Girton's archivist/historian 3rd and 4th. October 2007. He stated that Mrs. Howard Ellis B Sc. was a peripatetic teacher at Girton. There have been several name changes of this school since it was started in the early 19th century as a Dame's School. Eventually Girton Girls' School joined with King's College boys' school on 5 February 1974 to become what is now called Pembroke School Incorporated at Kensington Park, South Australia.
- ²³ Ellis interview, November 2003. As Ellis had previously received some art training, she was able to quickly pick up the simple elementary technical details of mixing and applying china paints as taught by Birch. Their china painting was fired elsewhere.
- ²⁴ Ada Hough provided a firing service, as did Joan Sullivan who lived in Plympton, Adelaide. Sullivan especially, fired for china painters from country areas. In the early 1960s the author lived in Broken Hill, NSW and sent her china painting by air freight down to Sullivan to be fired.
- ²⁵ Ellis at that time lived at 1 Moore Street, Toorak Gardens. Helen Burnett and Marie Jericho who had just taken up china painting and subsequently taught it in South Australia were also present at that meeting.
- ²⁶ The South Australian China Painters' Association Constitution, item no. 2 'Objects'.
- ²⁷ Ellis interview, 26 November 2003.
- ²⁸ 'Strathalbyn Show', *News Letter*, S.A. China Painters' Club, September 1965, p. 2. This was the first newsletter issued, and the only issue to call the organisation S.A. China Painters' Club. All subsequent issues stated South Australian China Painters' Association. The space allocated for the display at the Strathalbyn Show was about 6 feet of bench space which restricted the amount of hand painted china they could display.
- ²⁹ 'Strathalbyn Show', *News Letter*, November 1965, p. 2.
- ³⁰ 'Display', *News Letter*, March 1966
- ³¹ Birch interview 1998.
- ³² 'Business', *Brush & Palette*, June 1969, p. 1.
- ³³ Caroline Jordan, *Picturesque Pursuits: Colonial Women Artists & the Amateur Tradition*, Melbourne University Press, 2005, pp. 112, 122.
- ³⁴ 'Review of the Festival, President's Report', *News Letter*, April 1966, pp. 2, 3. The exhibition room was, however, so small that only the committee and a few invited guests could be present at Davey's opening speech.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*

- ³⁶ The rules were finally published in 'Business Meeting', *Brush & Palette* March 1967, p. 1. Some exhibiting members had been very irate with the manner in which the work was displayed and went to great lengths to shift their work to better vantage points after the exhibition committee had arranged the displays.
- ³⁷ 'Exhibition for Diabetic Children's Association', *News Letter*, September 1966, p. 1. Birch mentioned in the July 1966 *News Letter* that, before granting permission, a representative of the David Jones department store visited her to check on the quality of the china painting to be exhibited.
- ³⁸ 'Secretary's Report', *Brush & Palette*, April 1967, p. 1.
- ³⁹ 'Mannequin Parade', *Brush & Palette*, August 1967, p. 2. The December 1967 issue stated that \$150 was raised for Spina Bifida at that function.
- ⁴⁰ 'Display for Helping Hand centre', *Brush & Palette*, July 1967, p. 2.
- ⁴¹ 'Highlights from meeting 10 March 1969', *Brush & Palette*, March-April 1969, p. 2.
- ⁴² Birch interview 1998. Birch stated that when her student numbers reached thirty, they worked to a theme for an exhibition which would then consist of a great number of items. They had one exhibition in the Payneham Town Hall. Birch could not remember the exact year but she has mounted only one or two exhibitions of solely her work.
- ⁴³ 'Invitation', *Brush & Palette*, October 1969, p. 7.
- ⁴⁴ 'Annual General Meeting, President's Report, March, 1970', *Brush & Palette* April 1970, p. 2.
- ⁴⁵ 'Charity Register', *Brush & Palette*, July 1970, p. 2.
- ⁴⁶ Avis Smith, 'Does it pay?', *News Letter*, June 1966, pp. 3-5.
- ⁴⁷ Catherine Speck, 'The negotiations of career: women as artists and teachers at the South Australian School of Art 1888-1968', in *Proceedings of the 7th Australian Women's Studies Association Conference 16-18 April 1998, Adelaide*. Australian Women's Studies Association, 1998, pp. 141-160.
- ⁴⁸ The list of china painting organisations 'Porcelain Artists' Associations within Australia' is by courtesy of Colleen Moss, Badgery's Creek, NSW. It is a good indication of the years in which china painting became popular in the various Australian states, but does not list some of the smaller groups in country areas of each state.
- ⁴⁹ Ellis's own speech 'Reminiscing' given at a SACPA meeting, 11 March 1985. Ellis gave a copy of that speech to the author in 2003. Ellis recalled that one Adelaide china painter of the day grizzled at paying an extra 5c to cover costs of obtaining the china from WA.
- ⁵⁰ Item 1, *News Letter*, November 1965.
- ⁵¹ Letter from John Thomson, 28/55 Alexander Drive, Menora WA, in March 2005. He had interviewed the daughter and grand-daughter of Eugene Muriel Menz (nee Miller) and provided a considerable amount of information on Menz's extensive early art career. Menz was a member of the WA Society of Arts and exhibited china painting in that Society's 1935 annual exhibition.
- ⁵² Ames grew up in a 'not wealthy' family and became a tailor/dressmaker at a young age. She did not start to china paint till about fifty years of age. Her manual, *Roses and the Fine Art of China Painting*, self-published in 1972, was very popular with Australian china painters.
- ⁵³ 'Mrs Menz', *News Letter*, September 1965, p. 2.
- ⁵⁴ Birch, 'President's Letter', *News Letter*, Sept. 1965, p. 3. The *Brush & Palette* magazine as it is was subsequently titled and which is still circulated to members in 2008, was initially called just the *News Letter*. Mrs Eugene Menz was an elderly member of the Menz biscuit family and the September 1965 newsletter mentioned her on pages 2 and 3 in very warm terms, describing her at some length as an interesting and lovely person, who put everyone at their ease.
- ⁵⁵ Ellis interview, 26 November 2003.
- ⁵⁶ The author was china painting in Broken Hill, New South Wales at the time of Menz's visit and drove the 1000 km round trip to Adelaide especially to see how Menz painted double pink roses in the American 'Sonie Ames style'. Other china painters who lived in country areas of South Australia also drove to Adelaide to watch Menz paint, which indicates the importance attached to American china painting techniques at that time.
- ⁵⁷ 'Country Members', *News Letter*, October 1965, p. 2.
- ⁵⁸ 'Lee-line', *News Letter*, December 1965, p. 3.
- ⁵⁹ Ellis interview, November 2003. Ellis imported special bisque blanks from America; the author imported jewellery with porcelain blanks from Campana's in America and china paints from Wengers in England, when teaching china painting in Broken Hill in the 1960s.
- ⁶⁰ Campana catalogues were issued every two years and consisted of around 90 pages, depicting an enormous range of illustrated supplies, including hundreds of art 'studies', that could be required by china painters.
- ⁶¹ Phil Bullock, 'Origin of Argana', *China Decorator*, April 1969, pp. 2, 3. 'Argana' was the Aboriginal word for joy or pleasure and is one of the very few recognitions by Australian china painters of Aboriginal culture.
- ⁶² 'Library', *News Letter*, June 1966, p. 2.
- ⁶³ 'Comments. From South Australia.', *China Decorator*, July 1966, pp. 18, 19.
- ⁶⁴ 'Roses and Cherries', Vol. 10, no. 2, February 1965, p. 8. Klein was a German artist.
- ⁶⁵ Augusta Purcupile, 'Dresden China', *China Decorator*, March 1967, p. 10.

- ⁶⁶ Title and author not stated, *China Decorator*, January 1968, p. 15. The article is set between illustrations of attractively decorated plates, wine glass, candlestick. It is certainly not a working class setting!
- ⁶⁷ 'Mary Nokes', (author not stated) *China Decorator*, January 1965, p. 2.
- ⁶⁸ 'ICPTO President for 1968 – 1970 – Mary Nokes', *China Decorator*, September 1968, p. 20.
- ⁶⁹ Gladys Burbank, 'Thank You!', *China Decorator*, November 1964, p. 18.
- ⁷⁰ Audrey Hadley, 'Irving Hopkins', *China Decorator*, June 1965, p. 2.
- ⁷¹ Mildred Wolfman, 'Mrs Harvard Karp', *China Decorator*, January 1968, p. 3.
- ⁷² Gladys Burbank, 'Who comes to class?', *China Decorator*, June 1969, p. 27. Gladys, Donald and Betty Burbank were the publishers of *China Decorator*.
- ⁷³ The author was one such teacher and had May Harding, a noted West Darling authority on Australian flora as a china painting student at the same time as the author was one of her botany students. Broken Hill china painters were divided into the double pink roses group and the Australian flora group.
- ⁷⁴ 'Display china', *Brush & Palette*, July 1968, p. 2.
- ⁷⁵ 'News from Western Australia', *News Letter*, October 1965, p. 3.
- ⁷⁶ Mavis Salter, 'Western Australian Guild', *China Decorator*, January 1968, p. 9.
- ⁷⁷ 'Lecture and Demonstration', *Brush & Palette*, February 1967, p. 3. Her fee was \$31-50 per hour – quite a hefty sum at that time. She stated she would do ten articles during the two hours and would lecture all the time.
- ⁷⁸ 'Amy Lakides Summer School', *Brush & Palette*, December 1967, pp. 5, 6.
- ⁷⁹ 'Library', *Brush & Palette*, June 1968, p. 12, an article states that Lakides also donated a number of demonstration tiles to the SACPA library. They were subsequently framed and available for a short loan to SACPA members at 20c per tile.
- ⁸⁰ *Brush & Palette*, Aug. 1969, p. 8.
- ⁸¹ Advertisement in *China Decorator*, January 1977, p. 36. The advertisement also advertised her sketch books nos 1, 2, at (American) \$6.50 the set, plus postage.
- ⁸² John Thomson letter, 2005. Drok was Dutch and imprisoned in Indonesia during WWII. Little is known of her early art training before she came to Australia. Drok died in 2001, her date of birth is unknown.
- ⁸³ 'China Painting in Australia', (no author stated) *China Decorator*, March 1969, p. 19.
- ⁸⁴ 'From South Australia', *China Decorator*, July 1966, p. 18.
- ⁸⁵ Birch interview, 12 January 1998.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ⁸⁷ 'The President's Report', *Brush & Palette*, April 1967, p. 2.
- ⁸⁸ 'Teachers' names and addresses', *Brush & Palette*, August 1967, pp. 3, 4.
- ⁸⁹ H. Jean Hughes, '50 years of china painting', *Brush & Palette*, March 1968, pp. 5, 6. From her account, it seems she received no formal art training apart from during her school days. She stated that in china painting, 'one painted scenes or traced copies in the old days'.
- ⁹⁰ 'Teachers' Guild', *Brush & Palette*, June 1968, p. 9. The author believes that date is the correct one. There is however, a typed paper 'History of the South Aust. China Painting Teachers Guild' by Patricia Brown 18/2/83 in SACPA archival records, that states the date of the first meeting 6 June 1969. There are a number of other inaccuracies in that paper and the author disputes Brown's date.
- ⁹¹ 'President's Report – 1968/9', *Brush & Palette*, March – April 1969, p. 4.
- ⁹² 'Personal Invitation', *Brush & Palette*, September 1968, p. 9; 'Ruth Appreciates New Zealand and Australia', *China Decorator*, March 1969, p. 15.
- ⁹³ It was published by Brack Publications, Lubbock, Texas, 1963. Brack Little was Ruth's husband. The author's own copy, purchased from Ruth in 1964, came with her own personal message hand written in the book.
- ⁹⁴ Ruth Little, 'Ruth Appreciates ... 27,000 miles to paint china ...', *China Decorator*, March 1969, pp. 15-18.
- ⁹⁵ 'Ruth Little', (no author stated) *China Decorator*, July 1968, p. 17.
- ⁹⁶ Francina Irwin, 'Amusement or instruction? Watercolour manuals and the woman amateur', in *Women in the Victorian Art World*, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr, Manchester University Press, Manchester, England, 1995, pp. 150, 156.
- ⁹⁷ Sara M. Dodd, 'Art education for women in the 1860s: a decade of debate', in *Women in the Victorian Art World*, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr, Manchester University Press, Manchester, England, 1995, p. 187.
- ⁹⁸ Irwin, op. cit., pp 151-155. Gartside's first book came out in 1805 and by 1808 her reputation was such that Queen Charlotte and various members of the aristocracy subscribed to her publications.

Introduction

Although South Australian china painters came under American influences in the 1960s and Necia Birch became a member of the American-based International China Painting Teachers Organisation (ICPTO) in 1968, it was not until more South Australian teachers became ICPTO members in the 1970s, that the groundswell of American china painting influence gained full momentum. The ideological zeal of many leading American members of ICPTO bore some resemblance to an earlier generation of American women called 'torchbearers', who venerated Christian ideals, had a decided liking for conservative art and earnestly tried to convert others to their own philosophies.

In this chapter I will show that the very practice of china painting, the way it was taught, and the changes in the organisation of large exhibitions of china painting by Australian teachers that resulted from close contact with their American counterparts, maintained china painting as a feminine social hobby. Moreover, this occurred within a more professional business format to accommodate the widening international membership of ICPTO. Exhibitions and teaching seminars became presented as business ventures to sell new products of use in china painting; to publicise particular teachers, and promote the sale of pretty studies to copy. This was in contrast to professional art teachers in established art schools, where teaching concentrated on developing originality and encouraging critical analysis of artwork, and not copying studies or the teacher's paintings. Mainstream American china painters of the 1970-80s were, like the Australians, predominantly married, middle-class women to whom china painting was a serious hobby, to be practised and exhibited within a firmly feminine culture, without the stress of exams or the necessity of originality.

The majority of china painters in America and Australia were financially supported by their husbands and, although those who taught china painting earned sufficient to travel at their

own expense during the peak years of their teaching practices, it was disposable income for use within their hobby. Nor was their prime purpose to paint and sell china for financial gain, most chose instead to paint pretty china as special gifts to family and friends. However, in an effort to increase the exposure of their work, many teachers exhibited their china painting, often with the best pieces marked 'not for sale', in selected exhibitions with the expectation of gaining prestige amongst their peers. It also promoted their technical skills to potential pupils. In effect, they could be classified as experienced, 'semi-professional' hobbyists, keen to promote their leisure activities, although in contrast to professionals they did not earn a primary income from this, nor did they have a professional qualification from an established art school

Acknowledgement of their artistic skills was, initially in the 1960s to early 1980s, within a limited, predominantly feminine circle of fellow china painters. Even though both American and Australian china painters appeared to ignore the more radical aspects of the second wave of the feminist movement, by the late 1970s they nevertheless did follow some feminist techniques of becoming publicly vocal on matters that concerned them.

During the 1970s, the lack of acknowledgement of their work by the fine arts world was of major concern to most china painters, especially the Americans. Instead of calling themselves 'china painters' they decided to call themselves 'porcelain artists', believing the name change would increase their perceived status in the fine arts world, as many American and Australian china painters vehemently disliked their work categorised as craft. They renamed their organisation the International Porcelain Art teachers Inc. (IPATI) in 1976. Their periodical *ICPTO News* was re-titled the *Porcelain Artist*, which informs somewhat my analysis. Nevertheless *Porcelain Artist* continued the former policy of publishing only articles and photographs of work by teachers of china painting, with little reference to art produced outside that field. I will discuss the art/craft debate and show how the American china

painters fought for their work to be considered as fine art in the late 1970s and the effect this had on Australian china painters.

Acceptance of china painting as a fine art was not gained as readily as the Americans anticipated. In the 1980s there were increasing rumbles of discontent by a few china painters in America and, by the mid 1980s, certainly in Australia. The lack of originality in much of the work being generally produced, and especially the china painting featured in *Porcelain Artist* that continued to laud copying the work of 'yesteryear' eventually led to a decline in the American influence in Australia. A few Australian teachers, as will be discussed in the next chapter, were alarmed at the copyist trend of china painters and pushed for more Australian work to be published in china painting magazines and more original Australian imagery to be painted on china. A periodical, *Australian Porcelain Decorator* was published in Australia in 1981, and I will explain how this was also one of the factors that led to the fall of the American influence on Australian china painting.

Furthermore, in 1986 the American influence dramatically declined in Australia due to a decisive change in the organisation's by-laws introduced by IPATI headquarters in America, and precipitated the desire by the majority of Australian teachers to make a break with the over-riding American influence, as I will show in the closing section of this chapter. Nevertheless, two entrepreneurial South Australian china painters, Fay Good and Josephine Robinson managed to successfully navigate their way in the 1970-80s through the rise and fall of the American influence and how they did so, will be briefly discussed in this chapter.

‘All the Way with the USA’

In order to understand the clash of cultures between the Australian and American china painters, it is necessary to situate the American women in their own unique cultural tradition that reflected a group of women that Karen Blair called the ‘Torchbearers’, when she examined the influence of American women in their various art clubs during the first half of the twentieth century.¹ The name ‘Torchbearers’ indicated a belief in their duty to lead others to a high ideal. The activists were predominantly white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon, urban and middle-class, and they were especially active in arts clubs for women amateurs, and generally held the age-old admonition that women should serve others.² They firmly believed in proselytising not only for art programs they endorsed, but also fiscal policies that determined how monies raised should be spent. The American china painters of the 1970s, who sought, with apostolic zeal, to bring their Australian counterparts into the American fold in the 1970s, maintained that ‘Torchbearer’ tradition.

Such a background was very much in evidence in the various groups of American china painters mentioned in most issues of the *China Decorator* during the 1960-70s and also in the *Porcelain Artist* (originally called the *International China Painting Teachers Organization News* or *ICPTO News*), in the 1970-80s. Those magazines often mentioned the church activities of china painters, with many small local exhibitions of china painting in church halls or in the homes of teachers, with funds raised from entry fees, afternoon teas and raffles of hand painted china, then donated to charities. South Australian china painters, as mentioned in the previous chapter, held similar philosophies regarding exhibiting in church halls and raising funds for charities, but not with the same quasi fundamentalist religious zeal.

Blair also noted that American Torchbearers’ visual arts clubs showed:

willingness to meet regularly with other women to learn more in a formal setting, insistence on using refreshments and conversation to foster sociability among members ... (and) it is

significant that women decided to associate with other women ... in mixed-sex groups women did not generally enjoy the decision-making power they did in all-women's organisations.'³

Moreover many of those women's art clubs in the 1920s provided displays 'for the pleasure and edification of their membership' and built up collections for their own museum/gallery space which 'helped mark the club and its members as knowledgeable, refined and cultured. It also removed them further from the artistic life of their communities ...'⁴ Those admirable philosophies held by the Torchbearers, also underpinned the decision by ICPTO in America to establish a Museum Fund with the aim of eventually building its own museum and gallery space, and by 1979 it was reported that land had been purchased in North Dallas, Texas for that purpose.⁵ The South Australian china painting organisations adopted a similar course, with the formation of a collection of South Australian china painting for their own museum, and like ICPTO in America, started a building fund in the 1970s with the aim of eventually purchasing their own club house.⁶

Blair also described how, from the end of the nineteenth century, some clubs with Torchbearer members started to organise biennial conventions in which members could showcase their own talents and invite leading experts from similar member clubs in America to visit and give lectures.⁷ The organisation of similar conventions was certainly popular with American ICPTO china painters in the 1960s onwards and influenced their Australian counterparts to do likewise after ICPTO member Ruth Little's visit.

The first ICTPO Show in Australia was organised by members of the South Australian Regional Section under President Necia Birch. They followed the American trend of using an up-market hotel as a venue, and the Show was held in the Hotel Australia, Adelaide, on 1-2 July 1969. The choice of a hotel rather than the more usual exhibition spaces favoured by the Australian fine arts world, affirmed the shift away from art, to china painting as a social

hobby. The event was reported in the August 1969 American journal *I.C.T.P.O. News*.⁸ However it was very much a social report on who attended and what was worn, with no mention made regarding the items or images painted on the china.⁹ It certainly was not a critical review as had been the case when china painting had been exhibited in the Royal South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions in the 1920-40s. The *I.C.T.P.O. News* report clearly placed china painting more as a social, hobbyist affair for women and not as an exhibition by serious professional artists.

However it was a start on the road to international recognition for South Australian china painters, for whom plans were already in place to attend the big ICPTO International Convention in Oklahoma City in July, 1970. The *I.C.T.P.O. News* published details of the Convention well ahead of the event. (See Appendix 19.) With such a large number of exhibits, it was not customary for ICPTO exhibitions to have catalogues printed that listed individual pieces with prices - if they were indeed for sale. Only teachers were permitted to exhibit and demonstrate, and only hand-painted china was permitted – no decals, ceramics or pottery were allowed. Nor was art in other media allowed to be exhibited. This again, further shifted china painting away from art practice. There was to be a special section for antique china from members' private collections, as collecting old china and copying antique styles was popular with American china painters. Birch planned an itinerary for travel arrangements for the South Australians to not only go to Oklahoma City, but also to visit Ruth Little in Lubbock, Texas, and then travel to additional places of interest such as potteries in England and Europe.¹⁰ On 20 June 1970, Val Ellis invited members and friends to visit her home to view the china which the four South Australian ICPTO members, Marjorie Brook, Helen Burnett, Birch and herself would be exhibiting at the Convention in Oklahoma City.¹¹

The large ICPTO Convention in Oklahoma City in 1970 was Birch's first visit to America, where she exhibited, demonstrated, and was interviewed on television. She stated that her

first impression of the American china painters was, ‘Noisy! It was terrible being in an American elevator with a crowd of American china painters! However they were charming, very friendly, did a lot for us.’¹² Birch was warmly greeted as she was the first President of the South Australian Region of ICPTO and the South Australian contingent was invited into the homes of some American china painters. Birch observed that ‘most American women china painters did have their own big collections. They were usually wealthy women. Their homes were always well furnished with china on display’.¹³ Collecting antique china and painting their own china by copying antique styles, was their hobby. On that first visit to Oklahoma, Birch and the visiting Australian contingent were entertained in a home on what Birch called ‘Nob Hill’, where the visitors were served by a butler in a magnificent room. It was in marked contrast to how the Australian teachers entertained at home in the 1970s, as few Australian china painters employed home help, let alone a butler. Ellis also noticed the wealth of many American china painters and observed the manner in which they often kept and used their best pieces:

You’d have a hand-painted tray and they’d serve something on it. A chocolate cake, after dinner in a home in America, would be on a beautiful hand-painted plate. You would look around and the (painted) lamp bases would be there. Everything (painted) would be around you...

The format for the five days of the Convention was also an education for the Australasian teachers.¹⁴ The American committee meticulously organised all aspects of the convention, basing it on the format of successful business conventions and used a large hotel of good standing as the venue. The social hobby aspect of china painting dominated the occasion. Flower arrangements, table coverings and special pieces of hand-painted china as gifts and door prizes, were all carefully chosen. Hospitality books were available from 1 November 1969 for the July 1970 Convention and included tickets for general admission, breakfasts and banquet, as well as give-away sundry designs and draws for prizes.¹⁵ Birch commented that ‘American china painters were excellent businesswomen – probably better than we were!’¹⁶

Brook, Birch, Burnett and Ellis were suitably impressed and wrote letters home. An extract from Ellis's letter was published in *Brush and Palette* in which she described how the display of china painting was held in the hotel's extensive ballroom, with the walls lined with approximately fifty booths that featured china demonstrations and painting aids, and the china painting exhibits of approximately 7,600 pieces were displayed on gold taffeta that covered numerous tables in the ballroom.¹⁷ Most of the pieces were from various States of America, but several foreign countries were also represented. Ellis believed that the Australian Exhibit 'held its own', but the Australian china painters were nevertheless rather in awe of the skill of the world-class china painters.¹⁸

Birch, who was the only Australian demonstrator at that 1970 Oklahoma City Convention, gave two, one-hour demonstrations during the four-day period; namely 'Seascapes' on Thursday 9 July and 'Scenes' on Friday 10 July. A check of the complete demonstration schedule provides an indication of what was popular at the time. Roses were overwhelmingly the most popular subject, with thirteen one-hour demonstrations given during the three and a half day period. The methods used in the demonstrations showed the lack of tertiary art education of the teachers. Flowers were copied from pretty studies or painted by rote, and no live flowers were used. Portrait painting was always demonstrated by tracing and copying a studio photograph of a family member or a print by the 'Grand Masters'. Live models were not used as would be the case in an art school life drawing class, and nudity, unless of sexless cherubs, was decidedly inappropriate for these middle-class copyists. There was little individual difference between the styles of painting double pink roses on china by the leading American teachers of the 1970s such as Sonie Ames, Ruth Little, Helen Humes, and Jean Sadler, all of whom tended to paint romantic images of double pink roses based on the style of such nineteenth century painters as Franz Bischoff and Franz Aulich (figures 88a, 88b).¹⁹ It was a somewhat ironic forecast of future problems, that the same page listing some demonstration schedules of the 1970 Convention, also contained an article 'Mental Barriers'

that advised, 'One who refuses to give up old ideas refuses to grow, and without growth there is no chance of becoming an artist...'²⁰

Major International Conventions of ICPTO were held every two years, thus allowing the numerous mandatory Regional Shows to be held during the intervening years. Birch and Ellis also attended the next big International Convention held in America at Atlanta, Georgia, in June 1972 (figure 89). In March 1972 coming changes were indicated to ICPTO by-laws by the American headquarters organisation informing members that, from Regional Shows, a maximum of USA \$200 from the profit shall be retained in the Region for the next Regional Show and the balance of the profits turned over to the General Operating Fund of ICPTO.²¹ This fiscal policy was not popular with Australian members, who were determined to decide for themselves how their profits should be used, and were vocal on the matter. The American President of ICTPO Elinor Crane, after calling the business meeting at the Atlanta Convention to order and giving the prayer, then 'made a few remarks regarding the plight of our overseas members in Australia regarding monies earned at their Regional Shows'. Ellis, who by 1972 was the Regional Chairman for South Australia, was then called upon to speak for the Australians. She argued for more monies to be retained by the Regions and more exchanges to take place regarding exhibits and educational programs. Although the American headquarters had their own Museum Fund allocation from monies received, some Regions, such as South Australia, had also started their own museum collections and wanted to keep more funds. Ellis's comments were 'favorably received by those in attendance'.²² Ellis's arguments were an indication to the Americans that Australians were not inclined to go all the way with the USA in relation to the use of funds raised through the Regional Conventions. The parent ICPTO organisation later make some amendments along the lines suggested by Ellis and the Australian Conventions were exempted of some financial obligations to American ICPTO funds.

In a business meeting of ICPTO in America in July 1976, there was another revision of the organisation's by-laws with a change in name to International Porcelain Art Teachers, Inc. (IPATI), and the monthly *International China Painting Teachers Organization News (I.C.P.T.O. News)* was renamed *Porcelain Artist* in the October 1976 issue.²³ Unlike Australian china painters in the Arts and Crafts decade of the 1920-30s, few teachers in the 1960-80s had attended a recognised art school or university to undertake formal art training with examinations, thus gaining a tertiary qualification in art and the basis for professionalism. The various 'schools' advertised in china painting magazines, were usually of only a few weeks' duration and organised by fellow china painters who often had attractive certificates printed for those who attended the short courses.

It is understandable that so many unqualified American china painters to whom status was important, and who subsequently influenced many Australian teachers, were ambitious to increase their standing from what they believed to be an inferior craft category of 'painter' to what they perceived to be the higher one of a 'professional' artist. They anticipated that a higher status could be gained merely if they changed the name of 'china painting' to 'porcelain art', without debating or even appreciating whether any changes in their practices should be made in order to achieve higher recognition within the wider contemporary fine arts world. However the change of name did not alter their hobbyist status, as they maintained previous exhibition formats and continued the china painting practices of copying antique styles and traditional European floral subject matter.

The first large prestigious event for Australian china painters took place when the New South Wales Regional Branch of IPATI hosted the first Australasian IPATI Convention and Exhibition in the Menzies Hotel, Sydney in October 1979.²⁴ The Convention was attended by Gladys Galloway, President of the American IPATI and the comfortable social hobby format of dinners, breakfasts and free give-aways of donated, hand-painted china by Regional

members took place.²⁵ Subject matter painted on exhibits featured some Australian flora and birds, but double pink roses in the American style were extremely popular.

The Second Australasian Convention of IPATI was held in the Hotel Oberoi, Adelaide, September 21-26, 1981, opened by Murray Hill, M.L.C. Minister of Arts in South Australia, and attended by Dorothy Berryman the visiting American President of IPATI. The Chairman of the South Australian Region of IPATI for 1980-82 was Josie Robinson and Co-Chairman Meave Abraham. (See Appendix 20.) Unlike the first Australasian Convention of 1979, the Second Australasian received good publicity beforehand in the *Porcelain Artist*, which in April 1981 devoted a page to the coming Convention.²⁶ Furthermore, the May 1981 issue contained black and white photographs, accompanied by short artist's statements, of the work of ten South Australian members, of whom only one stated that her work was an original design.²⁷ This indicated the persistence of the hobbyist approach of copying antique styles or photographs from magazines. Likewise, in the seminars held in conjunction with the Convention, china painting was taught by tracing and copying the supplied studies, with the teacher correcting any mistakes on students' plates with her own brush strokes.²⁸ Unlike professional artists in the wider art world, originality was not deemed important by china painting teachers, and is another reason for the low status and lack of recognition of china painting by professional artists in the South Australian fine art community.

The publicity, both overseas and local, for the 1981 Second Australasian IPATI Convention, was due in part to the initiatives of Robinson, who, as will be explained later in this chapter, was familiar with promotional and advertising procedures. The local South Australian newspaper the *Advertiser* printed an article about Brazilian china painter Carlos Spina who attended the Convention to both exhibit and teach short classes.²⁹ Robinson was also a driving force behind the publication of *Porcelain Pictorial* that was a limited edition, hard cover, photographic catalogue of the 1981 Australasian IPATI Exhibition and included

photographs of at least one piece of china painting by each exhibitor. It was the first of its kind produced for an Australian exhibition of china painting. However, unlike catalogues for fine art exhibitions, it did not include any information regarding prices or work for sale.³⁰

The American influence was obvious in all IPATI Convention Exhibitions in Australia as they had to conform to strict bylaws, including financial controls, set by the American headquarters. The Americans might china paint as hobbyists, but, as Birch observed in 1970, they were excellent business women. The Conventions resembled professional business and trade conventions, rather than emphasising the china painting as a fine art exhibition. Critical reviews of work placed in those Convention exhibitions were never undertaken and published in newspapers, while very few catalogues listing the individual works and prices, were ever produced.³¹ The sheer volume of pieces of china painting placed on decorated tables was in danger of making many IPATI Exhibitions resemble sale time at a large department store, rather than selected fine art exhibits to be closely scrutinised. In later years, further conditions for exhibiting stated that all work must have been painted within the two previous years and a certain number of pieces by each exhibitor must be for sale.³² Photographs of IPATI exhibits were taken by professional photographers and no private photography was allowed. There was always an important social background to both the Conventions and the accompanying seminars, which often featured teachers from overseas and took place during either the week before or after the Exhibition. Rather ironically, one side effect of the determination by American china painting women to be powerful and successful in the 1970-80s, was the formation in America of an ancillary 'Men's Lib' club, composed of the long-suffering husbands of china painters, and for whom the IPAT Convention Committees organised small side trips in order to keep them happy during Conventions (and presumably out of the way of the women?). No similar 'Men's Lib' club occurred in Australia.

By the 1980s most Australian teachers of china painting were members of IPAT and could purchase educational IPATI publications, such as *Classical Gems*, that contained a selection of sentimental portraits of rather vapid female faces and cherubic children, as well as scenes and flowers. (See Appendix 21.) The lack of an art school education, meant that few American or Australian china painters could paint from life or nature. IPATI publications were useful for teaching, as the illustrations were printed in sizes that could be traced onto most pieces of china, which reinforced the hobbyist approach of copying and teaching. The result was a minimal difference between the china painting produced in each Australian state and in America.

This was especially so with double roses, as the American style of painting roses was constantly reinforced in the very monthly issue of *I.C.P.T.O. News*, and by the subsequent *Porcelain Artist*, either by inclusion of pretty 'studies' for readers to copy, or by articles featuring teachers with illustrations of their work. Many teachers assiduously copied so many rose studies, that they could eventually paint them by rote. Live roses in a vase on a table with other objects, were not painted as a still-life study by china painters, whether students or teachers, being beyond the skills of most. From 1975 onwards, every January issue of the china painting magazines, was devoted particularly to the subject of painting roses. Lakides, with her eye for publicity, had her rose vase featured in the 1975 January issue (figure 90).

Nevertheless, as a result of the IPATI Conventions, allied with their demonstrations and seminars, the technical standards of work produced by Australian china painters during the 1970-80s improved considerably, even though their choice of subject matter, in the main, remained conservative. Like the American china painters, many Australians liked antique hand-painted china, especially European hand-painted china such as Dresden, Meissen and Sevres, much of which was embellished with expensive, gilded, raised paste work. Such antique, hand-painted china was expensive, and a status symbol that indicated money to spare

for luxuries and a certain social status. It also looked elegant in the china cabinet, and reflected the knowledgeable and cultural taste of the owner. The work of the nineteenth century European artists such as George Leykauff from Dresden, Franz Bischoff from Bohemia and, Franz Aulich who studied in Dresden and Berlin, all of whom migrated and taught in the United States, was eminently collectable. Moreover, it could be quietly copied in the privacy of a home studio.

China painting was firmly entrenched as a form of hobbyist, copyist painting, based on antique, factory-produced, iconography. Instead of originality, the emphasis was on attaining high levels of technical skills similar to those possessed by professional decorators employed in potteries. This attitude influenced the fine arts world to align china painting produced following the 1960s revival, as a practical craft, rather than art. China painters on the whole, especially in South Australia, were not interested in becoming involved with the post-modern, contemporary art issues, or even joining less adventurous but art-based associations such as the Royal South Australian Society of Arts.

Many South Australian teachers travelled to other Australian states and America in the 1970s and early 1980s to exhibit, demonstrate, teach, and judge, as the same style of china painting was practised in both countries. Fay Good and Josie Robinson were two South Australians who made several trips to America and became adept at liaison work with American china painters. Good and Robinson were taught in the early 1970s by copying the work of others, and enjoyed china painting in social groups, as hobbyists, influenced by American trends. However, by the 1980s, both women turned their china painting knowledge and American networking contacts to practical use as a sustainable business asset, and became professional business women. This was not the same as becoming professional artists with a wide range of media skills developed from art school education, as had been the case with the china painters of the 1920-30s. Nor did becoming professional business women cause Good and Robinson

to abandon their own personal china painting practices which remained within the parameters of a hobbyist approach, built on emulating work by 'artists of yesteryear'. Moreover, professional business women in the china painting world of the 1970-80s, were obliged to understand and supply what customers wanted, which, at that time, included easy access to china painting supplies and the availability of simple, but interesting, short classes where women could learn china painting as a hobby, in a relaxed, social atmosphere. As professional business women, Good and Robinson, each in their own way, set out to fill that need, as the following two case studies demonstrate.

Case Study: Fay Good

Fay Good (b. 1943) did not have a background of formal art training, but was attracted by arts and crafts from an early age (figure 91). She was interested in English and European porcelain for many years before she became a china painter, and had gradually built up her own collection of antique china.

However it was not till marriage and the birth of a son, that Good started to learn china painting under South Australian teacher Pat Brown in 1971-2. She enjoyed her new hobby, and had further lessons from South Australian teacher Jan Collins, then in 1975, tried gold raised paste work with Dulcie Porter.³³ After further admiring the intricate gold raised paste work produced by other South Australian china painters such as Jim Stuart and Ruth Cartledge, she decided to concentrate on mastering that technique.³⁴

Good wrote an article for the March 1976 issue of *Brush & Palette* on her experiments with several different gold formulae used for decorating china.³⁵ By July 1976 she was sufficiently proficient to be one of twelve Australians in the total of 133 china painting teachers demonstrating at the important ICPTO Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, where she

demonstrated several techniques of using gold in china painting.³⁶ On her return from America, Good was in demand as a teacher in South Australia. For example, by December 1977, Argana China Arts advertised that Fay Good (in capital letters) was conducting classes in their air-conditioned studio.³⁷ Because of her interest in the antique styles of European porcelain decoration so popular in America, Good often painted, by rote, small sprays of double pink roses in the centres of her cartouches of gold raised paste during her class demonstrations. Her work looked pretty, and South Australian china painters followed her lead. It became fashionable to incorporate small sprays of traditional European flowers, including double pink roses, within gilded, raised paste cartouches.

Roses painted on china were popular, as indicated by an article, 'A Touch of Delicacy That's the Secret of Porcelain Painting' by Liane Maxfield, published in the *Australian Women's Weekly* in July 1976.³⁸ Maxfield estimated there were 6000 china painters in Australia at that time. Of the nine pieces of china painting depicted with the text, double pink roses featured on six pieces and white daisies on two. Maxfield went on to state that it, 'is an art that demands extreme delicacy of touch and patience', inferring that the china painting was, indeed, a suitable hobby for women to pursue and 'worthy of the fabulous bygone European artists of Sevres, Meissen or Chelsea'.³⁹

Good became interested in combining her raised paste work with areas of heavy grounding, often in blue, which showed the gold to advantage. It was not a new way to decorate china. She was copying an antique technique used by famous factories such as Meissen and Sèvres in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴⁰ However for Australian china painters, it was a new, additional technique to master in their leisure time, and reinforced the hobbyist approach of painstakingly copying the design work of others. Good's decorated urn, depicting her technical skills in blue grounding, gold raised paste work and a floral spray including double pink roses, featured as the cover page of the May 1980 issue of *Porcelain Artist* (figure 92).

An article by Good, published in the same issue, included the information, ‘I have never had a teacher to learn paste work from ... the good Lord helps us develop, when we discover the talents with which we’ve been endowed.’⁴¹ Good’s statement was not strictly accurate, as she had received some raised paste tuition, but her religious reference diplomatically echoed other articles on women’s talents published in the *China Decorator*, and also reflected earlier American religious sentiments promulgated by the Torchbearers.

By that time, Good showed her abilities as an emerging business woman and used her knowledge and contacts to form a commercial enterprise.⁴² She was, as will be described shortly, starting to fill two roles, namely as a professional business woman selling manufactured products, while still acting as a hobbyist china painter in her (reduced) leisure time. Good realised that her style of china painting fitted in with the American penchant for antiques and conventional subject matter redolent of the late nineteenth century, and decided to seek publicity through the *China Decorator*. It was a good business move, as that American magazine was very popular with china painters not only in America but also in Australia and increasingly in England and Asia. Articles written by Good, and her business advertisements, appeared in forty-six issues of the *China Decorator* from October 1979 to the end of 1989.⁴³ Australian china painters could not fail to be impressed that one of their number was so widely known throughout the current world of china painters.

Good was not only interested in gaining publicity via American networks, but also set her sights on England. As a business trip to make contacts in 1983, she took the further step of hosting a 37-day ‘United Kingdom Porcelain Art Tour’ leaving Adelaide in August. The itinerary was planned to include two weeks’ study in England, where tuition in painting traditional English subject matter of fruit, flowers and birds on bone china would be given by professional artists from English potteries. It was widely advertised in the *China Decorator*, the *Brush and Palette* and the *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, and reinforced the attraction to

hobbyist china painters of copying traditional English/European conservative imagery that underpinned much of the popular American china painting. The experience and networking that Good gained during that trip proved to be of subsequent use to her when she desired to further increase her own skills in the techniques of raised paste work and gilding.

Following an exhibition of her china painting with its gold raised paste work in Wendt's Jewellers in Rundle Street, Adelaide, she was sponsored by Peter Wendt and Dame Nancy Butterfield for the 1985 Churchill Fellowship. That award enabled her to travel to overseas for several months in 1985 and receive a term's tuition in design and raised paste work from the English expert in the field, Graham Davies at the Poly-Technic College in Stoke-on-Trent, England.⁴⁴ Applying raised paste and gilding were special techniques that required a very steady hand and much practise, although on a term's tuition in a subject did not make the recipient a professional artist. The Churchill Fellowship added to Fay Good's technical skill credentials, although, had she been employed within the pottery industry, she would have been classified as a gilder, rather than a professional artist producing original, contemporary images on china. During that trip Good also visited several European porcelain factories, and was particularly impressed with the work in the Meissen Porcelain Company in East Germany and the antique china collections she viewed. Good stated, 'we can all learn from studying antique pieces of painted porcelain ... even as we turn to nature for our inspiration, we seek to emulate an Old Master.'⁴⁵ It was an affirmation and vindication of her practice of replicating the styles of former centuries. Nevertheless, the combination of the Churchill Fellowship and the visit to the Meissen factory, were turning points in Good's career. She then concentrated on putting her skills and knowledge to practical use within the business world.

As mentioned in chapter one, Jordan commented on layered definitions of the term 'professional' when applied to the art world, and Gelber noted, when discussing hobbies and

leisure activities, that a pleasurable social hobby could lead to 'serious leisure' where achievements could be measured and making money from a hobby was an acceptable activity. I argue that, during the 1983-85 period, Good's 'serious leisure' activities enabled her to also become a professional business woman. She used her knowledge of the necessary supplies and technical skills required to engage in the hobby of china painting, to her financial advantage, by forming a business. The objective was to establish a wide variety of quality products, bearing her own label, for sale to china painters. Nevertheless, her own china painting practice remained firmly entrenched in her former hobbyist, copying mode, based on antique styles, albeit at a very high level of technical skill due to her Churchill Fellowship. This leads me to define Good in two different layers of professionalism, as a 'semi-professional' hobbyist china painter due to her professional training under Davies in England, and also as a professional business woman selling and demonstrating manufactured products.

By 1984 she had started to market her own range of china painting supplies which she called 'The European Collection'.⁴⁶ It included paints, brushes, mediums and some studies suitable for students to copy for gold raised paste work. Good increasingly worked as a professional business woman during the 1980s, gaining her income through selling her products by demonstrating, or charging fees for short classes/seminars in which she taught people the technical skills of applying her products to china, rather than creating original paintings on china. Her influence resulted in china painters producing pretty work that, although of a high technical quality, was a pastiche of styles and artwork of bygone eras.

As a result of her networking, Good was also in an excellent position to arrange for overseas china painters to travel to South Australia to provide tuition to Australian china painters. By the end of 1985 she had finalised plans and placed advertisements in *Brush & Palette* and *China Decorator*, that the Fay Good International School of Porcelain Arts and Crafts would

present ‘The South Australian 150th Autumn School’ in April 1986.⁴⁷ (See Appendix 22.) Her ‘European Collection’ of products was quite extensive by then, and was suitably advertised in the months beforehand. (See Appendix 23.) The School was held at the Wirrina Holiday Resort, south of Adelaide. Students attending were drawn from the hobbyist group, attracted by the thought of staying in a holiday resort and producing a pretty piece of finished work by the end of the week. The china painting teachers included two artists from the Royal Crown Derby pottery in England, an American china painter, and Good, who taught ‘European Techniques’ for which she used her own business products. South Australian china painter Jill Cooter wrote a eulogistic account of the week’s school, commenting that it was ‘magnificent in every aspect’ and attracted students from many Australian states as well as from Papua New Guinea and New Zealand.⁴⁸

The Fay Good International School of Porcelain Arts and Crafts presented another South Australian week-long school at the Wirrina Holiday Resort in May 1987. China painting teachers from the Royal Worcester Porcelain Company and the Royal Crown Derby factory, and two American and eight Australian female IPATI teachers were engaged. The subject matter taught was firmly conservative, traditional china painting.⁴⁹ Students were hobbyist china painters, eager to improve their skills by copying studies provided by the teachers. The only distinctively Australian subject matter was the class on ‘Australian Gum Scene and Birds – Mixed Medium’ taught by Di Teasdale, whose work will be discussed in the next chapter.

Nevertheless, after the success of that School, Good’s involvement with such events and her teaching commitments declined. Throughout her china painting practice, Good neither sought, nor taught, involvement with contemporary fine art practices. Her work was appreciated and valued within her china painting community, but lacked the originality of approach practised by professional art and craft practitioners of her time, and was not recognised within the wider Australian art world. She continued to china paint as a ‘semi-

professional hobbyist' in her leisure hours, working to the same high technical standard, and in the same antique style for which she was noted, but her output decreased considerably in the 1990s.

The second of two case studies that demonstrate the influence of American china painting practices in South Australians during the 1970-80s, is that of Josephine Robinson, who, like Good, turned her technical knowledge to good account and became a professional business woman.

Case Study: Josephine Robinson

Josephine (Josie) Robinson enjoyed art as a child and studied it at secondary school. However she did not start china painting until she married, had two young children, and was given a Christmas gift of one term's tuition in a china painting class under teacher Mrs Jan Collins in the 1960s. Robinson regarded china painting as a hobby and a break from domestic duties while her mother minded her children.⁵⁰ Collins, like other china painting teachers of that era, lacked professional art qualifications and taught by placing pretty American studies in front of her students. She was a popular teacher in South Australia, had a waiting list of potential students, and in 1970 persuaded Robinson to teach some women on the waiting list.

It was the start of Robinson's teaching career, and, because china painting was rapidly becoming a popular hobby for women, within a short time she was teaching many china painting classes in her home, using a variety of studies from which her pupils worked, as that was the way she had been taught. However by the late 1970s, for personal reasons, Robinson decided to establish a business. In 1977 she established the Gilberton Gallery, which subsequently had a large studio and kiln behind the shop.⁵¹ An advertisement in a 1977 issue of *Brush & Palette* informed readers that the Gilberton Gallery not only ran classes for china

painting, but also stocked glass supplies, lamps, studies, books and a wide range of craft materials for macramé, pottery, enamelling, and candle making.⁵² It marked a change from being a hobbyist china painter, to a professional business woman running a gallery, and resulted in minimal time for her own china painting practices. Robinson engaged an assistant who was also a china painting teacher, and organised a series of classes taught by other china painting teachers in the gallery studio, although Robinson also taught at various times. Classes were friendly, social affairs, and involved much copying, often from the numerous coloured studies sold in the Gilberton Gallery shop, where work by china painters was also displayed and sold.

The traditional style of china painting appealed strongly to Robinson, especially double pink roses based on the work the Master Painters Bischoff and Aulich taught in America in the late nineteenth century. During business trips overseas she travelled to America and Europe and organised a supply of china painting colours similar to those used by Bischoff and Aulich, which she sold under her own brand name and used within her own china painting (figure 93). This style of antique floral painting, especially of double roses, was a popular subject to teach in short seminars, where studies could be used. Moreover it was eminently saleable to women with a conservative taste in art and interested in antiques. Robinson explained:

I don't have a real favourite as I vary one thing to another, but the floral would be the most prolific subject that I paint. I paint florals both because I like the subject and also because it sells. I am more interested in traditional work than modern painting. Traditional designs and subject matter – florals - do fit to the shapes ... I also look at the design with the home in mind, and not as an art gallery. By 'home' I have in mind the desire to admire or to use ... I see china painting as producing an item of display and pride in the home, as well as being functional.

As a teaching aid, Robinson used several of her own pieces, each painted to a sequential stage of firing, but at the end of each year would put them in a box and dispose of them in the local garbage dump. Her success in painting in the antique style was indicated when a friend came into Gilberton Gallery one day and said to Robinson, 'Oh - I've just seen a lovely piece of

your work that a friend has just bought from an antique shop, and she paid a lot of money for it.’⁵³ Robinson recognised it as one she had once used as a teaching aid, then taken to the dump. From then on, she always broke her hand painted china before discarding it. Like most other china painters of the 1960-90s, she only signed, but rarely dated, her work.⁵⁴ Like Good, Robinson’s china painting was technically superb, but firmly based, due to her excellent technical skills, as a ‘semi-professional hobbyist’ on the work of ‘yesteryear’.

By the late 1970s, the Gilberton Gallery was one of the leading establishments for china painting in Adelaide. Robinson opened the Gilberton Gallery for free social days, during which people were welcome to enter, watch free demonstrations, chat with each other and visiting teachers and be served with refreshments as they did so. Understandably, those events were very popular and were excellent net-working occasions, especially with overseas visitors present.⁵⁵

Robinson also taught some classes, with painting wild single roses one of her specialities for beginners (figures 94a, 94b). She also arranged monthly seminars in the Gilberton Gallery studio, with a different subject by a different teacher each month, and this continued until well into the 1990s. Teachers for those seminars were often from other Australian states or even visiting teachers from America or England. How to paint roses was always a popular subject.⁵⁶ For example in September 1981 Mary Ellen Haggerty (USA) taught ‘Color and Roses’ in a 3-day seminar at Gilberton Gallery, fee \$85.⁵⁷ In December 1982, visiting china painter John Bergman (USA) took a seminar and demonstrated wild roses. In this way, hobby china painters could have a short course, usually only three lessons, from a wide range of teachers each of whom might specialise in a particular subject or technique. The classes were all essentially copyist, based on traditional images, and required no previous art training.

One of Robinson's strengths was her ability to organise and communicate with people. She travelled overseas in July 1978 as the 'Tour Escort' on a trip to the important 1978 IPATI Convention held in Dallas, Texas, where she was an exhibitor. With her exhibition work, she fitted the definition of a 'semi-professional hobbyist', as her work was always of a high technical standard, not necessarily for sale, but remained firmly based, like that of her American friends, on emulating artists of the nineteenth century. Other overseas trips followed; for example in October 1982, Robinson was one of four teachers, including Good, engaged for a 'Porcelain Artists' Cruise' on the P&O *Oriana* (figure 95).

In her professional business woman role, Robinson organised a series of annual events that were of major importance for introducing overseas ideas into the Australian china painting world. She pre-dated Good in co-ordinating these schools, which were advertised by Robinson as 'South Australia's Porcelain Arts School for Painters', popularly called the 'Summer Schools'. They took place, over a six-day period in the Barossa Valley region of South Australia, in January or February for many years. The first one was held 21-27 January 1979 in Tanunda, when all five teachers were Australian IPATI members.⁵⁸ Subject matter taught was predominantly of familiar garden flowers, mostly using studies provided by the teachers and taught in a relaxing social atmosphere. Students attending were hobbyists.

The Summer Schools became very popular and the 'Second Edition of South Australia's Porcelain Arts Schools for Painters' was held in the same venue in January 1980, with teachers from Western Australia, Victoria and South Australia. Robinson, in her role as a professional business woman, was astute enough to know that hobbyist china painters merely wanted to learn easy ways of painting pretty pieces of china that they could proudly show to family and friends after the school finished, and say that they had 'studied china painting' under one of the better-known state or overseas teachers. Robinson had the Australian and overseas connections to satisfy them.

It seemed that South Australian hobbyist china painters could never get over their passion for painting double roses, painted in variations of the American style and with little or no understanding of the tradition of flower painting by artists. It continued to be a favourite subject, being taught in the 1980 Summer School by three different Australian teachers. Subsequent Summer Schools introduced overseas teachers such as Beverley Saladin (USA) in 1982 who taught the hobbyists how to paint daisies and violets (figure 96). In the same School, South Australians Jan Milton and Jan Collins catered for the rose lovers (figures 97a, 97b). Robinson engaged Good to teach techniques of gold work in that and several other annual Summer Schools, which continued throughout most of the 1980s. Good often used gilded raised paste work and blue ground work to set off her small rose paintings (figure 98). During that period, most South Australian teachers of china painting painted their double roses by rote, with little difference in individual style (figure 99). There was no attempt to paint, from nature, the different cultivars of roses that were available in South Australian nurseries, and grew in most home gardens. Many china painting teachers had not received any formal art training and lacked the skill of drawing anything as complicated as a rose from nature. Nor did their hobbyist students wish to learn anything as tedious as drawing. It was far easier to trace and copy the many illustrations and coloured American studies that were available.

Nevertheless, by the mid 1980s there was a gradual lessening of the American influence as other overseas teachers were engaged. Gerald Delaney (UK), a china painter trained in the Royal Worcester Porcelain Factory in England, came to the Gilberton Gallery in 1984, remained in South Australia for several years and regularly taught the Worcester style, and techniques of painting fruit and birds, at the Summer Schools and in the Gilberton Gallery seminars (figure 100). The Worcester techniques were most successful when applied to English bone china; the Gilberton Gallery stocked a wide range of English bone china blanks, and offered a suitable firing service.⁵⁹ Attractive though such pieces might be to the china

painters, they were still a pastiche of a famous factory style popular in the first half of the twentieth century, and did not represent the spirit of original concept that underpinned the contemporary definition of an artist within the 'fine arts' world of the 1980s.

The lack of originality was one of the reasons why china painting in South Australia at that time was, in the view of the wider field of gallery curators, critics and writers, still viewed as a low form of copyist art. The technical skills of craftsmanship were certainly there in much of the china painting, but original creativity was not. Even aligning china painting of the 1980s with craft was not an apt classification. The differentiation between art and craft became a subject of much debate, sometimes heated, in Australia and America during those years. Many craft practitioners in the 1970s -80s, as noted by Christopher Menz, were producing and exhibiting highly original work, as a result of post art school or design school training in the Jam Factory in Adelaide.⁶⁰

By reason of their networking skills, Robinson, Good, and Ellis were three South Australian china painters who managed to navigate their way through the turmoil that led to the 1987 break between Australian and American china painters which will be discussed in the next chapter. Although those three were members of the breakaway group, they simultaneously maintained their membership in the large International Porcelain Artist (IPA) organisation in America and retained personal friendships with many American teachers. In 1988 they were the only Australians listed in the IPA Screening Committee of the IPA Certification Program for Australasia and were still listed in 1991.⁶¹

All three produced china painting of a very high standard of technical skill, and were adept at teaching those skills to their students. Nevertheless, their preference was for subject matter aligned with antique china painting of the nineteenth century, so popular in America in the 1960-80s. They were very influential in spreading the popularity of the American style of

china painting in Australia in the 1970-80s when copying pretty American studies was the vogue, although Ellis did encourage originality with her more talented students.⁶²

Due to financial reasons, a few china painters, such as Good and Robinson, worked hard, as described, to build up a business selling manufactured products, and I define them as professional business women, which is not synonymous with the definition of professional artist. Their own china painting practices, as with most of their group, remained hobbyist in approach, but Good and Robinson honed and publicised their technical skills to a level where I define them as ‘semi-professional hobbyists’. The overwhelming majority of china painters in the 1970-80s were hobbyists. To them, china painting was primarily something that was produced by copying or adapting American studies, and often gifted or kept in the home for use or display. The best pieces that had required so much work, time and skill to produce, were beyond price, and usually kept locked in the china cabinet and bequeathed within the family, usually to a daughter. China painting teachers and their students, believed that going to classes should be, as Robinson found, a pleasant social outing to escape boring domestic responsibilities and not something with an exam and a grade at the end. A short poem ‘China Painter’s Lament’ contained a verse that summed it up:

A keeper of the home fires bright,
Is my true job and goal
Yet with my hands I china paint
To satisfy my soul.⁶³

The emphasis on hobbyist china painters gaining technical skills in the smooth application of china paints to the chosen blanks; on the time consuming process of applying fine raised paste lines and gilding them; of laying a smooth application of grounding colour; and the important firing techniques to mature colours at the appropriate temperatures in multiple firings, were deemed of more importance than creating original iconography. It was a factor more aligned with a ‘craftsperson’, rather than a professional artist.⁶⁴

The Art/Craft Debate

The distinctions between ‘art’ and ‘craft’ have long been controversial and boundaries shifted somewhat during the 1970s as various craft societies sought to gain more recognition for their skills and aspired to art status for many of their hand-made items. In her seminal research Grace Cochran explored the many influences on, and paths taken by, the various craft practitioners in Australia as they strived to gain acceptance of their work by art circles and observed that, ‘for many, the path to this desire lay in being like an artist.’⁶⁵

In 1971 the Australian Prime Minister Mr McMahon announced there would be an enquiry into the role of the Arts in Australia.⁶⁶ It included the first major study of craft activities in Australia, was to be as comprehensive as possible, and the report, titled *The Crafts in Australia* in two volumes, was finally presented to Prime Minister Whitlam in 7 March, 1975. Definitions regarding what were ‘crafts’ were far reaching, with china painting one of the many skills mentioned.⁶⁷ Many general issues regarding craft practices were also raised, including training (or lack of), exhibiting, hobbyist or professional approach, and could justifiably be applied to china painting in the 1970s as well as to the wide range of other media practices mentioned. The enquiry acknowledged, with some regret, that artists working in various craft media were not recognised as artists on the same level as painters. However the Craft Council of South Australia knew that the Royal South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions of the 1930s included craft as well as fine art, as the Craft Council contacted SACPA (date unrecorded) regarding that Association’s historical collection of china painting by early South Australians and photographed some of the pieces.⁶⁸ Following that contact, Elizabeth French of the Craft Council supplied a list to SACPA of names of early china painters who exhibited in the 1930s. The names on that list were taken from the Royal South Australian Society of Arts catalogues mentioned in previous chapters and those mentioned were china painters who were also recognised as painters in the field of fine arts.

Some Arts and Crafts Societies in Australia included a few china painters, as for example, the Alooomba Arts & Crafts Group in Broken Hill, New South Wales, that was listed in the ‘Craft Organisations in Australia’ section of the Report. Some Alooomba members were associated with SACPA but lived in Broken Hill, sold their china painting through the Alooomba shop and also exhibited with their local arts society. Generally however, china painting organisations in Australia slipped through the net; the China Decorators Society of New South Wales in Sydney, the Victorian Guild of China Painters, Melbourne, the WA Guild of China Painters, Perth, being the only ones listed in the Craft Organisations in Australia.⁶⁹ No South Australian china painting associations were included in that list of craft organisations, although the Gilberton Gallery (china for painting), Alexander Agencies (white china for refiring) and Jewelcraft (china painting) appear in the list of information about supplies.⁷⁰

One possible explanation for the omission of many china painting organisations, especially those in South Australia, was that their members believed china painting to be an art and not a craft, and were therefore simply not interested to provide details for the report’s researchers. The belief that china painting was not a craft, was firmly promulgated by the all-pervasive American china painting influence of the times. The tension between definitions of artist and craftsman were mentioned when the *Crafts in Australia Report Volume 1* noted that the division between fine arts and crafts was deplored by some craftsmen, whereas other craftsmen felt that they could stand as creative artists in their own right.⁷¹ Issues of the standard of work being produced were often mentioned in the final Report, with many practitioners believing that large quantities of mediocre work appearing before the public prevented appreciation and discernment of high quality craft.

Mediocre work by china painters did appear in public, sometimes in areas where excellence was the expected aim of exhibitors. China painting was exhibited in various country shows by Birch and Ellis in their early promotional campaigns, and the trend to exhibit in country

shows took on as SACPA increased membership in country areas in the 1970s. However the increase in popularity carried with it the danger of a drop in standards of work exhibited. For example in 1972 three entries of china painting were exhibited in the Moonta Agricultural and Horticultural Society Show. In 1973 there were forty-four entries and the exhibits varied so much in quality that it was suggested there should be beginners and advanced classes.⁷² A similar situation subsequently occurred in the Royal Adelaide Agricultural and Horticultural Society Shows, where SACPA, and the teachers, lobbied for the addition of china painting classes specifically for beginners, as well as classes for more experienced china painters. At the Royal Adelaide Agricultural and Horticultural Show, china painting has consistently been exhibited in the same large hall as women's *domestic craft* work of an unvaryingly high standard such as cake decoration, knitting, embroidery, sewing and cooking, all of which attracted much public scrutiny and further promulgated the perception that china painting was a craft, not fine art. To view a crowded exhibit of beginners' china painting midst all the other highly skilled areas of women's work, might have been a cause of pride and encouragement to the beginner china painters themselves, but it did nothing to elevate china painting as a fine art form in the public eye. By contrast, the fine arts exhibits of paintings by adult artists were hung in a rather completely different section of the Royal Adelaide Showgrounds and not associated with women's crafts at all.

However in the 1970s there was one occasion when china painting was exhibited in a fine art exhibition, when the Royal South Australian Society of Arts organised an exhibition for thirteen Metropolitan and Country Art Groups in December 1973. Twenty members of SACPA, including Birch (bowl - landscapes), Ellis (pink porcelain bisque), Robinson (urn - roses) exhibited one piece each. Of the twenty pieces of china, five were decorated with paintings of double roses. It was the first occasion that any SACPA member exhibited china painting with the RSASA, but there is no evidence that it was ever repeated. China painting had indeed dropped from view in the fine arts world of South Australia since the late 1940s.

Nevertheless Australian china painters were not overly concerned during the early 1970s that the Fine Arts World of prestigious art societies, gallery curators, critics and writers ignored their work, as most American and Australian china painters were not interested in Modernism, Post Modernism or the Conceptual Art of the 1970s. A SACPA member wrote, in words that would have pleased the original American Torchbearers, that:

Art is fundamentally the expression of beauty. Modern art, in the craze for novelty, often produces forms that are weird, even grotesque and incomprehensible. An artist ... has a responsibility to produce something that is elevating and morally healthy. Let us have harmony; gracious accord with the beauty of the flowers and trees ... the spiritual heart of things. True realism is not the exhibition of some ghastly skeleton. Much of modern art smacks of the regrettable lawlessness that has corrupted music and literature. It is morally irresponsible.⁷³

Instead of weird and incomprehensible forms, china painters produced work on traditional shapes of china that would please their own social group of fellow china painters, family and friends, all of whom offered praise, not an informed criticism. The American studies they copied were easily recognisable, beautiful flowers that made people feel happy. Some Australian china painting teachers produced their own studies that students could purchase and copy. For example Robinson's teacher Jan Collins produced several sheets of her own small studies of Australian landscapes for \$1 each, and South Australian Roma Prentice, well known for her skilful china painting of fruit in the style of the nineteenth century artist Catherine Klein, produced her own original studies of fruit tree leaves for students and others.

By contrast, American china painters were becoming more active in their desire to have their work accorded a higher status. In 1977 Mary Ellen Haggerty editor of *Porcelain Artist*, stated that, 'we have been stressing, over this past year, the need and desire for our art to be given recognition as a fine art. Much progress is being made ...'⁷⁴ In 1978, Mary O. Bugher in writing on the history of International Porcelain Art Teachers, Inc. stated that the history behind the objectives of the organisation included 'the story of a legitimate art form struggling for fine art acceptance.'⁷⁵ American china painters had their own definitions of

what constituted fine art, and it certainly was not contemporary art. A paragraph in the 1978 IPATI Convention catalogue stated firmly:

... it takes great levels of patience and concentration to paint on porcelain ... that is why porcelain is totally unsuited for subjects of the immediate, the "pop", the here-today, gone tomorrow. If you are looking for generalizations about the "human condition", statements pertaining to the troubled times in which we live or the jargon too many of us have come to accept as the definitive framework of contemporary art, *you won't find them here*⁷⁶

American china painters might not be radical, militant feminists, but nevertheless they had emerged from the home and organised efficient business-like conventions in hotels and were politically vocal to the right people in order to achieve their aims. In 1972 when Jimmy Carter was Governor of the State of Georgia, his wife Rosalyn visited the 1972 ICPTO Convention in Atlanta and accepted a hand-painted, wild rose vase at the Convention luncheon and promised to push Fine Arts in every way she could.⁷⁷ In 1978 when the large International IPATI Convention was held in Dallas, Texas, the committee persuaded the Dallas Mayor to make an official proclamation that the week during which the Convention was scheduled was to be 'Porcelain Art Week' in Dallas. (See Appendix 24.) The proclamation looked impressive on paper and contained the words 'fine art'. However the inclusion of the words 'fine art' mentioned by the Dallas Mayor did not authenticate china painting as fine art. Dallas was but a small region in the world, he was not an influential art critic, and only mentioned 'fine art' following the persuasion of the committee who had their own subversive agenda for the wording.

By December 1979 the push for recognition of china painting as a fine art gained momentum when IPATP resident Gladys Galloway appealed to all IPATI members to lobby their Congressman or Senator to pass a resolution that painting on porcelain was a fine art. When the Resolution was considered in February, it failed, but there was one more chance in June 1980. Galloway renewed her call to all china painters to continue lobbying and suggested that they also engage in telephone campaigns to their local and national offices. This time they

were successful. By June, the State Legislatures of Alabama and Michigan had passed legislation declaring china painting a fine art and not a craft.⁷⁸ It was however a regional success and not an international one. On 2 July 1980 President Carter proclaimed porcelain painting a fine art, not a craft and declared July 1980 as National Porcelain Art Month, a fact that was printed in the September 1980 issue of *Porcelain Artist* for all to see. (See Appendix 25.) Nevertheless, although President Carter declared china painting a fine art it had no international significance. He was not an influential art critic. The definition of what was considered to be fine art and what was not, was made by critics, writers and art galleries in the wider art world, and not by a President who might be in office for only a few years.

Although such a proclamation delighted all Australian members and reinforced their belief that they were, indeed, fine artists and had evidence from President Carter USA to prove it, no one bothered to ponder if, indeed, President Carter's words really carried weight. Recognition by the Australian fine arts world for china painting certainly did not automatically follow. IPATI Convention rules on who could exhibit and what was allowed to be exhibited, were very restrictive, virtually making it a closed world. Moreover there was always a charge at the door to enter and view IPATI Exhibitions. It was not surprising that few people from the fine arts coterie bothered to attend. They were not interested. It was common knowledge in many fine arts circles that china painters were copyists, which was not in keeping with contemporary fine art practices.

However Robinson, too, believed that china painting deserved fine arts status. She was Chairman of the South Australian Region of IPATI when they were to be the host state for the forthcoming Second Australasian Convention and Exhibition in 1981, and set the ball rolling for South Australians by calling a meeting of IPATI members in the Gilberton Gallery in September 1980.⁷⁹ Among points listed for discussion were her plans to gain Fine Arts status for china painting. The chosen setting for the meeting was indicative of Robinson's skill at

handling people and committees. It was within the familiar, informal, sociable ambit of a friendly 'paint-in', with the women seated around long tables as they painted the donated china, chatted, enjoyed drinking coffee or tea, and ate lunch together. After three hours of this, the meeting started. Robinson gained agreement for her points raised, and the Second Australasian IPATI Convention in Adelaide in 1981 followed smoothly. Brazilian china painter Carlos Spina was one of the guest artists invited to exhibit and teach at the 1981 Convention School; an article about him in the *Advertiser* never mentioned the word 'craft' or indeed 'china painting' but called it 'porcelain painting' and informed readers that he would 'display, teach and lecture about china art.'⁸⁰ The article contained a further subtle connotation of fine art status when it mentioned that 'other porcelain exhibitions in the city this week will be at the Art Gallery of SA ...'. Nevertheless, the china painting exhibited in the IPATI Exhibition appeared to be ignored by the fine arts world, as no critical review of the work appeared in the *Advertiser* and there is no evidence that anyone from the Art Gallery of South Australia attended. Robinson had overlooked the fact that the declaration in America was regional, with no influence whatsoever on the South Australian fine art world, and that the proclivity for china painters to copy was well known within South Australian art circles.

By 1986 there were questions being raised by some experienced American china painters querying the perceived success of the 1980 proclamation that china painting was a fine art. A 1986 issue of *Porcelain Artist* contained a provocative article on the subject by Georgia Helmick, who argued that:

Just what kind of art is porcelain painting? In 1980, Congress declared it to be a fine art. Congress can not, however, define fine art. This task lies, correctly, with the art community. Porcelain artists want to be recognised as fine artists but among porcelain art teachers there seems to be a n i m p e r f e c t u n d e r s t a n d i n g o f w h a t c o n s t i t u t e s a f i n e a r t ... a l m o s t w i t h o u t e x c e p t i o n o u r w o r k i s d e r i v a t i v e a n d f i n e a r t, b y d e f i n i t i o n, i s n o t. T h e s u b j e c t m a t t e r, v e s s e l s o r s h a p e s w e p a i n t o n, s t y l e o f p a i n t i n g, a n d d e s i g n a r e o f t e n i m i t a t i v e o f o t h e r a r t i s t s a n d t i m e s. T o b e f i n e a r t i s t s w e m u s t u s e o u r m e d i u m t o c r e a t e s o m e t h i n g o r i g i n a l, u n u s u a l a n d i n n o v a t i v e ...⁸¹

The points about producing derivative work and imitative were very pertinent. It went to the very core of what was being printed in *Porcelain Artist*, exhibited in IPATI exhibitions and widely taught, especially in IPATI Convention seminars. Work that was obviously copied, especially portraits, was frequently shown. The plagiarism of china painters was yet more evidence that so many teachers lacked any formal art school training and were not interested to make the effort to attend fine art exhibitions and understand contemporary fine art. Although Helmick's argument about porcelain art teachers was based on the broad model, it also had particular relevance to the situation in South Australia at that time, especially to the Schools organised by Robinson and Good. Also appropriate to the china painting of the times, were Helmick's added comments that, 'decorative art enhances, beautifies or improves an object. A blank, white porcelain urn is "decorated" by a porcelain artist.' In that same issue, an attractive, expertly painted urn/vase in traditional 'stylised Worchester (sic) fruit' by Delaney was featured. It was in the popular traditional copyist style that he was teaching to many South Australian china painters at the Gilberton Gallery's classes in the 1980s. The cover of that issue of *Porcelain Artist* also featured a painting of a face by a teacher who described how she had carefully traced it from an antique print onto the china, and another contributor sent a photograph and description of a plate on which she had copied the picture from a greeting card. Helmick's comments were to the point, but an attack on copying and lack of originality by teachers of china painting would not be very popular with many readers. Not surprisingly, the editor added a note after Helmick's article stating that it reflected the view of Helmick and comments and/or rebuttals would be published in future editions.

Western Australian teacher Heather Taylor's written response agreed with Helmick and was critical of the *Porcelain Artist*, pointing out that it had a responsibility:

To reject reproductions and imitations. Have so few of the artists studied drawing, design, colour theory or art history? (Where are the) innovative porcelain painters?⁸²

Taylor was one of the most highly trained Australian china painting teachers of that time, was aware of contemporary art and craft practices in Australia and encouraged her students to produce original work with Australian subject matter. The lack of originality had been observed by a few other Australian teachers who contributed articles to *Porcelain Artist*. Lakides, after writing that she considered the white porcelain as her canvas, firmly admonished that, ‘until every vestige of tracing and wholesale copying is done away with, there is little hope of our acceptance as fine artists!’ Ellis and Birch also tried to impress on other china painters the virtues of original drawing and not copying, and by the 1980s both teachers considered that china painting was not given the recognition it deserved because ‘there have been too many copies. They have used the studies and it has been copy after copy.’⁸³

The tendency of china painters to copy was one reason for the lack of acknowledgement of china painting as a fine art, but another cause was the conservatism of many china painters and a refusal to interact with contemporary art ideas. Although some of the prominent American IPATI teachers such as Rosemary Radmaker allegedly ‘majored in art’, they did not show evidence of an interest in contemporary art or ceramics, but continued to espouse the ideals of conservative floral imagery.⁸⁴ Radmaker and other American china painters had been involved to varying extents in the formation of American artist Judy Chicago’s large installation exhibition the *Dinner Party*, for which Chicago went to china painting classes for eighteen months.⁸⁵ However no article on Chicago or on the *Dinner Party* exhibition appeared in the *Porcelain Artist*, despite the fact that the exhibition was completed in 1979 and travelled throughout North America, was at the 1984 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, then opened in London in March, 1985 and was acknowledged and widely discussed by the wider fine arts community. The non-recognition by *Porcelain Artist* was possibly because the images carved by Chicago into the porcelain plates and then china painted, could be read subversively as vaginal symbols. The entire installation of *Dinner Party* carried second-wave

feminist undertones; although based on the traditional feminine arts of embroidery, china painting, and entertaining, they were, in fact, contemporary art. The vaginal images bore some slight resemblance to full-blown double roses, but most certainly did not fit into the comfortable conservative type of naturalistic and morally uplifting art favoured by IPATI members.

With hindsight, had IPATI headquarters acknowledged Chicago's approach to art and her exhibition, and subsequently encouraged a more open-minded attitude by members to investigate and experiment with contemporary art practice, china painting may have become more widely accepted by the wider fine arts community. IPATI's attitude reflected that of the Torchbearers decades earlier, who 'were not interested in modern, abstract or controversial art'.⁸⁶ In Australia by the early 1980s, although strong links still remained between American and Australian china painters and double pink roses remained popular subject matter in both countries, there had been subtle indications of the decline of the American influence apparent for some years.

The Decline of the American Influence

By the 1980s, after over a decade of reading American china painting magazines, some Australians became increasingly critical of the work depicted therein and believed that American china painting was 'in a rut', with too much encouragement of copying the work of others. Although the work of American china painters was technically excellent, experienced Australian china painters believed the Americans could not teach them anything new. As prominent South Australian teacher Ruth Cartledge commented, 'by that time, we realised that we had as good a china painters as theirs!'⁸⁷ Other teachers also became critical of the Americans in the early 1980s. South Australian teacher Margaret Box, who used lustre work

extensively with her bold designs, commented that the Americans did very little experimental work but kept on painting pretty double roses, violets and raised paste in the same old style.⁸⁸

The sale of pretty studies, whether sold separately or in printed lessons, was a business proposition for the many American teachers such as Jean Sadler, who produced and heavily advertised them; consequently it was to their financial advantage to promote the use of studies. (See Appendix 26.) Many hobbyist American teachers also had the financial resources to travel widely throughout America and overseas, establishing their own reputations through teaching and demonstrating at conventions during which their studies were available and used in classes. They were always warmly greeted when they attended and demonstrated at the opening of the big Australasian IPATI Conventions and Exhibitions.

Even though, by the end of the 1970s many Australian china painting teachers were thoroughly conversant with what the Americans had to offer, and personally might prefer to experiment in other directions, demands by china painters who merely wanted a pretty hobby and liked to copy, kept the American influence alive to some extent. It did not sharply decline in the early 1980s, as was proven by the popularity of the American content of the week-long schools organised by Good and Robinson, although, as mentioned previously, there were other influences present in those same schools.

The smaller Regional Australian IPATI shows that were not visited by American IPATI teachers, provided indications of a swing away from the American influence and a trend by some Australian teachers to concentrate on subject matter and techniques not often covered in the *China Decorator* and the *Porcelain Artist*. For instance in the South Australian Regional Show in 1978, although painting roses featured in seven demonstrations, Australian subject matter also appeared. (See Appendix 27.) There was a distinct shift away from copying. Kitty Drok came from Western Australia and, as she had advocated in the 1960s, emphasised

the importance of drawing from the real thing instead of copying. Her demonstration was on observing, drawing and painting leaves. Other teachers advocated keeping sketch books of original drawings, and working from those. For example, South Australian teacher Helen Callander, who had just written her book *China Painting for Beginners*, demonstrated landscapes, a subject in which she concentrated on using her own original drawings of local countryside.⁸⁹ Birch, whose book *China Painting* was published in 1971, demonstrated scenes, stones, trees and ferns, using her own original subject matter, often drawn from nature.⁹⁰ The practices of those teachers were more in line with art school teachings, than the American copyist approach of using pictures from magazines, studies, or someone else's photographs. Techniques demonstrated by other Australian teachers included raised paste, Petit Point texture paste, dry dusting, and etching glazed porcelain surfaces with acid, all of which were rarely apparent in American china painters' work depicted in their popular magazines.

Although the *China Decorator* and *Porcelain Artist* both contained illustrated articles from time to time about items painted by various Australian china painters, most Australian work mentioned in them, tended to reflect conservative American floral imagery, especially double roses or portraits copied from Old Masters, postcards or photographs. Very occasionally, a more individual, Australian piece of work appeared, such as Diane Teasdale's 1986 painting of a kangaroo that, in her accompanying details of how she painted it, advised readers, 'snap shots do not provide enough detail ... other people's illustrations should be avoided ...' and that china painters should understand their subject and have a firm understanding of anatomy.⁹¹ Teasdale later proved to be a mover and shaker in Australian china painting after the breakaway from America, and will be discussed in the next chapter.

The American influence in Australia was gradually overtaken when another periodical colour magazine of much more interest to Australian china painters appeared in 1981. This was the

Australian Porcelain Decorator, produced in Asquith, New South Wales, by Danish immigrant Celia Larssen, who was also involved with china painters raising funds for research work into cancer.⁹² Although Larssen welcomed visiting American teachers into her studio to take short workshops and had been a member of IPATI since Little's first visit to Australia, she also encouraged Australians to produce their own original work and emphasised that fact in the new magazine.

Notwithstanding the inclusion of a number of china paintings of double pink roses, much of the work in the first issue of *Australian Porcelain Decorator* in June 1981, featured Australian images of bush scenes, Australian wildflowers and birds, albeit copied from various books or calendars. It also contained articles outside the immediate area of china painting, such as a short article on the gold rush in Australia, adjacent to a description of the application of liquid bright gold and lustres to china. The first issue also included a number of colour photographs of china paintings of Australian birds, although the bird painters were obviously not bird watchers, as the species they painted did not normally inhabit the native flora in which they were depicted, nor did their size relate to the flowers.

Nevertheless, as the *Australian Porcelain Decorator* included much information on 'what was happening where' in Australia and also contained a high percentage of Australian subject matter painted on china, it was a refreshing change from the American magazines. It rapidly increased in popularity, and did not contain the numerous homilies so favoured by *China Decorator*, and had the added advantage that any china painter could submit work, which was not the case with the *Porcelain Artist*.

In 1982 the *Australian Porcelain Decorator* included a collection of china painting featuring local scenery, titled 'Scenes and Wineries' by Betty Haysman, which was a further indication of original subject matter and a high standard of china painting (figure 101).⁹³ A lessening of

American IPATI influence was also indicated when the front cover of the same issue featured NSW wildflowers by June Downey that she had painted over a spread of twelve ceramic tiles – IPATI regulations prohibited ceramic tiles being used in exhibitions and frowned on their use by members, believing it cheapened the image of china painting.⁹⁴

Larsen was multi-skilled in subject matter and introduced her own version of contemporary Danish style of pen work designs to Australian china painters. It was not necessarily based on conventionalising floral designs, but used a more abstract system of line work in repeated divisions around the piece of china, usually a plate (figure 102). It indicated the decline in American influence, as that type of work did not usually feature in the American magazines, but often appeared in *Australian Porcelain Decorator*. From that inspiration, Australian china painters in different states, such as Val King from New South Wales, Elfi Markovitch from Tasmania and Dorothy Butler from South Australia, experimented with pen work drawings on a number of subjects, including floral paintings with pen-work outlines (figures 103, 104, 105). Some entrepreneurial Australian teachers also produced porcelain art videos for teaching purposes, such as Di Teasdale's 'Australian Animals' for \$49.50, and Barbara Dimitri's 'All over floral penwork' both of which were different to American work of the time.

Likewise, by the 1980s, Australian china painters had formed their own extensive networks. As teachers frequently circulated interstate, they spread their individual ideas of painting naturalistic Australian subject matter, instead of relying solely on American studies. Another factor in the decline of the American influence, was the number of Australian teachers who were prepared to travel to country areas. There they encouraged china painters to try techniques and subject matter not instructed to any extent in the *China Decorator*, which had previously enjoyed a wide circulation as the major influence for china painters in remote areas without ready access to teachers.

The lessening of the American influence on china painting in Australia gained momentum in 1986 following Helmick's provocative article in *Porcelain Artist* and the various letters written in by Australian and some American teachers, supporting her viewpoint. A 1980 USA Presidential Declaration had not been the hoped-for panacea for china painting to be acknowledged as a fine art, and it became obvious there was some discontent amongst IPATI members.

The Seeds of Rebellion

By 1986, things were not going as smoothly in the organisation as IPATI American headquarters desired, although issues of *Porcelain Artist* tended to either gloss over, or did not acknowledge, the dissensions within the ranks. When Kay Godshalk was President of ICTPO in America in 1975 she wrote that many china painters had regretfully commented that they never had any art training, but Godshalk believed that the informative articles in the magazine made up for that lack and 'we are getting a fine education in art'.⁹⁵ By 1980 her viewpoint changed somewhat and she wrote in an article intended to praise, enthuse and yet rally china painters to better efforts, that, 'we must have knowledge ... without access to artistic and technical knowledge will bring us frustration ...' and then noted that china painters still did not have the general support of galleries, museums, colleges or universities.⁹⁶ Godshalk then commented that, to her knowledge the technicalities of china painting were not taught on an accredited level in any college or university, but that lack was being made up by the many 'schools' or seminars organised by various china painting teachers and organisations. She believed that the greatest drawback in china painting at that time was the lack of originality. A drive for increased membership and a revision of membership categories was put on the agenda for the forthcoming 1986 International Convention in an attempt to find a solution.

On being informed of the new directions proposed, the majority of Australian IPATI members were alarmed, vocal and determined to do something about it. They no longer believed that the American china painters were the Infallible Gods (or Goddesses?) they once were.

The lengthy business meeting for all IPATI members held during the fourteenth International Convention held in Atlanta, Georgia in July 1986 was an occasion during which many changes were made to the organisation. Members from many countries, including England, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Canada, Colombia, Mexico and Brazil attended. Good, Robinson, Drok and Lakides (even though by 1986 she was resident in Georgia) were among the Australian contingent who went to the Convention. Understandably, the overwhelming majority at the business meeting were Americans. Amongst several changes made, the two that were of immediate concern to Australian members were the change in membership rules and the introduction of certification and exams for teachers.

Membership of IPATI would no longer be restricted to teachers, but would be open to anyone interested in china painting, consequently the word 'teachers' would be omitted and henceforth the organisation would be called International Porcelain Artists Inc.(IPA). Thus the organisation lost its previous exclusivity. Furthermore a Teacher Certification program was to be inaugurated, with exams for teachers and also competitions that would be judged by 'qualified judges', although exactly what background such people had, was not clearly stated, except that they could be from the wider arts community.

Australian teachers had already taken steps in teacher training and disliked the idea of American interference. But Kay Godshalk the incoming Chairman of the American IPA Board, was enthusiastic about the changes and subsequently wrote, 'we want more knowledge so we can be better teachers, so we can be better artists ...(and) the educational program will enable any teacher ... fill the gap many feel because they were not art majors!'⁹⁷ The result of

the Board's decision and Godshalk's announcement added fuel to the forthcoming rebellion in the ranks of the majority of Australian members. However not all Australian teachers were rebellious towards the new IPA constitution. Ellis, Good and Robinson's personal styles of china painting remained traditionally based, in keeping with American tastes, and they had many long-established friendships and connections with past and present members of the American Board. Moreover they were excellent teachers and demonstrators and were able to make trips to America on more than one occasion, whereas such repeated travel overseas was not as easy for other Australian teachers.

The other new by-law voted in by the Americans at the 1986 Convention business meeting that alarmed the Australians, was the Teacher Certification program and further training scheme. It proved to be more complicated than was first thought. Although all current teacher members of IPATI at the change-over to IPA were automatically listed as Certified Teachers, that certificate was the basic level and further progress up the ladder to Masters had to be by correspondence courses and assessments. The correspondence lessons for the Master's Certification Program which started in March/April *Porcelain Artist* in 1987 contained basic drawing, perspective, design and theory courses which could have been easily found in any of the many art books published in the wider field of art.⁹⁸ The footnotes and selected bibliography that accompanied the lessons were mostly from American publications, including John Ruskin, *The Elements of Art*, published in 1971. Analysis of the composition of the works of Old Masters such as Rembrandt's *Girl at a Pedestal* was also on the agenda. Having to study Rembrandt and Ruskin was an indication of the historical eras the American IPA considered important for the 1980s china painters.

Although some Australian china painting teachers possessed considerable natural talent, very few had received any formal art training in an established art school when they were young. By the 1980s many of them were middle aged (a survey of readers undertaken by IPATI in

1985-86 showed the average age at fifty years) and the thought of the American exam/assessment system in operation alarmed them. So too, was the idea of obtaining and reading the recommended books.

In any case, some Australian china painting teachers had already taken steps to improve their art skills and there were Australian venues in place that provided short courses in drawing and other arts. Although probably overlooked by the Americans, various Technical and Further Education Colleges in several Australian states had introduced china painting classes into their curricula in the 1970s, no doubt in response to the Governmental *Crafts in Australia Report*. By the 1980s, some technical colleges included china painting as a formal subject in a Certificate Course such as in the Perth and Fremantle areas in Western Australia, where *Australian Porcelain Decorator* reported that china painter Heather Taylor taught six units of china painting as electives for a Diploma of Art Studies. That Diploma course also included a wide range of compulsory art subjects.⁹⁹ Taylor's students were not allowed to copy another artist's work or use 'studies' and she never painted on their work, which was a professional art teacher's approach and in marked contrast to the methods used by the well-known American teachers of china painting.

Other colleges, for example the Gawler Adult Education Centre in South Australia engaged Helen Callander to teach china painting in 1971. The classes continued when the Centre was later renamed the Gawler College of Further Education and an Arts and Crafts Certificate course was introduced in 1977. Although, as at Gawler and some other Colleges, the china painting class was then a 'personal enrichment' or hobby-type course and did not feature in the Certificate exams, tuition was of a high standard. Callander, for example, had undertaken exam courses herself in subjects such as drawing and design to improve her china painting teacher skills.¹⁰⁰ Similarly in Mount Gambier, a Further Education course was available that enabled successful students to graduate with an Arts and Crafts Certificate. Kirsten

Christensen who had first learned china painting in Denmark before migrating to Mount Gambier, gained her Arts and Crafts Certificate in 1979, in which she included drawing, painting, pottery and other subjects that helped considerably in her subsequent designs for china painting that featured original Australian concepts (figure 106). Kirsten taught Thelma Guerin who subsequently taught china painting through the Further Education department in Mount Gambier and experimented with a wide range of techniques, including lustres and pen work around her own drawings of flowers in her garden (figure 107).¹⁰¹

Other Australian states also provided somewhat similar opportunities and as some originality of work was expected in most colleges, the American influence of copying studies further declined. In Bathurst in July 1986 the Mitchell College of Advanced Education ran the thirteenth, six-day winter School of Creative Arts, which took place twice a year in a variety of arts and crafts subjects, including porcelain art.¹⁰² China painter Sandra Brown taught the five and a half day Porcelain Art Class, the subject being ‘Textures and Techniques on Porcelain’ in which she insisted on original work and experimenting with different products, including glass chips, that were fired onto glazed porcelain surfaces to pit or raise the surface before further application of lustres or paints.¹⁰³ Although briefly mentioned in some articles in the American magazines, glass chips was a new direction for china painting, and a technique becoming increasingly practised by Australian china painters. Classes in establishments such as the Mitchell College attracted students from a wide area; Brown’s class included three New Zealand china painters.

Even more to the point for china painters in New South Wales, the Teaching Institute of Porcelain Art (NSW) (called TIPA) started in 1982. TIPA was an organisation and not a teaching school located in one particular town. It was initially inaugurated by teachers of china painting specifically to improve the standards of teachers/aspiring teachers but later included associates and would also accept applications from other states. The course required

entrants to study a total of fifteen units; not by attending a series of structured lessons but on their own initiative. Each unit contained various aspects of style, subject matter and technique, with the requirement to submit the resultant pieces of china painting for assessment at the conclusion of each unit.¹⁰⁴ It was a step towards raising the status of china painting, but not structuring any lessons and leaving it to the initiative of the student to decide what was appropriate, was not in keeping with professional tuition in formal art schools.

By June 1983 TIPA had guidelines developed and the first Assessment Weekend was held. Venues for assessment were subject to change in order to cater for the wide geographical location of NSW teachers and were held twice a year. The submitted pieces were judged by a panel of china painters who had graduated through the course or completed some units, and not by professional artists or outside judges from the fine arts world. The criteria set by TIPA for assessing the submitted china painting included points that most Australian china painters then believed to be important; namely mastery of various tricky techniques, brush strokes, cleanliness and firing results. TIPA, like IPATI, would not accept china painting done on ceramics and insisted that all blanks used must be factory-produced porcelain or bone china, without even a gold rim applied by the factory. The guidelines for unit presentation given to the students were clearly stated but rather proscriptive. Less attention was paid to a need for originality, whereas perfection in technique was always required.

The course also included training entrants how to judge china painting in competitions, where again, technical points were always scrutinised although copying portraits and photographs, Dresden styles of flowers, and partly copying scenes from magazines was acceptable. Although laudable in trying to improve standards, it was, in fact, reinforcing a hobbyist approach to china painting. Judging china painting was not necessarily the same system used within the fine arts world where concept, originality and layers of meaning were evaluated by most trained art judges.

Although TIPA included units of ‘abstract’ and ‘contemporary’ art in their course, they did not appear to establish any genuine contact and knowledge regarding what was happening in the contemporary craft and fine art world outside the china painting area. The exclusion of qualified artists with art school backgrounds from TIPA’s training and judging panel in the 1980s, tended to set china painters further apart from the wider arena of Australian fine arts in which they aspired to be recognised.

Nevertheless TIPA evolved a very comprehensive system and was a credit to the Australian china painters who initially decided on the units to be studied. One valuable component of the assessment weekends was always the friendship, learning and sharing by all, as the social aspect of china painting was considered to be very important.¹⁰⁵ TIPA undoubtedly helped raise the standard of china painting in Australia as it set examples that were later followed by other states after the breakaway from America. It remains operational for the technical training of china painters in 2008. Understandably therefore, in 1986 TIPA members were not impressed with Godshalk’s pronouncements regarding IPA’s new by-laws for teacher’s training courses that would compete with, and perhaps be preferable to, TIPA’s own course. But there were other probable factors behind the decision to abandon the former teachers-only membership of IPATI and seek members from a wider field. The financial necessity could well have been a point, although it was glossed over in the article from the International American IPATI president Gigi Leavelle in the January/February 1986 issue of *Porcelain Artist*. Leavelle’s brief account of the fact that costs had risen dramatically, including printing of *Porcelain Artist*, taxes and insurance on their building had tripled and the second mortgage on ‘our’ building had been taken over by the bank, did not necessarily imply an imminent financial crisis but was of some concern. Leavelle informed members that, ‘due to these increases, our building has been listed for sale and a new location for our office will be selected. I believe these are positive changes for I.P.A.T.’¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless, Leavelle's utterances bore a marked resemblance to situations faced many decades ago by the Torchbearers who, when initial enthusiasm ran high, purchased their own building; only to find later, that the falling membership of an organisation, combined with increasing costs of building maintenance and interest repayments, threatened financial ruin which led them to seek wider membership numbers.¹⁰⁷ Moreover the Torchbearers also formed their own art collections by purchase and donations, with the intent of forming their own suitable art gallery space, and this, too was what IPAT was doing. The Museum Fund was constantly advertising for donations for a collection of china painting and a suitable gallery in which to house it. The financial situation had not improved in 1987, when Godshalk wrote that IPA wished to reduce 'our investment' but IPA's Central office was still up for sale, had been so for some time as the depression in the oil industry had left Dallas with the worst glut of office space in the nation.¹⁰⁸

By the end of 1986 the simmering Australian rebellion against opening IPATI membership to any person interested in porcelain art came out into the open. Pam Colbeck of the Victorian Porcelain Art Teachers (PAT) wrote a terse letter to the editor of *Australian Porcelain Decorator*. It was published in the 1986 December issue. The Victorian PAT believed that the Americans had sought to 'increase membership to help support their increasingly difficult financial situation. We, as a teaching organisation in Victoria, find this unacceptable ...'¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, Colbeck wrote in the same letter, that negotiations were in progress to amalgamate with other similar Australian organisations and that 'we see our way clear now without the ties to America, to promote our own Australian artists and our own aims ...'. Another report in the same issue of *Australian Porcelain Decorator* indicated that Victoria was not the only Australian state considering the same action.¹¹⁰

How the Australian and New Zealand members of the former IPATI organisation finally broke ties with America and formed their own Australasian organisation in its place, will be

followed in the next chapter. However it was not without some initial problems. Moreover the subsequent efforts to find and establish an Australian identity for china painting were more difficult than had been realised. Although Australian subject matter was increasingly popular, and a few teachers, as mentioned earlier, were advocating working from original sketch books, many teachers, and students, were not comfortable with that concept of originality. The copyist, hobbyist approach, albeit from publications on Australiana, remained firmly entrenched in many china painting practices. The interesting and differing points of view about china painting as a contemporary art or craft, and where it was going, will also be explored in the next chapter. There were promising signs of some limited professionalism emerging, when several china painters with tertiary art school qualifications exhibited some 'experimental work' in an attempt to regain recognition of the earlier status of china painting as an art form.

¹ Karen Blair, *The Torchbearers; Women and their Amateur Arts Associations in America, 1890-1930*, Indiana University Press, 1994, pp. 3, 7, 8.

² Ibid. 'Arts and Activism', p. 33.

³ Ibid. 'The Struggle to be Seen' p. 77.

⁴ Ibid. 'Art for Clubwomen' p. 89.

⁵ Elinor Crane, Chairman, 'Bulletin: from the Board', *Porcelain Artist*, March 1979, p. 6.

⁶ Birch, 'President's Message', *Brush & Palette*, September 1974. Birch suggested that each member raise \$50 towards the proposed purchase of a suitable property. The fund grew over several years, but a building was never purchased by the South Australians.

⁷ Blair, 'Hear America First', pp. 50, 51.

⁸ 'South Australia Regional Show', *International China Painting Teachers' Organization News*, August 1969, p. 8.

⁹ Ibid. As was the custom of polite society of the times, married women were mentioned by their husband's name. Mrs Richard D. Geppert, wife of the US Consul in SA opened the exhibition. She wore a crystal lime knitted suit and was welcomed by Mrs. Max Birch who was in an aqua jersey suit with crocheted collar and cuffs.

¹⁰ 'I.C.P.T.O. News' and 'China Painters' Convention, 1970 in U.S.A.', *Brush & Palette* February 1969, pp. 4, 6.

¹¹ 'Dates to Remember', *Brush & Palette*, June 1970, p. 5.

¹² Interview by the author with Necia Birch, 30 August 2004.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Speech by Ellis to SACPA members on 11 March 1985, (copy held by thesis author). Australian teachers met up with New Zealand teachers. Ellis stated that Joan Dillon of New Zealand attended the Convention in Oklahoma City and was livid because she was asked from what part of Australia she came.

¹⁵ 'Hospitality books', *International China Painting Teachers' Organization News*, October 1969, p. 15.

Included were tickets for door prizes, special prizes and free items from ten commercial booths. Many china painters had donated pieces of their work to be given away as lucky draws or gifts to visiting dignitaries.

¹⁶ Necia Birch interview, 30 August 2004.

¹⁷ 'Overseas News', *Brush & Palette*, August 1970, pp. 4, 5.

¹⁸ Ibid.

- ¹⁹ Aulich and Bischoff trained as china painters in Europe in the mid to late 19th. Century before migrating to America where they taught china painting to many middle-class white women. The Educational Fund of IPATI published numerous illustrations and booklets on them. Their work was very collectable as antiques.
- ²⁰ No author stated, 'Mental Barriers', *I.C.T.P.O. News*, April 1970, p. 9.
- ²¹ 'Proposed Changes in Bylaws of I.C.P.T.O.' *I.C.P.T.O. News*, March 1972, pp. 17-19.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Conversation with Ellis by the author, 20 February 2008. Ellis stated the name change did not occur without heated discussion between original founding members of ICPTO and the then current Board.
- ²⁴ New Zealand china painting Regions joined the Australian Regions, hence 'Australasian'.
- ²⁵ The author was then a member of the NSW branch of IPATI, attended the event, and noted how at that time, Australian china painters seemed to be overwhelmed and impressed by the American presence and rhetoric.
- ²⁶ Greta Lawrie, 'Australasian Convention and Exhibition', *Porcelain Artist*, April 1982, p. 18.
- ²⁷ 'Second Australian Convention, Australian Artists', *Porcelain Artist*, May 1981, pp. 20-25. Joyce Pike was the only one to state that her design was original. It was a linear, stylised design based on a lyre bird
- ²⁸ The author was a student in one of these seminars. Everyone's work finally looked identical to the study.
- ²⁹ 'Carlos Spina is a man of many true loves', *Advertiser*, 21 September 1981, p. 7.
- ³⁰ *Porcelain Pictorial* was published by International Porcelain Art Teachers Inc. South Australian Region, December 1981 (Limited Edition). In a conversation with Robinson after her interview of 8 January 1998, the author was told that not all copies of *Porcelain Pictorial* were sold and the SA Regional IPATI Committee subsequently destroyed the unsold copies. That is a pity as it is a useful historical record and the existing copies in private hands are now sought after by antique shops and collectors.
- ³¹ One exception was the NSW Region of IPATI with their 1977 Regional Show, officially opened by Jayne Houston (USA) President IPATI. The catalogue was produced on similar lines to a fine art exhibition, with the work by each NSW china painter numbered, titled and priced. In addition to eighteen exhibiting NSW china painters, there were three from the USA, one from New Zealand and five from SA. Prices on work, for example NSW china painter June Kay, ranged from \$15 for a lustre ring box, to \$600 for her hydrangea vase.
- ³² Firing the date of painting under the work was not mandatory however and was, in most cases, firmly resisted by the majority of china painters who argued that it hindered subsequent sale of their work. They argued that the public always wanted to buy their 'latest work'. Such a mindset by china painters is frustrating for art historians!
- ³³ Fay Good, 'Profile', *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, December 1985, p. 42.
- ³⁴ Interview by the author with Ruth Cartledge, 12 February 2003. Cartledge taught and exhibited china painting and gold raised paste work in South Australia in the 1970-80s. Cartledge learned gold raised paste work from South Australian china painter Jim Stuart. Good wrote an article 'Jim Stuart, Adelaide, South Australia' in *Porcelain Artist* June 1981 issue. pp. 34-36.
- ³⁵ Good, 'Gold', *Brush & Palette*, March 1976, pp. 11, 12. This was followed by a further article on gold in the May issue, pp 10, 11.
- ³⁶ 'List of demonstrators for the International China Painting Teachers Organization', *I.C.T.P.O. News*, May 1976, pp. 8, 9.
- ³⁷ 'Argana China Arts', *Brush & Palette*, December 1977, p. 12. At that time the shop was at 45 Duthy Street, Malvern and they stocked Kitty Droks' china paints and Sonie Ames' china paints as well as text books and studies etc.
- ³⁸ Liane Maxfield, 'A Touch of Delicacy', *Australian Women's Weekly*, 21 July 1976, p. 51. The two women mentioned in the article were Mrs Toby Blanchfield and Mrs Avis Miles, both of New South Wales.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Jan Diviš, *European Porcelain*, Peerage Books, London, 1983, pp. 67, 141; Robin Hildyard, *European Ceramics*, V & A Publications, London, 1999, p.94.
- ⁴¹ Fay Good, 'Cover Artist', *Porcelain Artist*, May 1980, p. 12. This comment is at variance to her statements in 'Profile' mentioned in reference 37.
- ⁴² The author is not privy to the personal information regarding the exact date when Good extended her china painting knowledge into a formal business activity, but believes it was the early 1980s.
- ⁴³ During that period, *China Decorator* published a series of seventeen articles by Good titled 'Thunder From Down Under', some of which were on the history of ceramics, although she never provided references.
- ⁴⁴ Fay Good, 'Profile', *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, December 1985, p. 43.
- ⁴⁵ 'Fay Good', *Porcelain Artist*, November 1981, p. 36.
- ⁴⁶ The 'European Collection' was also available from her agent in America and was regularly advertised in many issues of the *China Decorator* from the 1984 March issue through to the 1989 issues.
- ⁴⁷ 'Fay Good International School of Porcelain Arts and Crafts', *Brush & Palette*, September 1985, pp. 10-11; *China Decorator*, November 1985, p. 12. The 'craft' of embroidery was also taught at that School.
- ⁴⁸ 'Jill Cooter, 'South Australian News', *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, September 1986, p. 44. Cooter stated that the American china painter San Do was only 27 years of age and that she 'would consider him a world class porcelain painter' and 'a magnificent artist'. However he only copied portraits by other artists without acknowledging them, which reinforced the hobbyist copy approach.

- ⁴⁹ Advertisement, 'The South Australian Autumn School, 3rd May – 9th May 1987' in *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, December 1986, p. 46, Subjects included 'Traditional Painting', 'Dresden and European Techniques', as well as roses, pansies, poppies and the techniques of raised paste and gilding.
- ⁵⁰ Josie Robinson, interview by the author, 8 January 1998.
- ⁵¹ Initially Gilberton Gallery was at no. 2-4 Walkerville Terrace, but later moved to no. 101.
- ⁵² Advertisement 'Gilberton Gallery', *Brush & Palette*, March 1977, p. 10.
- ⁵³ Robinson interview, 1998.
- ⁵⁴ Robinson explained, in a later conversation with the author, that the lack of a date fired onto the back of the china painting could assist sales, especially through antique shops. She also had found out that many people who purchased china painting while the artist was alive, wanted 'your latest work' and not your old work, believing that if it were old and not sold, there was something wrong with it!
- ⁵⁵ 'Dates to Remember', *Brush & Palette*, December 1978, p. 3.
- ⁵⁶ 'The Gilberton Gallery', *Brush & Palette*, October 1982, pp. 11, 12. Four-day seminars could also include, at an extra cost, a separate short lecture/demonstration session by some well-known overseas artists such as John Bergman.
- ⁵⁷ 'Gilberton Gallery Seminars', *Brush & Palette*, March 1981, p. 10. The classes ran from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- ⁵⁸ 'South Australia's first porcelain art school for painters', *Brush & Palette*, October 1978, pp. 5-7. The School venue was the Weintal Hotel/Motel, fees for day students \$130, a twin room was \$250. All meals provided, social occasions as well. A limit of ten students in a class, with a certificate and banquet at the end. It was very popular.
- ⁵⁹ It is beyond the parameters of this thesis to discuss the subtleties of techniques to obtain the rich glowing colours of fruit for which Royal Worcester work is famous and why it is more successful on English bone china rather than bone china from Brazil or Japan. Robinson herself received considerable instruction from Delaney before she also taught the technique.
- ⁶⁰ Christopher Menz, *Australian Decorative Arts*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1996, pp. 101-105.
- ⁶¹ 'Screening Committees IPA Certification Program', *Porcelain Artist*, July/August 1988, p. 2. Screening committees were formed in Australasia, Central America, Canada, Europe, Japan, South America, USA Eastern Region, USA Southern Region and USA Western Region; 'Screening Committees IPA Certification Program', *Porcelain Artist*, January/February 1991, p. 2. By then Portugal was another country involved with the program.
- ⁶² Interview by the author with Valda Ellis, 26 November 2003.
- ⁶³ 'A china painter's lament', *Brush & Palette*, October 1978, p. 9. It was acknowledged by courtesy of the *China Decorator*, 1971.
- ⁶⁴ 'Craftsman' in *Webster's New World Dictionary*, fourth edition, Wiley Publishing, New York, 2003; 'craftsperson' in *The Illustrated Encyclopedic Dictionary*, Bay Books, Oxford University Press, 1986. 'Artisan' has a similar meaning.
- ⁶⁵ Grace Cochrane, 1998, Truth or Trap? PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, pp. 77, 78.
- ⁶⁶ 'History of the Committee of Enquiry into the Crafts in Australia', *The Crafts in Australia, Volume 1. Report*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra 1975, p. 1.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid. Chapter 3, 'What are the Crafts?', p. 7.
- ⁶⁸ 'Historical Collection', *Brush & Palette*, December 1984, p. 6.
- ⁶⁹ 'Craft Organisations in Australia', 9B-2, *The Crafts in Australia, Volume 2, Appendixes*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975, pp. 206, 207.
- ⁷⁰ 'Suppliers, Addresses and Information about Supplies', 7B-1, *The Crafts in Australia, Volume 2, Appendixes*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975, pp. 140, 141, 142.
- ⁷¹ 'The Craftsman in Australia', *The Crafts in Australia, Volume 1. Report*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra 1975, p. 12.
- ⁷² Lee Sanders, 'The 102nd Annual Show of the A.H.& F. Society Inc.', *Brush & Palette*, November 1973, p. 2.
- ⁷³ Contributed by a Member, 'Thoughts on Art', *Brush & Palette*, September 1970, pp. 6, 7.
- ⁷⁴ Mary Ellen Haggerty, 'Gleanings', *Porcelain Artist*, June 1977, p. 6.
- ⁷⁵ Mary O. Bugher, 'History', *International Porcelain Art Teachers, Inc. Convention Catalogue Exhibit 1978*, Executive Offices 1978 International Porcelain Art Teachers, Inc., Dallas, Texas, p. 3. This catalogue was the first of its kind and the proceeds from its sale were to go to the Museum Fund for construction of a museum of china painting in America.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 9.
- ⁷⁷ Elinor Crane, 'Our First Lady', *Porcelain Artist*, June 1977, p. 6.
- ⁷⁸ 'IPAT News', *Porcelain Artist*, June 1980, p. 6.
- ⁷⁹ An original letter for this meeting is held by the author.
- ⁸⁰ 'Carlos Spina is a man of many true loves', *Advertiser*, Monday 21 September 1981, p. 7.
- ⁸¹ Georgia Helmick, 'Reflections', *Porcelain Artist*, May/June 1986, p. 18.
- ⁸² Replies to 'Reflections', *Porcelain Artist*, November/December 1986, p. 51.
- ⁸³ Ellis interview November 2003; Birch interview. January 1988.

⁸⁴ ‘Rosemarie Radmaker’, *ICTPO News*, October 1974, p. 8. She was Vice President of ICPTO in 1974 and the article stated her formal education included the basic fundamentals as well as more advanced courses. Like many American teachers, it was inferred they were University trained in art, but actual proof and further information was rarely supplied.

⁸⁵ Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, Anchor Press, New York, 1979, pp. 9, 10.

⁸⁶ Blair, ‘The Struggle to be Seen’, p. 76; ‘Art in the Schools’, p. 87.

⁸⁷ Cartledge interview, 12 February 2003.

⁸⁸ Interview by the author with Margaret Box, 31 January 1998. Box was also skilled in silk painting and both her silk and china painting sold readily through several selected outlets, one of which was in Victoria.

⁸⁹ Helen Callander, *China Painting for Beginners*, Nadjuri Australia, Jamestown, SA, 1978. The book contained numerous landscape and floral drawings by Callander.

⁹⁰ Necia Birch, *China Painting*, Rigby Ltd., Australia, 1971.

⁹¹ Diane Teasdale, ‘Painting from Nature’, *Porcelain Artist*, May/June 1986, pp. 32, 33.

⁹² ‘What is A.P.D.A.?’ *Australian Porcelain Decorator Vol. 1 No. 1*, June 1981, p. 31.

⁹³ Betty Haysman, ‘Scenes & Wineries’, *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, September 1982, p. 28.

⁹⁴ The other reason why IPATI would not allow ‘domestic quality’ ceramic tiles in exhibitions was their stated reason that such tiles would not stand the repeated firings necessary for china painting. Such a statement indicated a lack of knowledge and expertise as the author personally painted successfully on ceramic tiles on many occasions.

⁹⁵ Kay Godshalk, ‘Lagniappe’, *ICTPO News*, April 1975, p. 3.

⁹⁶ Kay Godshalk, ‘Where do we go from here?’, *Porcelain Artist*, April 1980, pp. 10-12.

⁹⁷ Kay Godshalk, ‘Letter from the Chairman of the Board’, *Porcelain Artist*, September/October 1986, p. 14.

⁹⁸ It is the author’s belief, after four years full-time, degree study in the South Australian School of Art, University of South Australia, 1990-94, that, with hindsight, the instruction in those IPA courses was indeed very basic and would have been taught to students in an established Australian art school in the first month or so.

⁹⁹ ‘Profile, Heather Tailor, Western Australia’, *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, June 1986, p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Helen Callander, Chairman, South Australia’, *Porcelain Artist*, April 1977, p. 30; Personal phone call by the author 19 March, 2008 to Bob Fielke, Vice Principal of the Gawler College of Further Education in the 1970s. Fielke checked his records and the prospectus and said china painting was not an official subject in the Arts and Crafts Certificate Course.

¹⁰¹ Interview by the author with Thelma Guerin, 16 February 1998.

¹⁰² ‘Mitchell School of Creative Arts’, *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, June 1986, p. 7.

¹⁰³ Sandra Brown, ‘Thirteenth Winter School at Mitchell College, Bathurst’, *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, December 1986, p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ Interview by the author with TIPA member Margaret Towler, Buff Point, NSW, 19 July 2003, to whom I am indebted for her gift to me of the Constitution of the Organisation and many records and guidelines for presentation and judging.

¹⁰⁵ Towler interview, 2003.

¹⁰⁶ Gigi Leavelle, ‘From the President’s Desk’, *Porcelain Artist*, January/February 1986, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Blair, pp. 194, 195.

¹⁰⁸ Kay Godshalk, ‘From the Chairman of the Board’, *Porcelain Artist*, May/June 1987, pp. 6, 38.

¹⁰⁹ Pam Colbeck, Secretary Victorian Porcelain Art Teachers Inc., ‘Letters to the Editor’, *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, December 1986, p. 26.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* ‘Report on the Formation of the Australasian Art Teachers’, p. 35.

Introduction

By 1986, china painting had been a popular copyist activity for post-war Australian women hobbyists for more than two decades, although during that period, as discussed in the previous chapter, some had achieved a high level of technical skill. As a result of the activities of the International Porcelain Art Teachers Inc. (IPATI), there was in place throughout Australia and New Zealand a firm network of experienced teachers, most of whom knew each other personally and communicated together regularly via their Regional State Letters. Thus it was relatively easy to mobilise support. In 1986 it took just one letter to American headquarters to break the membership ties of the Australian Regions with America and form a separate Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers Inc. (APAT) with each state a Region.

The First Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers Exhibition and Convention was held in Brisbane in 1987. A small group of avant-garde china painters exhibiting at this exhibition tried to break with the former copyist china painting practices of hobbyist Australian china painters, in order to forge a highly individual Australian identity for china painting. A key factor that set them apart from the other exhibitors and influenced the decision of the avant-garde group to push for an Australian identity, was their education in tertiary art schools. Their training as professional artists enabled them to understand why china painting in the 1960-80s was out of touch with contemporary art and craft practices and accorded a low status by the wider art and craft communities.

They hoped, by exhibiting their new experimental work, to gain recognition in other art circles that china painting could be an interesting new creative activity focussing on Australian imagery. Case studies will be given of three of those avant-garde teachers: Beverley Ambridge, Dianne Teasdale and Sandra Brown. They sought to incorporate

Australian iconography and introduce contemporary art/craft approaches to china painting. Their exhibited work caused a furore within the Australian china painting community. They received a certain amount of support, especially in their use of Australian iconography, and influenced a few china painters to explore more original concepts in their work. However the majority of Australian china painters had no understanding of contemporary art/craft ideologies and refused to change their mindset. After the furore died down, Australian china painting remained with the hobbyist approach and low status, although it did gain an Australian identity. Australian flora increased in popularity, some china painters were encouraged to paint more Australian birds and animals, while other Australian china painters experimented with pen work. The promulgation of a more distinctly Australian face for china painting was also assisted by the *Australian Porcelain Decorator* magazine. How this occurred will also be discussed in this chapter.

During the 1990s, china painting in South Australia declined in popularity as a social hobby. Ambridge and Teasdale left the field of china painting and practised in other media. By the beginning of the twenty-first century the number of hobbyist, copyist practitioners had dwindled to such low numbers that the organisations struggled to survive. Nevertheless, there were several professional artists who neither belonged to, nor influenced, the Australian china painting community, but incorporated aspects of china painting within their professional art practices. They will be briefly discussed towards the end of this chapter, as they may herald a new direction for china painting on the horizon, with a possible shift in status in the twenty-first century.

The Breakaway

As the 1980s progressed, changes in Australian china painting to reflect a more individualistic approach became increasingly apparent, and were observed by *Australian Porcelain Decorator*. In 1986, editor Celia Larssen commented in an editorial that:

Reflecting on what is seen at recent exhibitions in Western Australia and Victoria, it can't help being noticed that foremost Australian china painters are experimenting with new ideas ... I am referring to free flowing designs, motifs with semi abstractions, bracelets and rings with abstract designs and techniques with application of glass, raised paste and textures with a completely new appearance. It is encouraging ... that attempts to deviate from the more traditional approach is received with enthusiasm.¹

In a later 1986 editorial, Larssen stated that, in conversation with a display manager of a venue in which an exhibition of china painting was held in South Australia in the early 1980s, he commented on the fine work in the exhibition but 'it appeared to him that it was the same kind of work as had been seen during the last century; there was not really displayed anything new in the way of styles and ideas'.² Larssen then made the point that if the same display manager viewed the current 1986 work being produced by china painters he 'would no doubt have to admit that a vital change has now taken place'.³

Larssen was a New South Wales member of IPATI, well aware of the disagreements held by Australian members with American policies, but as the editor of the magazine, she tactfully refrained from commenting on the subject. Instead, she affirmed the establishment of an Australian identity through consistently pointing out and publishing the interesting changes taking place in Australian china painting and frequently featured china painting by leading Australian teachers. For instance, the June 1986 issue of *Australian Porcelain Decorator* certainly validated Larssen's comments regarding the 'vital change', by including a photo of a teapot by well-known Western Australian teacher Heather Tailor who painted a number of wet teabags dangling around a teapot (fig. 108). Not only were paintings of popular brands of tea bags hanging on the outside of a teapot an unusual subject, but it played with the whole

notion of the friendly social aspects of china painting, where a ‘cuppa’ during a lesson marked the friendliness inherent in the occasion.

Taylor was at that time, well known throughout Australia for her innovative china painting and teaching abilities, hence the American changes in Teacher Certification seemed ludicrous if applicable to such as her. The proposed ‘Degree Certification’ for the American award of Master Teacher of Porcelain Art was a ploy that could imply to the outside world that china painting teachers were university graduates and post graduates, whereas in fact the ‘degrees’ had no such standing. It is not surprising that Australian members such as Ellis, Ambridge, Teasdale and Brown who were familiar with university degree status, were alarmed. Most Australian teachers also viewed askance the wording used when Dorothy Berryman, Chairman of the By-Laws Committee at the American IPATI headquarters, sent a list of twenty proposed revisions of IPATI Bylaws with a covering letter dated 1 April 1986 to all members. Berryman wrote that, ‘Much prayerful thought and consideration has gone into the preparation of the following recommended changes to our Constitution and By-Laws’.⁴ The use of the words ‘prayerful thought’ had resonance with the Torchbearer attitudes, but did not help Berryman’s cause in Australia, as few Australian teachers used such words. Instead, they could assume that, because the American decisions had been made following communication with God, they were with Divine Blessing, and those who did not go along with them risked His/Her Justifiable Wrath!

The South Australian Region of IPATI held their Annual General Meeting on 16 May 1986, during which Regional Chairman Elaine Jury noted the proposed changes to IPATI By-Laws which were then discussed. All members present were opposed to the changes. After receiving legal advice, members decided to proceed with making the break.⁵ On 14 June 1986 a meeting of the NSW branch was held in the Pennant Hills Community Hall. Marjorie Jarrett Chairman of the New South Wales Region of IPATI, had ‘explained the grave

seriousness and implications of propositions outlined by IPAT, USA' to NSW members and then 'shouldered the worrying necessity of contacting Chairmen of our other Australasian Regions for their opinions and intentions'.⁶ She found that Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia had decided to break away, but Tasmania, Queensland and New Zealand were still to have their meetings. Subsequently a meeting of all Regional Chairmen to take combined action was called, to be held at the Glenview Inn and Convention Centre, Sydney in early September 1986.

As a result, a letter on behalf of the five Australian Regional branches, dated 5 September 1986 was sent by Betty Hood, Hon. Secretary of the Queensland Region, to the newly elected 1986 President Perry Hare of International Porcelain Artists (IPA), in Texas, USA. The letter was brief and to the point and notified Hare that the Presidents of the Australasian States of IPA had, at a meeting, formed the Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers, to be effective from 30 September 1986. It was signed by Presidents Iris Hopkins of Queensland, Karen Davey of Western Australia, Meredith Porter of Victoria, Elaine Jury of South Australia and Marjorie Jarrett of New South Wales.⁷ It was the official split by Australian china painting teachers from IPA and the over-riding American influence of American china painters, and thus the first official indication that Australians wished to forge their own identity.

No time was wasted. On 6 September 1986 a Steering Committee for the Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers met and the first rules for membership of Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers (APAT) were moved and carried. Rules included the necessity for intending applicants to have been teaching continuously for a period of two years, with a minimum of five students immediately prior to application, and to submit for assessment, three pieces of their work that included different techniques. Further standing rules were also made. The biennial Australasian Exhibition and Convention, was to be rotated in a specified order between the states, with regulations for the management of a fund for that purpose and other

financial controls. A donation from funds earned could be made to a nominated charity at the discretion of the Host Executive, similar to the American model.⁸ In that respect, APAT maintained the image of a group of caring, middle-class women who donated effort, time and money to help deserving charities, thus perpetuating the hobbyist tradition.

Kay Godshalk, on behalf of the American Central Office of International Porcelain Artists Inc, replied to the Australian breakaway group. Her letter, dated 20 November 1986, was printed in the NSW group's December 1986 *Newsletter*. She stated that, 'growth of any kind can be both disruptive and painful' and went on to point out the gains of their new program, which 'simply indicates that the membership has matured through these years'. She did however add:

I do want to point out that one significant new challenge is our certification program designed to help our members, teachers and non teachers, acquire a basic education in art. I am very pleased to see our organization undertake this program, following the example of the Australians who made it available to their members years ago. The Australians were the vanguard in this important area, and it is high time we got in step!⁹

Although her words might, to some extent, flatter the NSW Teaching Institute of Porcelain Art and the Porcelain Art Teachers Guild of South Australia, she made no concessions to any members of those organisations by allowing them any credit for subjects studied or examined. Most Australian teachers remained unimpressed. Nevertheless, as mentioned in the previous chapter, some teachers, for example Ellis and Robinson remained within the International Porcelain Artists Inc. as well as becoming members of APAT, and became involved with the IPA Certification Program.

It took some months to finally legalise matters and attend to the financial aspects of the changeover in all Australian states. Western Australian members included some women from Singapore. New Zealand was happy to join the Australians, hence the reason for the word 'Australasian'. In South Australia the legalities were finalised at a meeting on 6 February

1987 when, after much discussion on financial matters, the Porcelain Art Teachers Guild and the former IPATI S A Region combined to form the new association called Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers, SA Incorporated.¹⁰ (Commonly called APAT, with the addition of the initials of the pertinent state branch if required).

One consequence of the formation of APAT in each state was the decision to produce a general APAT Newsletter called *Open Medium* on a rotational yearly state basis, with nominated state reporters. *Open Medium* was available to financial APAT members only and provided an outlet for their freely expressed thoughts, opinions and strong comments. In the first issue, South Australian reporter Beverley Ambridge wrote:

However – yes – we do owe America a great deal, but the time has come to “have a go” here in Australia. There are regrets at leaving the ‘American Umbrella’, but we are all confident of making a real success of our Association – lets stand on our own rubber-thonged feet!¹¹

To mark the occasion, Ambridge included her drawing *Advance Australia Fair* of a china painter holding a large paintbrush upright as a flagpole, with the Australian flag fluttering at the top, and surrounded by an admiring kangaroo and koala, echidna and emu (fig. 109). The inclusion of a ‘plump chook’ with head turned away is an interesting addition. Although chooks were common in many Aussie Back Yards, Ambridge also used it as a subtle indication of ‘those dear old chooks – Australian elderly china painters’.¹² The main topic of conversation between teachers in each state at that time was the forthcoming First Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers Exhibition and Convention to be held in Brisbane in October 1987. The next issue of *Open Medium* carried a drawing by Ambridge on the cover, depicting a member dragging her husband along as she rushed off to Brisbane (fig 110).

The First Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers Exhibition and Convention.

The Queensland branch of APAT was responsible for the First Australasian Exhibition and Convention, to be held in Brisbane 28-31 October 1987. Despite the breakaway, the Queensland branch still followed the American tradition in their Exhibition format. An expensive, up-market hotel convention centre was sought and the Mayfair Crest Hotel on the City Square in Brisbane was chosen. All potential exhibitors were sent an entry form and an informative newsletter with a small sample of the pink Exhibition Tablecloth that was to be used under the exhibits.¹³ The deliberate choice of a pink colour was a conservative feminine statement – and an indication that exhibitors should paint with suitable harmonising feminine colours to avoid discord. The Queensland APAT also clung to the hobbyist, feminine charitable role by deciding to donate some profits to their chosen 1987 charity – the Endeavour Foundation. The Australasian Exhibition Executive Committee desired to retain firm control of the exhibits, to ensure they conformed to a designated standard of perfection.

Moreover the Exhibition Committee asked all APAT members, irrespective of State, to paint and donate two small pieces of porcelain as Banquet Gifts. This had been the custom at former IPATI conventions and most APAT members were happy to maintain the tradition, although the amount of decoration they painted was often minimal and frequently depicted the ever-popular small double pink roses. China painters were, in this instance, told to mark the pieces ‘1987 A.P.A.T. Queensland’. To give away small pieces of hand-painted china as souvenirs to guests at a large exhibition dinner was held by most china painters as an entrenched feminine ideal of a perfect hostess. The fact that no Australian fine arts organisation did such a thing was ignored. Nor was it considered that such small pieces might later end up in second-hand or charity shops. People who were not china painters and who did not have to pay for what they received, tended to not appreciate those small, free souvenirs.

The Queensland committee worked hard to ensure that the exhibition was a notable success; even arranging a concurrent program of 'Men's Hospitality' tours around Queensland for those males who courageously accompanied their china-painting wives to the Exhibition and Convention.¹⁴ In the program of fifty-four (mostly one-hour) demonstrations that ran concurrently with the four days of the exhibition, seventeen demonstrations were by china painting teachers from England, USA and Brazil. Of the three, one-hour, rose-painting demonstrations, two were by a visiting American china painter Jan Byerlee. The Exhibition was followed by four days of seminars.

The entry form for the 1987 Australasian Porcelain Art teachers Exhibition contained information that up to five pieces per member were allowed to be exhibited, of which two only could be kiln fired, 'experimental pieces' – no ceramics pieces allowed. The exact definition of the clay body in 'ceramic pieces' was not made. What was considered 'experimental' was also not stated, but it was generally assumed to be recognisable subject matter and techniques, that did not stray too far from naturalistic florals or Australiana and was painted on factory-made porcelain blanks. Such illustrative work rarely required any input from the viewer in order to understand it.

However one significant event marked the 1987 Brisbane exhibition. It occurred when some of the most innovative Australian teachers sought to exhibit work that horrified the traditionalists and pushed the boundaries of the rules set by APAT. It was the first attempt to break with tradition and forge a truly Australian content and identity for china painting. Those ground-breaking teachers consisted of a small group from Western Australia, and another group of three teachers who were firm friends, namely Beverley Ambridge from South Australia, Dianne Teasdale and Sandra Brown from New South Wales.¹⁵ All were concerned with the direction of contemporary china painting in Australia, believing that most

china painters still remained very conservative in outlook, and had little idea of the value of originality.¹⁶

Brown stated that she had been earlier influenced by the philosophies of china painters in the false assumption that china painting should be accepted as 'fine art'.¹⁷ Because traditional china painting was mostly done on factory-produced, white glazed, domestic ware, other artists especially potters, regaled her with comments that it was therefore 'not credible' as fine art. As a result, for the 1987 first APAT Exhibition, Brown decided to produce works on factory-made china 'in a way that they could no longer be perceived to be used in a "domestic" sense and would therefore be seen as works of art in their own right'.¹⁸

Brown first chose a 30 cm. plain round white plate as symbolic of china painting and deliberately broke it. She then set about designing a sculptural piece from the shards that, when decorated, referenced an opal reef, using textural paste and opal lustre to achieve the effect. Her other pieces utilised the concepts of 'Treasures of the Earth' and also incorporated the breakage factor. One segment of a broken pillow-shaped vase was filled with hundreds of pieces of broken and lustred glass set into texturing paste, to represent crystals such as amethysts in a thunder egg (fig. 111). Brown stated:

All these items were certainly no longer practical or useful – but they were presented as a sculptural installation, complete with wooden stands and brass name plates similar to those used to identify exhibited minerals.¹⁹

Teasdale majored in painting at the National Gallery Art School of NSW, had an intense interest and skill in painting wild-life, and had been greatly influenced by a visit to Rickett's Sanctuary in the Dandenongs, Victoria. She chose to paint animal portraits on pieces of broken china, which she adhered to a perspex hanging mount and titled her work 'Bracken Hearth'.²⁰ Larssen featured it on the cover of the June 1988 issue of *Australian Porcelain Decorator* (fig. 112). It was an example of contemporary art and could be read at various

levels of 'hearth and home' with visual comments on the homes of various creatures in the wild, allied with notions of fragility, broken environments (broken hearth), and dispersed animal life. Environmental concerns, as Christopher Menz observed when surveying the productions of craft practitioners of the 1970-90s, featured in the work of many decorative arts people of that era. The manner in which they expressed their concerns could vary from the media used, to the object made or how it was decorated, or even with the title given to the piece by the artist.²¹ Such readings however stretched the imagination and were possibly beyond the understanding of conservative china painters accustomed to realistic, romantic floral paintings.

Ambridge was well aware of what was happening in contemporary art in South Australia as she was a regular viewer of contemporary exhibitions and maintained contact with her friends who taught art in secondary schools in South Australia. She called her china painting 'decorative art' but refused to be bound by conservative traditions of floral paintings of cottage garden flowers.²² Instead, she constantly experimented with other subject matter for china painting and with other media. In 1987 she was interested in making her own flat slab ceramics using various porcelain and earthenware clay bodies that had glazed sections on which she used her china painting skills.

Ambridge decided to push the boundaries and exhibit some of her experimental work of carved, free-form ceramic ware such as 'Fly in the Desert' which can be read at several levels (fig. 113). The artist, who was also an environmentalist and conservationist, at that time, was producing china painting featuring the Australian landscape as if seen from the air, with the desert blooming with drifts of everlasting daisies after rain. Her dragonfly piece can be viewed as an aerial comment on the drying creek beds in the red earth of outback Australia, where the disappearing water leads to the death of the various transient creatures, including dragonflies, which multiply after the rains. It also has some resonance with dead creatures

being trapped and preserved forever as occurs in Australian opal fields like White Cliffs, or in amber around the Baltic.

The works submitted by Brown, Teasdale and Ambridge certainly did not make for comfortable, easy to understand, viewing. Brown stated:

We set our work up individually at the exhibition, with mine being the most experimental looking as its formal use was of a sculptural installation. The committee saw them, were shocked, horrified and indignant. We were each taken aside and told that they had looked at our work in detail and considered them **not** of the standard of 'an International Exhibition'. Di and I were taken to task about the use of 'broken' forms that the committee considered inferior...Bev was questioned about her use of different ceramic clays for her slabs...They threatened to dismantle my installation and debar some of the other two artists' items as they were 'unfinished' and did not fit their criteria of standards for the exhibition of china painting.²³

The committee then went away to deliberate. Meanwhile many other exhibitors gathered around to make judgements on the work, with most comments being extremely favourable and supportive. Ambridge loudly stated that, if they could not exhibit such work, they would take it down to the foyer, set it up and put high prices on it and she was sure it would sell to wealthy Japanese tourists!²⁴

It was a feminist gesture by Ambridge to stand her ground, sell her work and shake the Australian conservatives in the china-painting world to bring them in touch with more contemporary male and female art/craft trends in the outside world. She was aware of the manner in which ceramic art was viewed and treasured in Asia and the fact that some broken pieces of hand painted china were venerated to such an extent that they were sometimes mounted as brooches. Tourism from neighbouring countries was becoming a new economic feature for Queensland galleries and tourists were seeking art, craft or souvenirs with Australian content. Although most Australian china painters desperately wished their work to be viewed as fine art, they nevertheless closed their eyes to the contemporary Australian art scene and firmly refused to be associated with the word 'craft'. Indeed very few china

painters were at all interested in what the Crafts Council of Australia had done, and ignored it. Ambridge tried to open their minds and eyes. All three women were furious that they had to justify their work to the Exhibition Committee, who considered it to be imperfect.²⁵

The committee returned and somewhat reluctantly permitted the group to leave their exhibits in place, probably because they sensed the groundswell of support for the contemporary work. Most of Brown's work was purchased by other collectors as soon as the sales desk opened. Ambridge's work always sold well, wherever she exhibited. Teasdale dismantled her work after the exhibition and most of her broken pieces were purchased by collectors.

Ambridge was also aware of the potential breakaway group from Western Australia who were at the same exhibition. Marilyn Barrington and Heather Taylor were two members of that group who had been involved with the recognised On-glaze Certificate course through the Western Australian Department of Technical and Further Education and consequently were exposed to all sorts of other art influences.²⁶ Like Ambridge, Barrington was a conservationist and the Western Australian Art Gallery had previously purchased an example of Barrington's work incorporating a piece of leather with a ceramic tube on which she had painted a parrot. It was Barrington's visual comment on the illegal practice of posting live Australian parrots overseas. In the 1987 Brisbane APAT exhibition, Barrington had mounted her exhibit as an installation along somewhat similar lines. The Committee would not allow such an installation and insisted that only her china be exhibited and not the complete installation which they dismantled.²⁷ Ambridge knew that such an action had upset Barrington very much. In later years, those innovative members from Western Australia distanced themselves somewhat from exhibiting very much of their innovative contemporary work in APAT exhibitions, which weakened the forward impetus of an Australian identity for china painting and certainly lessened the chances of wider recognition of china painting throughout the art/craft world.²⁸

The Australian Porcelain resident Iris Hopkins later wrote an account of that Exhibition in *Australian Porcelain Decorator*.²⁹ It was a good description of what was undoubtedly a happy, eye-catching social occasion, but more suitable for the women's section in a newspaper, rather than an informative review of the artwork in what was deemed an important 'first' exhibition. The report informed readers that the 'Presidential Ballroom of the Mayfair Crest Hotel was converted into a porcelain art exhibition, with magnificent chandeliers reflecting in the waterfall that was erected at the exhibition entrance'. There were backdrops of palm trees and exotic plants. The exhibits were arranged on 'a very soft shade of ashes of roses with matching silk flowers' and the tables were finished off with 'burgundy pleated skirts'. It was a statement of femininity, rather than a review of a serious art exhibition. The remainder of the article eulogised the important guests, the cocktail party, the candle-lit dinner in the ballroom, but made no comments on the hand-painted china exhibited, a part from the fact they were 'treasured pieces' and 'some conventional, some showing the artist's imagination'. This emphasis on a conservative feminine role for china painters was at odds with their avowed insistence that their work was fine art and that they be taken seriously by the fine arts world, and thus re-instated the hobbyist tradition.

Hopkins also ignored publishing the fact that, for the first time in such an exhibition, three of the leading original, avant-garde china painters in Australia had successfully challenged and broken some of the former stringent rules for exhibited pieces. Nor did Hopkins mention the attempt by the very innovative Western Australian group to present their work in a manner previously accepted within the fine arts world, but refused in Brisbane due to the restrictive ruling of the newly formed APAT 1987 Exhibition Committee. The new APAT Exhibition rules were based on former IPATI rules. There was irony in remembering the former IPATI pledge:

I pledge devotion to the art of porcelain painting in all its branches and to work diligently to obtain acceptance of our better creative efforts as a Fine Art. Through teaching, study,

research, trial and error experimentation, I pledge, when possible, to project new thoughts and ideas into this art.³⁰

The next few issues of *Open Medium*, that circulated amongst APAT teachers only, contained many comments over experimental work. There was a groundswell of support for such work, although there were, as expected, many china painters who still preferred conservative work of ‘yesteryear’. The cover of the issue after the 1987 Brisbane Exhibition featured a drawing of Van Gogh with a pad and bandage over his (missing) ear area with the words, ‘I get so angry when they reject my experimental works’.³¹ (See Appendix 28) The drawing was unsigned but it had all the hallmarks and humour for which Ambridge was known. An article, presumably by the editor, adjacent to the image argued, ‘If we in A.P.A.T. want the world to recognise porcelain painting as a true art form, it would seem foolish to have a rule that limits the production of new ideas’.³² The same issue contained a lengthy article by ‘Yours grovellingly, Beverley Ambridge’ in which she wrote of the reasons for her experimental work, stating that ‘in recent months I became aware that I was going stale, and felt that I could not happily paint in the same style any longer’.³³ She pleaded for compromise and indulgence of the host exhibition committees of future Australasian Exhibitions to have a section for experimental work. Ambridge further pointed out that any art form would stagnate unless more experimental work was carried out, and questioned, if restrictions continued, would it be worth her while to travel interstate and exhibit in future exhibitions?

Taylor published an article in the same issue of *Open Medium*, pointing out the advantages of exhibiting in an art gallery if china painters really wished their work to be viewed as fine art. She observed that, ‘the atmosphere of an art gallery is entirely different to a hotel ballroom’ and wrote about the success of a recent exhibition by their Western Australian group of work titled *Alternatives*, and mounted in a gallery that normally exhibited fine art paintings.³⁴ *Alternatives* had been very successful, received excellent reviews, good sales, many viewers and they had been asked to have subsequent gallery exhibitions.³⁵ The restrictive stance taken

by the committee against the installations of the Western Australian avant-garde group at the Brisbane 1987 APAT did not result in the group's immediate resignation from APAT, but nevertheless there was a cooling in the group's attitude and a lessening of their involvement with APAT.³⁶

The next few issues of *Open Medium* included further discussion on experimental work. Ev Hales from Victoria believed that the previous teaching of forms and forget-me-nots encouraged narrow parameters of china painting and did not cater for those who had different tastes. She noted that, in modern techniques, 'we are no longer side-tracked by a recognisable image'.³⁷

Controversy was still raging in print within the 1988 vol. 2 no. 1 issue of *Open Medium*. A hard-working Queensland member known for her conservative work and who had been heavily involved in the 1987 First Australasian, defended the Committee's decisions, stating that she believed 'five pieces of experimental work together would make a boring display and show a minimal amount of china painting'. She further believed that, as members had elected them, the Executive decisions should be accepted.³⁸

Noted Canberra china painter and editor Tricia Bradford, who was very familiar with the work of a wide range of Australian china painters, entered the discussions in *Open Medium*.³⁹ She addressed her comments 'To Would-be Professionals,' reminded readers that they were painting 'in an unknown field about which the public is almost totally ignorant' and admonished:

If we want to have painting on porcelain recognised as art it is imperative we change our image and our presentation, not only of the art we practice (sic) but of ourselves as well. Look at our exhibitions ... how can we expect art galleries to take seriously a bunch of women who hire a big room and fill it full of tables cluttered with pretty plates and vases? ... Until we take ourselves seriously and act as artists we can-not expect the rest of the world to consider us as anything but hobby painters who decorate porcelain in their spare time.⁴⁰

Bradford also wrote a somewhat milder letter to the editor of *Australian Porcelain Decorator* suggesting that:

There seems to be some confusion and dare I say it, dissension over what is and what is not acceptable for exhibition as porcelain art ... in general, art, be it on porcelain or any other surface, should know no restrictions. Convention encourages boredom ... art which has been painted onto a porcelain surface and fired in a kiln is porcelain art. If the artist chooses to decorate his/her subject in order to present it differently, that is his/her choice and as such should be respected.⁴¹

Other china painters who were also concerned over the stance taken by the Queensland committee members regarding 'experimental work' wrote to the editor of *Australian Porcelain Decorator*. South Australian member Margaret Faulks who was also experimenting with unconventional china painting, wrote:

What is experimental in one person's eyes, may be "real art" in another's, and who are we to judge. Now we have reached this cross road in Porcelain Art, I feel the time has come for all the elected State Committees to look at drawing up a new set of guidelines ... and not rules ... it is really NOT what it is made FROM that is of value, but the creativeness and professionalism of the work and its most outstanding point, uniqueness! How can we go around and say rose plates are unique? ... How many of these artists are we going to lose from our ranks if we exclude their forte?⁴²

Ambridge, Teasdale and Brown remained involved to varying extents with APAT after that ground-breaking exhibition of 1987. Nonetheless, Ambridge and Teasdale did withdraw from taking such an active role in china painting. Instead, they extended their art practices into wider fields beyond those of most china painters, as will be explained in the following short case studies, and therefore laid the ground work for china painters to also widen their skills.

Case Study: Beverley Ambridge

Beverley Ambridge (nee Klopffer) (1936-2003) was interested in art during her secondary education when she also went part-time to the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts. She became a full-time student there in 1952, after enrolling in Adelaide Teachers College to become a High School art teacher. It was a period of training during which, as potential art

teachers, they were bombarded with new ideas and what was called ‘free art’ in contrast to the more formal art styles taught by older teachers. Although Ambridge saw Gladys Good’s china painting class, she did not wish to learn.⁴³ After graduating, she taught art in secondary schools for approximately seven years.

It was not till after she was married and her daughter was about three years of age that Ambridge took up art again. Her mother, without consultation, enrolled her in china painting classes under Jan Collins in c. 1970. Collins was unaware that Ambridge was not an ordinary student who fitted the copyist, hobbyist definition of china painters, but was a professional art teacher with formal art training in an art school. Collins was a hobbyist china painter with no art qualifications, and taught by using studies for her students to copy. She constantly told Ambridge to wipe the colour off as she was painting too heavily, which irked Ambridge, who did not like the ‘soft technique’ of pale colours fashionable in china painting at that time. After about three months, Ambridge left Collins, well aware of the inadequacies of the hobbyist approach used by china painting teachers in Adelaide. Ambridge knew that the lack of originality resulting from the copyist approach did not produce work acceptable within the fine arts community, and lowered the status of china painting. At the time, she kept silent, but the experience underpinned the stance she took in 1987 when she attempted to influence a shift in the status of china painting.

Nonetheless she enjoyed china painting after leaving the class, and eventually taught it, although she was well known for her dislike of double roses. As Ambridge said:

I went more into design than teaching techniques or things like that. That is – as much as I was allowed to! I gradually phased myself out of teaching normal china painting and tried to stress design and creativity. But it was like hitting my head against a brick wall! Or a porcelain wall!⁴⁴

Her words ‘as much as I am allowed to’ indicates her frustration at the copyist, hobbyist approach expected in the usual china painting classes and demonstrations, where the students only wished to paint pretty pieces of china, without the effort of learning to design and create original work. Ambridge’s increasing loss of interest in conforming to hobbyist china painting practice, was indicated when, during the mid 1980s, she was experimenting with rolling out pieces of terracotta clay and glazing them. As she had not trained as a potter, she had earlier sought help from a wide range of sources, including pottery suppliers and people with experience in ceramics, so was well aware of the increased ceramics activity amongst craftspeople in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when producing original craftwork was paramount. As Christopher Menz stated when explaining the ceramics produced during the South Australian craft movement that gained pace in the 1970s, ‘forging a break from their functional heritage was a significant element of the crafts movement ...’⁴⁵ Ambridge was well aware that functional use of an item was one of the historical definitions of craft and served to distinguish it from art. Although Ambridge did not experiment widely with coloured glazes, she could see the creative possibilities of making a ceramic body, glazing and china painting only a part of it to produce a non-functional item. She enjoyed experimenting and sought to pass on her knowledge to china painters. She knew that:

A lot of potters, with their criteria, are not recognising it (china painting) as they believe that you have to create a piece of clay before you decorate it. They say that it’s more a craft than an art, but I used to think that I was more involved with trying to promote and justify it as an art form. Perhaps indirectly you would have to call it a craft, but this didn’t worry me as I ended up calling myself a decorative artist. I was quite happy with that. However a lot of china painters were not, they didn’t like the term at all, but I didn’t care.⁴⁶

Her remarks confirm the low status of china painting both within the fine arts world, and also the craft world, at that time. Ambridge was aware that the American influence of copying antique styles of artwork was a factor in its lack of recognition by the art world, when she added:

It’s been given the recognition that it deserves in a closed circle. And that closed circle is very happy with the recognition that it has. It has a big following, particularly in America. It has

been given the recognition that it deserves unfortunately because a lot of them have closed minds!

Following the controversies over exhibiting a number of experimental pieces in the 1987 APAT exhibition, Ambridge let it be known that she considered it pointless to attend the next big APAT Exhibition and Convention in Christchurch in September 1989. Her decision provoked a New Zealand china painter to comment in *Open Medium* in 1989 that:

Beverley Ambridge's letter pleading for indulgence to exhibit more than two pieces of experimental work touched our sympathies. However it is not for the N. Z. Region to change any of the A.P.A.T. Exhibition rules.⁴⁷

Nevertheless a South Australian friend persuaded Ambridge to exhibit a plate in the 1989 APAT Exhibition in New Zealand. The friend packed one of Ambridge's less-controversial china paintings done on a factory-produced plate in her own baggage. Ambridge was extremely surprised to be notified that her plate *Armenian Earthquake Victim* won the coveted Isobel Agnew Exhibition Award for the best originality and creativity on commercial porcelain. *Australian Porcelain Decorator* devoted a page to Ambridge's award (fig. 114).⁴⁸ An accompanying article gave Ambridge's artist's statement on the painting. She informed readers that the subject matter came from a newspaper report that showed a woman and her three children who had been rescued after forty-eight hours under rubble following an Armenian earthquake in 1988. It affected Ambridge greatly and she used only the faces from the photograph, seeking to show the extraordinarily strong face of the woman who had survived and also 'possible problems arising from having three little girls in such a male-dominated society as Armenia'.⁴⁹ Furthermore, she stated that her broken but rich background colours suggested the ideas of torn fabrics, broken ground and buildings, with four strong female faces struggling to live through all the confusion.

After the 1987 APAT Brisbane Exhibition, Ambridge tried to encourage South Australian china painters to become more creative, believing that this could gain some recognition and

raise the status of their work within the contemporary arts or crafts world. To this end, the few short seminars she taught in Adelaide over the next year or so, were predominantly on various ways of carving clay slabs, glazing, modelling and the use of china paints on selected areas of fired, glazed clay. Ambridge was an entertaining speaker. China painters enjoyed listening to her and watching her demonstrations, but they were disinclined to follow her lead, although her work with clay, and china painting small sections of it, featured in *Australian Porcelain Decorator* after the 1987 Brisbane Exhibition.⁵⁰

To Ambridge, china painting was an interesting hobby, but it neither filled all her leisure time, nor did she take her practice as seriously as did other china painters of her time. She was not the typical china painting hobbyist who loved copying pretty American studies and emulating antique styles. The skills resulting from her art school training resulted in her work being not only of a high technical standard, but also very creative, so I define her as a professional hobbyist. She did not feel the need to be bound by the conservative APAT 'porcelain only' dictum for china painting, or for regular teaching and exhibiting.

By the end of the 1980s, Ambridge was tired of china painting, and realised that, although she had been influential in encouraging the use of Australian imagery, she had made little headway in persuading china painters to become more creative and thus raise the status of china painting in South Australia. She decided to shift into other fields of art, and took up silk painting and printmaking, after which her involvement with china painting was minimal. Sadly, she died in 2003.

The only student of Ambridge's who used china painting as a creative medium, was her daughter Margaret, who decided to include Art as a matriculation subject in the 1980s prior to entering university to train as a physiotherapist. She had long been interested in her mother's art activities, including china painting, and was:

well aware of Mum's influence and the fight she was having to bring new techniques or subject matter into the medium. That was a great effort. They [the china painters] were not even putting themselves into their work – there is no meaning behind their work ... why you are doing it, what are you trying to portray, what meaning, what feeling ... china painters when they paint a plate they don't think what the viewer is going to feel apart from the joy of looking at a pretty plate.⁵¹

Margaret's statement also shows the lack of creativity, the hobbyist approach of china painters in South Australia and why her mother, in frustration, gave up trying to change the status of china painting. It only took a week for Ambridge to teach her daughter the necessary china painting techniques for the practical section of the project. For this, Margaret used the concept of death in nature and suburbia and painted, amongst other pieces, a 'dead bird lying in a beautiful autumnal bed of autumn leaves – *The Perfect Death*' (fig. 115).⁵²

The results of the research section of Margaret's project also identified the hobbyist definition of china painting in South Australia. She formulated a questionnaire that was completed by a mix of nineteen china painting teachers and students.

In her analysis of the results, she found a fundamental lack of basic design and compositional skills in the work produced by those china painters during the period under examination, namely the 1970-80s, although their technical skills were high. Margaret further noted from her survey that 'almost none' of the china painters of that era had received any formal art training beyond primary school level and this lack of formal art training, she argued, resulted in a lack of confidence to experiment with novel subject matter.⁵³ She discovered that the reason for her respondents pursuing porcelain painting was the desire for a hobby with which to escape from home duties, coupled with a n interest in the art. Margaret came to a conclusion that china painting was:

a medium that gives a social outing context. It is something rather undemanding and relaxing that they can do and if you are copying you don't have to think about it ... and you are with women of similar interests.⁵⁴

Margaret subsequently received a mark of 97 % and came second in the State in her Matriculation Art exam. She never joined any china painting organisation, gave up china painting during her university studies, and did not practise it further.

Case Study: Dianne Teasdale

Dianne ('Di') Teasdale (nee Williams) was born in 1947 and lived in the small country township of Windsor, South Australia during her early childhood. After her marriage in the mid 1960s, Teasdale heard of Necia Birch and Pat Roberts, so enrolled in their china painting classes in the late 1960s as she wished to learn how to use old china paints that once belonged to her grandmother.⁵⁵ In the 1970s Teasdale shifted to New South Wales where she attended the National Art School in Sydney in 1973-76.⁵⁶

However she retained her early interest in china painting and by the late 1970s was teaching the subject both to her own classes and also in various seminars and workshops organised in other centres. It became an absorbing hobby for Teasdale, who managed to fit it around raising her children. During those years, Teasdale used the method of teaching desired by most hobbyist students, namely that of placing studies in front of them. Like Ambridge, Teasdale did not like painting from pretty American studies and was not fond of double pink roses. As her favourite teaching subject was Australian imagery, she painted a number of different leaves and the various paws, claws and eyes of native animals on porcelain tiles, from which students were able to copy the correct details for the creatures they painted.⁵⁷ Due to her art school training, Teasdale's china painting was not only technically well executed, but also creative and original, and I define her, like Ambridge, as a professional hobbyist in the china painting field of the time.

In 1981 Teasdale was accepted as a member of IPATI New South Wales Region, and during her residency in New South Wales, was a very active member of IPATI and subsequently APAT.⁵⁸ Fellow member Sandra Brown organised Teasdale to teach a number of short seminars on a wide range of subjects in the 1980s in Brown's studio the Porcelain Palette.

Teasdale had attended an APAT exhibition in Melbourne and while there, visited Rickett's bushland sanctuary, which made a profound impression on her.⁵⁹ The experience not only reinforced her decision to promote the painting of Australian wildlife to china painters, but also provided the impetus for Teasdale to paint Australian Aboriginal faces (fig. 116). She ventured into using modelling porcelain to form her own porcelain shapes to fire and paint. Even though she resided in New South Wales, Teasdale maintained contact with South Australian china painters, especially Ambridge, and was one of the teaching faculty at Fay Good's week-long International School of Porcelain Arts and Crafts at the Wirrina Holiday Resort, Normanville, in May 1987, where Teasdale taught 'Australian Gum Scene and Birds'. She was keen to wean Australian china painters away from copying images popular overseas. Her distinctly Australian subject matter was in marked contrast to the English, American and conservative Australian teachers who taught roses, blackberries, raised paste and European techniques in the same School.

Like Ambridge, Teasdale knew that the overwhelming amount of copyist practices, and lack of originality, contributed to the low status of china painting, and she wished to change that. Teasdale wrote articles emphasising the desirability of china painters to produce original work. For example, in 1986 the *Porcelain Artist* carried an article 'Painting from Nature' by Teasdale in which she advised readers that, although good sources of reference such as books and the artist's own photographs were useful, 'snap shots *do not* provide enough detail ... the best, of course, is a actual observation, which is why domestic pets are often well painted'.⁶⁰

She also produced a book *Painting from Nature* and a video *Australian Animals* that were widely advertised in Australian china painting newsletters by 1988.⁶¹

At the end of 1987, Teasdale and her family shifted from Wollongong back to South Australia and settled in Hahndorf. By 1989 Teasdale was questioning her personal involvement with china painting as indicated in her article, 'Porcelain and Beyond' published in *Australian Porcelain Decorator*.⁶² Like Ambridge, she had experienced frustration over the restrictive attitudes towards her work by the more conservative APAT members at the 1987 Brisbane exhibition. She stated, 'there was a lot of bias against china painting as you get typecast' and believed that the only way to avoid being typecast was to break away from the conservatism of painting doubles and traditional garden flowers and try something completely different.⁶³

Teasdale found, like Ambridge, that she was unable to change the conservative, hobbyist practices of china painters, who still assiduously copied Australiana from books and studies. She became tired of china painting, decided to take up a different venture, and become a professional business woman.

By 1990 she had specialised in silk painting and had established a successful shop in Hahndorf.⁶⁴ In 1992 Teasdale's skill at silk painting was sufficiently well established that the Australian Olympic Committee in Sydney ordered some for corporate gifts.⁶⁵ By then she had allowed her membership in APAT to lapse, moved completely out of the Australian china painting scene, and practised as a professional business woman and a professional artist in other media, including printmaking. Teasdale influenced her friend Sandra Brown to undertake a university degree involving design, and Brown, as a professional artist, also influenced Australian china painters to create original designs, by using Australian images based on objects such as shells.

Case Study: Sandra Brown

A brief case study of Sandra Brown is included as, although she lived in Sydney and was not a South Australian china painter, she was a good friend of Ambridge and Teasdale with whom she joined forces to mount their exhibits near each other in the 1987 First Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers' Exhibition in Brisbane in order to support the formation of a strong Australian identity.⁶⁶ Like her friends, Brown knew of the low art status accorded to china painting, as she was undertaking tertiary art studies, and intended to introduce more creativity into the china painting community.⁶⁷

Brown started china painting as a hobbyist Sydney in 1980, and within a few years decided to become a professional business woman, so started a studio and business, 'The Porcelain Palette' adjacent to her home in Northmead.⁶⁸ Like Robinson with the Gilberton Gallery, Brown decided to make the Porcelain Palette not only a supply shop for china painters, but also a teaching and social centre for them. An article in *Australian Porcelain Decorator* in 1986 described her business and advised readers that they were always welcome to call in for a cup of tea or coffee and a chat.⁶⁹ Brown organised numerous china painting classes in the studio area, with herself and others, including Teasdale, teaching a wide range of techniques, often in short courses.⁷⁰ Classes catered for the copyist, hobbyist china painters, as she was a professional business woman and that was the way to attract students and American studies were always popular. She also arranged short seminars and demonstrations by visiting overseas teachers such as Gerald Delaney who taught the Worcester style of china painting at the Porcelain Palette in January 1985, and the American teachers San Do in 1986, and Glorianne Michaels in 1987 and so was well aware of the tendency to copy antique styles of china painting.

Nevertheless, Brown's personal preference of subject matter for her own china painting, was of Australian imagery. Following the 1987 Brisbane APAT Exhibition, Brown continued to

engage creatively with Australian subject matter in her exhibition pieces as she was keen to raise the status of Australian china painting. Her ability to produce semi-abstract designs from natural Australian objects was recognised when her *Abstract Waratah* vase, painted on a porcelain blank made in Australia, was selected from an exhibition of work by New South Wales APATI members, to enter the Powerhouse Museum collection in Sydney in the Bicentennial Year. It featured in the March 1989 *Australian Porcelain Decorator* (fig. 117).⁷¹

Although, as a result, china painters might believe that the status of their work was now recognised in prestigious collections, the overall status of china painting remained low and was ignored within the fine arts world throughout the 1990s. During those years, Brown's involvement with china painting diminished as she undertook further tertiary studies in Sydney. Nonetheless, she took seminars in South Australia in the Gilberton Gallery on several occasions, each time encouraging participants to experiment with different ways of using Australian subject matter such as abstract landscapes and sea shells. However, although they admired her style and designing skills, most china painters remained in the hobbyist mode and within their comfort zone of naturalistic floral paintings.

Sturt's Desert Pea: Painting the South Australian Emblem

In December 1988, Larssen relinquished her position in Sydney as editor of *Australian Porcelain Decorator* and the magazine transferred to Adelaide, where Robinson became the editor in addition to running the Gilberton Gallery. Despite the increasing amount of Australian fauna and landscapes on china that featured in the *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, floral imagery remained the most popular subject matter for most china painters, with renewed interest in the 1980-90s to paint Australian flora.

South Australia's floral emblem, Sturt's Desert Pea, was popular with Fiveash in the early twentieth century and also with a later generation of South Australian china painters in the last decades of that century. Fiveash painted her Sturt Pea plate with a careful, observant detachment. It was on public view for some time when on loan from SACPA's Historical Collection to the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide for their 2007 Sturt Pea Exhibition.⁷² However the following four South Australian china painters each had her own individual interpretation and did not depict their Sturt's Pea with the same almost cold, clinical, style as did Roseash.

Valerie King, who lived and china painted in Broken Hill before shifting to Adelaide, painted the Sturt Peas that grew around Broken Hill in the 1970-80s. She had a kiln, and although she did not teach china painting, fired for many local china painters, and provided advice when requested. She rarely painted from studies, had considerable natural talent and her work sold readily. She was familiar with the Aboriginal Legend of the Sturt Pea and her china painting on a jug suggests the transfiguration through the darkness of death of the former Aboriginal maiden with her cloak of red parrot feathers, into a brilliant red and black flower (fig. 118).

Ex-nurse Margaret Faulks lived in Alice Springs for some time and admired the local Sturt Peas. After shifting to Adelaide she took up china painting in the 1970s and became a member of A PAT. Like Ambridge, she eventually experimented with making her own porcelain blanks and her work became increasingly original and distinctive in the 1990s. Her early work in the 1970s however was based on naturalistic paintings of Australian wildflowers. An example is her china painting of Sturt Peas and Flannel Flowers on the lid of a jewellery box, further decorated on all sides with dark brown grounding and gold, with the addition of relief paste (fig 119).

Roma Prentice, when a ten-year-old primary school student, attended two terms of the Saturday morning art classes at the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts in the 1940s,

before starting at Charles Birks store as an apprentice ticket writer when just fifteen years of age. Later in her life when she became a member of APAT, she painted a vase in c. 1980s with a slightly stylised, bold version of Sturt Peas in a striking colour combination of red, black and gold (fig. 120).

Lee Sanders trained and worked as a nursing sister for some years. The bright colours of flowers have always attracted her, so in 2003 she included Sturt Peas in her meticulously painted, eclectic group of Australian wildflowers in a riot of colours with the embellishment of white and yellow relief paste on some blooms. She produced a range of texture pastes that can be fired onto the porcelain and then coated with liquid bright gold, as she has done around the rim of this plate. Sanders' plate is an example of the rich brilliance of Australian wildflowers as if seen in bright sunlight (fig 121).

Although all these examples of Sturt Pea china paintings show the brilliance of the floral emblem of South Australia, there is considerable difference in the treatment. The relatively affluent circumstances of the women who took up china painting as a hobby, combined with the increased availability of small kilns, enabled a somewhat leisurely approach to china painting, as it allowed much experimentation in technique and building up of colours.⁷³ Each of the four artists just mentioned had her own kiln and their Sturt Pea paintings required many hours of work, with at least three to five paintings and firings to complete each piece.⁷⁴ Although they painted as hobbyists, they did strive for some originality in their work. The time-cost factor, plus the considerable expense of the gold applications, makes such work unrealistic to produce on a commercial basis. This again places china painting following the 1960s revival as a hobbyist activity of women who did not have to sell their china painting as a primary source of income.

A Declining Interest

In 1987, the year of the breakaway from America, SACPA membership peaked at 370 members, including those in the Northern Branch.⁷⁵ The previous two years had been a hive of activity, with members holding a china painting exhibition in Miller Anderson's department store in Adelaide, and fundraising by members to support the erection of a sculpture of Catherine Helen Spence in Adelaide in 1986.⁷⁶ Their regular fundraising activities for various worthy charitable purposes, reinforced the hobbyist, middle-class feminine image of china painters. *Brush & Palette* published information for their readers on Spence to ensure they were familiar with her life and the benefits that followed from Spence's work for South Australian women.⁷⁷ Other charities supported at that time included the Anti-Cancer Foundation.⁷⁸

However by October 1987, SACPA membership had fallen to 358, continued to decline over the next years, a decline that accelerated in the early 1990s. The committees of SACPA and APAT were concerned, and sought means to bring delinquent members back into the fold and attract newcomers. Rather than demonstrate china painting in shopping malls and country shows, as had been done in the 1960s, they believed that china painting was sufficiently well known in the community as an enjoyable social hobby, that members (and ex-members) would be happy to come to the Porcelain Art Centre clubrooms on advertised open days. They were expected to bring their china paints and a friend, and enjoy painting whatever they wished, within a social atmosphere. There were no set lessons, no demonstrations; it was not a private professional occasion, and the more experienced china painters present would be happy to help anyone with a query or painting problem. Free tea and coffee was available all the time. It was advertised that, 'a relaxed day of chat in pleasant surroundings is guaranteed – don't forget wear ear-conditions ...bring your paints – we paint as we chat!'⁷⁹ Nevertheless, although popular for a short time, enthusiasm waned and it did not halt the decline in membership numbers.

SACPA and APAT committees sought answers to the falling interest. In 1993 the following pleas appeared in *Brush & Palette*:

This subject will have to be reviewed at the end of the year to see which way we will go in 1994. We would like to see as many members as possible to attend because it is very disheartening to guest speakers when only a few attend ... HELP – HELP – HELP - we need you! ... Is interest in china painting on the wane? Are you disenchanted with the Association in some way? – if so, what would you like to see happening – attend meetings – put forward suggestions and have a say.⁸⁰

There was minimal feedback. Members who served on the SACPA committee during those years failed to realise some of the basic reasons for the continuing low status of china painting in the 1990s and the lack of new members. One factor was the time consuming, hobbyist, copyist approach to china painting, which did not appeal to the younger married women of the 1990s. Money was still raised for charities, sometimes by donating hand-painted china for raffles, and younger women were not very interested in those activities either. China painters of the 1990s were by then in the elderly age group, as indicated by numerous items of chit-chat in *Brush & Palette*, with ‘cheerios’ to named members on the sick list, congratulations to many members who had become grandmothers and an increasing number of condolences to members who had lost their husbands.

Subject matter painted in the 1990s was monotonous and lacked public appeal. It certainly included an Australian identity with images of Australian wildflowers and birds, but they were copied from various magazines and books. Double pink roses remained a perennial favourite for some china painters and the non-critical section of the public, but continued to emphasise the copyist image and low status of china painting to the wider arts community. Teasdale’s admonitions for the necessity of closely observing your subject matter and not relying on photographs were forgotten, and although Ambridge maintained some contact with the china painting community, she rarely commented on their lack of creativity, as she was professionally involved with other art media.

But it was not only SACPA membership that was losing momentum. South Australian APAT members hosted the Fourth Australasian APAT Exhibition and Convention in Adelaide in 1993.⁸¹ There was no critical review of the china painting exhibits, but a social report on the cocktail party, the Convention breakfast at the zoo and a barbecue, pronounced the event an ‘unqualified success’.⁸² Ambridge produced a telling humorous comment on declining active APAT membership with her breakfast-in-the-zoo drawing (fig 122).⁸³

Sandra Brown made a number of pertinent observations regarding the lack of public interest in APAT Exhibitions after hearing complaints that not enough members of the public attended them. She commented, only to her fellow APAT members, that, ‘these APAT Conventions were more of a reward to china painters who faithfully painted and exhibited to keep the craft going and that really, conventions were an in-house thing’.⁸⁴ She further pointed out the public is not normally expected to attend Conventions, which are for the practitioners, the converted, and:

held in big prestigious hotels, which are not normally visited by our hoped-for public and if we expect the public to come into such places and then become better educated, we are kidding ourselves ... moreover the public, if they wanted to view the work, had to PAY to go in and hopefully they would then pay more by buying some things as well ... conventions are more for china painters themselves to become better educated and to socialize.⁸⁵

The entrenched mindset of South Australian china painters that their works should be of recognisable imagery, meticulously painted in full detail on purchased porcelain, perpetuated the low status of china painting within the fine arts world. In the 1990s the South Australian School of Art was teaching Conceptual Art, which, although slightly passé in the post post modernism of the fine art world, nevertheless required art students to use their imagination.⁸⁶ China painters vehemently derided such work if they ever saw it. Within the craft world, originality was important, with Stephen Bowers exhibiting his interesting under-glaze and on-glaze ceramic painting in the Jam Factory Gallery with imagery that could be read at several levels, but few china painters bothered to visit that Gallery.

However there was one active member, Jillian Varga, in the APAT South Australian branch who was familiar with contemporary ceramic work. She was a qualified primary school teacher and had taken numerous primary students for short courses in pottery art during her professional teaching career, during which she took up china painting as a hobby. Like Ambridge, she liked to roll out clay into various shapes, then glaze and china paint them, for example to suggest how Australian fauna such as seals, was a part of the jigsaw of Australian life (fig 123). She produced such work in a capacity that I define as ‘private professional’, not advertising it, but for sale to people seeking her out. She commented, with some amusement, that her work was initially not considered acceptable in her application for membership of APAT, and she had to resubmit.⁸⁷ That initial rejection by APAT, again shows the lack of tertiary education of the South Australian china painting fraternity and their fixed ideas on what china painting should be. After admission to APAT membership, Varga maintained a relatively low profile, realising the difficulties in changing their hobbyist practices and not exhibiting her ‘private professional’, more experimental work, in their exhibitions.

By the end of the 1990s, SACPA membership had declined to only ninety-nine active metropolitan members and the decline continued into the twenty-first century.⁸⁸ The resultant decline in the demand for supplies led to the closure of supply shops, with the Gilberton Gallery closing around 2006.

Although Australian china painters generally made efforts to induce young people to take up china painting towards the turn of the century, it was not very successful. There was a widening generational gap between the china painters and the younger women they desired to attract into SACPA and APAT. The type of conservative floral imagery so loved by elderly china painters held no attraction to young middle-class women of the 1990s, many of whom were better educated than the china painters and had studied visual art to some level during

secondary education. They had their own ideas on what constituted fine art, and it was not the hobbyist, copyist art of china painting that their mothers or grandmothers painted, though they might look on it as a treasured heirloom should they inherit a few pieces. As Ambridge had noted, the china painters themselves rarely made an attempt to find out what type of art was being taught in secondary schools, let alone in the established Australian art schools.

China painting by the close of the twentieth century basically remained what it was when it was revived in the 1960s – a hobbyist practice based on copying images from a variety of sources and throughout that time was accorded a low status by the fine art world. A contributing factor to this low status was the lack of a suitable tertiary art education of the majority of china painters.

The Value of an Education

By contrast to the practices of hobbyist china painters just mentioned, with the resultant low status of china painting, a few professional artists at the end of the twentieth century, incorporated china painting in their art practices, and received professional recognition as had been the case with china painters of the pre 1950s era. Dianne Longley in South Australia, and Diana Williams in Canberra, used china painting as a contemporary form of art, and as such it was acceptable within the art world. Both had received good formal art education before they embarked on careers as professional artists. Their recognition showed the value of a good education.

Dianne Longley graduated with an art diploma from the Newcastle College of Advanced Education at the end of 1978. After moving to Adelaide, she converted her diploma to a Bachelor of Arts Visual Arts degree, then did a research-based Master's Degree at Flinders University.⁸⁹ She was not a member of any china painting organisation but a noted Australian

printmaker who acquired china painting as one of her many skills. In 1993 she taught printmaking in the South Australian School of Art, where one of the students in her etching class introduced Longley to the basics of china painting.⁹⁰ Longley subsequently met Ambridge who provided her with further instruction on china painting.

Longley produced the most publicly visible china painting in South Australia with her three commissioned catenary (lighting) pole installations in the Gouger Street precinct, Adelaide. For these, she designed a triangular-shaped, wrought iron structure to enclose each pole and contain a series of panels, each panel containing nine large tiles on which she china painted visual narratives that reflected various journeys through life. Her china painting was completely different from the copyist images of South Australian china painters. Longley's work reflected more abstract themes such as *Abundance Through Time* around one pole, *Celebration, Reflection and Chance* around another and *For Those Who Journey*, around the third pole. The latter title included a sub-title *Processional* as the theme on one of its three panels (fig. 124). Longley wrote, regarding *Processional*, that it was:

A processional of animals, all heading in one direction, but one animal is moving away in the opposite direction. We need to make decisions sometimes that take us away from our known environment.⁹¹

Photographs of some of Longley's catenary poles, appeared in the December 1997 *Australian Porcelain Decorator*.⁹² However the accompanying article only contained information about the SA Government's program 'Art for Public Places' that aimed to place contemporary art within the community. Neither title nor explanation of the artwork on the tiles accompanied the photographs. Given the genre of china painting prevalent at that time, it is doubtful if most china painters could appreciate the subtle concepts that underpinned Longley's work.

In an interview, Longley suggested that china painting will only attract attention if people show it in different places and use it in different contexts.⁹³ Her statement regarding using

china painting in different contexts, was a philosophy that underpinned Ambridge's concept for the 1987 Brisbane Exhibition and an indication of the innovative practices that are informed and underpinned by a good tertiary art education.

Canberra-based Diana Williams had received little formal art training and although not a member of APAT, belonged to a small, active group of china painters in the 1990s, and had previously worked closely with various ceramicists. She observed the lack of original creativity in china painting practices of the late 1990s and sought means by which she could gain wider experience and training to use her china painting skills with ceramic work. She approached the Canberra Museum. The *Australian Porcelain Art into the New Millennium*, a juried exhibition held in the Canberra Museum and Gallery 9 June – 2 September 2001 for which she worked closely with director Peter Haynes, was the result of her initial proposal and initiative.

Work with an Australian theme was solicited for the exhibition, which validated that an Australian identity in china painting did indeed exist. Of the 500 or so entries received, Haynes as curator, made the final decisions, selecting eighty-two pieces, dating from 1901 to 2001.⁹⁴ Williams' oval plate of Wedgwood bone china on which she painted a portrait of Sir Henry Parkes was included, also work by Sandra Brown and South Australians Barbara Collingwood (formerly Dimitri), Ambridge and Robinson (fig. 125). Various educational programs ran concurrently throughout the exhibition. The June 2001 issue of *Australian Porcelain Decorator* published an account of the exhibition.⁹⁵ It was the first (and last) time that china painters of the 1960-90s period had their work exhibited in a prestigious space recognised by the wider art world and they were delighted with the sudden perceived increase in status of china painting.

Other Museums and Art Galleries failed to follow the Canberra Museum's lead, and china painting sank back into the former low status after the exhibition closed. However, one result of the exhibition was an invitation for Williams to demonstrate and exhibit with China's top Master painters and ceramic artists and to be an artist in residence at Jingdezhen, China, under Professor Liew.⁹⁶ She took up her residency in 2004, and the resulting art education she received, led to her career as a professional artist. Following her return she held an exhibition of the works she produced, *The High-Fired Series*, in the ACT Legislative Assembly Exhibition Room, Canberra 22 November – 1 December 2005. It was not hobbyist, copyist art, but work produced by a professional artist. It consisted of a series of large, imaginative, porcelain blank forms made to her design, based on artillery shells, and had resonance with her husband's career in the navy and the possibility that her son would follow his father. Williams decorated the forms using a range of techniques including on-glaze enamels, basing her designs on the concept of the dichotomy of the shell's use as a destructive missile and also a means of obtaining peace. There were various levels of meaning inherent in her choice of designs, some drawing on Chinese symbolism. Haynes wrote the essay for the *High Fired Series* Exhibition, part of which is shown in figure 126. She then received the honour of being invited to return to China for another residency in 2005 and now uses the knowledge she gained there to work in cooperation with various Australian ceramicists in designing and decorating forms akin to how she worked in China. She has also been invited to teach in Germany.

The use of china painting by Longley and Williams, based on their professional training as artists, was the result of a good formal education and is an indication of how china painting might, once more, be viewed as part of the fine art scene some time in the future and regain a status lost during the era of hobbyist practices. Brown, after obtaining her Master of Design (Hons) from the University of New South Wales in 2004, also became a professional artist,

exhibiting in galleries such as the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art in 2001 and lecturing on ceramics and design in various tertiary education centres.

Despite the notable forays by Longley, Williams, Brown, Teasdale and Ambridge into lifting the status of china painting, the *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, under the editorship of Robinson during the 1990s into the twenty-first century, reflected the hobbyist practice of Australian china painters. It continued to publish copyist articles by contributors, although the illustrations were of a attractive, technically skilful, china painting. The magazine also indicated the declining numbers of Australian china painters, when the editor pleaded for more articles and subscription support from them. Nevertheless, regions where china painting was increasing in popularity, were indicated by the increasing number of illustrated articles of china painting by a diverse range of overseas practitioners. One issue included a Japanese newsletter with photographs, from Atsuka Kyogoku an instructor in a new china painting school in Tokyo, informing readers of the purpose of the school, established in 1993 with seventeen instructors, which suggests a professional, not hobbyist, approach to china painting there.⁹⁷ Other later issues included illustrated reports about china painting in Thailand, Japan, England, Holland, Denmark, Switzerland, Finland, Italy, USA, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa. From the short reports and illustrations, it is difficult to know if the work were copyist or original.

It remains to be seen if Australian subject matter persists. The alternatives could show influences of Australia's geographic location in the Asia-Pacific region. *Australian Porcelain Decorator* over the last few years has included an increasing number of articles on china painting in that region.⁹⁸ China painting has been a decorative art form in various cultures for many centuries; hence the current decrease of hobbyist china painters in South Australia may well be the end of its phase as a copyist, conservative, practice, but it is unlikely that it will completely disappear. The end of the first decade in the twenty-first century, may herald yet

another change in the fortunes of china painting, with professional artists like Longley, Williams and Brown, once more including it in their range of media skills, and gaining acceptance in the fine art world, as had the artists of the 1920-30s.

¹ Celia, 'From the Editor of A.P.D.A.', *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, March 1986, p. 5.

² Celia, 'from the Editor of A.P.D.A.', *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, June 1986, p. 5.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The author, as a NSW APATI member, received her own copy of this communication from Berryman.

⁵ Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers SA Region files kept, in 2008, in the Porcelain Art Centre, Buttery reserve, 259 Portrush Road, Norwood SA. The files contain records of the legal correspondence and minutes covering the matters.

⁶ IPATI NSW Region *Newsletter*, July 1986, pp. 1, 3, 4.

⁷ The author was Historian of the NSW branch of IPATI at that time and has a photocopy of the letter in her possession.

⁸ Betty Hood Hon. Secretary, 'Minutes of the Steering Committee of the Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers held at Glenview Inn and Convention Centre, Sydney, on 6 September 1986'. Copy held by the author.

⁹ The same letter was also printed in *Open Medium*, A.P.A.P. Newsletter, vol. 1 – no. 1, 1987 p. 8.

¹⁰ All documents appertaining to the SA branch of APAT, Constitution, Standing Rules etc are currently held in 2008 in the Porcelain Art Centre, Buttery Reserve, Portrush Road, Norwood, SA.

¹¹ Beverley Ambridge, 'A.P.A.T. – S.A. News', *Open Medium*, vol. 1 – no. 1, 1987, p. 5.

¹² Personal private conversation of Ambridge with the author. It was, however, said kindly.

¹³ B. Hood, Secretary, *Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers Queensland Inc. Newsletter*. Copy of this newsletter, with the pink fabric sample attached and exhibitor's Entry Form, held by the author of this thesis.

¹⁴ *1987 Australasian Porcelain Art Teachers Exhibition and Convention Demonstration and Seminars Programmes*. Copy held by the author. The different Men's tours were printed on the same page as the demonstrations, and included such trips as 'Jupiter's Casino – Gamblers Special' as well as a trip to Toowoomba and Darling Downs, koala bears, a woolshed and golf etc.

¹⁵ Interview by the author with Beverley Ambridge, 16 January 1998; interview by the author with Sandra Brown, 4 September 2004 and correspondence from Brown 21 September 2004; phone interview by the author with Dianne Teasdale 5 November 2004.

¹⁶ Brown, 21 September 2004.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Brown, 4 and 21 September 2004.

¹⁹ Brown, correspondence 21 September 2004.

²⁰ Teasdale, November 2004. This work was subsequently featured as the front-piece in Tricia Bradford's *Modern Trends in Porcelain Art*.

²¹ Christopher Menz, 'The Crafts Movement: 1970s-1990s', *Australian Decorative Arts*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, 1996, p. 112.

²² Interview by the author with Beverley Ambridge, January 1998.

²³ Brown, 21 September 2004.

²⁴ Ambridge, January 1998; Brown 21 September 2004.

²⁵ Brown, 21 September 2004.

²⁶ Ambridge interview 1998. Ambridge went into some detail of the work of this Western Australian group as she had been to Western Australia to take workshops in experimental china painting and became friendly with the group, admiring the concepts behind their work.

²⁷ Ambridge interview, 1998.

²⁸ Ambridge interview, 1998. She considered the Queensland Committee to be overly dictatorial on that occasion and possibly a little envious because Barrington had gained recognition within the fine arts world as a mixed media, successful artist in Western Australia, while most Queensland china painters remained very conservative in outlook and unacknowledged within the wider fine arts community.

²⁹ Hopkins, Iris R., Australasian President, 'The First Porcelain Art Teacher's Convention Queensland', *Australian Porcelain Decorator* no. 27, March 1988, p. 42.

³⁰ 'I.P.A.T. Pledge', International Porcelain Art Teachers, Inc. New South Wales Region *Newsletter* December 1986. This was the last IPATI NSW issue. This pledge had been habitually printed inside the front cover of the NSW issues, but discontinued in 1987 in the NSW issues after the changeover from IPATI to APAT.

³¹ 'Solomon ... Oh Solomon Where Are You When We Need You Most?' *Open Medium*, APAT Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 3, 1987.

³² Ibid.

³³ Beverley Ambridge, 'Feedback', *Open Medium*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1987, p. 2.

³⁴ The *Alternatives* artists included Heather Taylor, Helen Jones, Freda Ross, Gloria Padman, Adelphie King, Christine Laidman, Marilyn Barrington and Francis Caird. They were arguably the most innovative china painters in Western Australia at that time, and were all familiar with the wider field of art, having taught or studied for the Certificate Course set under the broad auspices of the Education Department.

³⁵ Heather Taylor, 'Western Australia', *Open Medium*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1987, p. 2.

³⁶ Ambridge interview, 1998.

³⁷ Ev Hales, Melbourne, 'Feed Back', *Open Medium*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1988, p. 7.

³⁸ Betty Hood, 'Feedback', *Open Medium*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1988, p. 4.

³⁹ Bradford was in the process of editing her fourth book of illustrations of the work of some Australian china painters.

⁴⁰ Tricia Bradford, 'Comment', *Open Medium*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1988.

⁴¹ Tricia Bradford, Canberra, 'Letter to the Editor', *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, June 1988, p. 46.

⁴² Margaret Faulks, 'Which direction? Forward or Reverse?', *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, June 1988, p. 39.

⁴³ Ambridge interview, 1998. Some of her teachers were Ken Lamacraft, Miss Caseley, Gladys Good, Helen McIntosh.

⁴⁴ Ambridge interview, 1998

⁴⁵ Menz, p. 101.

⁴⁶ Ambridge interview, 1998

⁴⁷ Margaret Lithgow, N. Z., 'State Reports. New Zealand', *Open Medium* 1988 (issue and month not stated on the cover) pp. 4, 5.

⁴⁸ 'Isobel Agnew Trophy', *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, March 1990, p. 15.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 16.

⁵⁰ Beverley Ambridge, 'Torn Clay & Foxes', *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, December 1987, p. 48. It was accompanied by two written articles by her, 'Torn Clay Souvenirs' p. 49; 'Foxes – An Extension of Porcelain Art' p. 49

⁵¹ Interview by the author with Margaret Ambridge, 6 February 1998.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Margaret Ambridge Special Study, 'Has Today's Technology Improved Porcelain Art?' This was loaned to the author of this thesis to read. It was done for her art exam when a student at Underdale High School, but no year was stated.

⁵⁴ Margaret Ambridge interview, 1998.

⁵⁵ Phone interview by the author with Di Teasdale, 13 May 2008. Her grandmother, Annie Williams of Medindie, Adelaide was a china painter in the 1920s.

⁵⁶ Teasdale interview, 5 November 2004. The National Art School has a history extending back to 1859, and since then, has undergone several changes in name, structure and location; for example when within the Colleges of Advanced Education, and Sydney University. The National Art School became an Independent School in 1996. It went under the name of the Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education when Teasdale studied there.

⁵⁷ The author has examined many of those tiles, which educated her students to closely observe the wildlife they wished to paint. Although they might copy a picture of a koala, it made them pay close attention to details.

⁵⁸ 'Minutes of General Meeting I.P.A.T. New South Wales Region, Saturday 23 August 1980, General Business'. Four pieces of porcelain art, submitted by Dianne Teasdale, were accepted as proof of the standard of her work; 'Minutes of IPATI NSW Region General Meeting held at Ranelagh, Robertson, 10 October 1981'. Teasdale was then social secretary for the NSW Regional Show; 'Minutes of the General Meeting at Ranelagh, Robertson, 12 June 1982' show her appointment as secretary. Teasdale was a member of the NSW Committee for many years and was still secretary in 1984.

⁵⁹ Teasdale, 18 May 2008.

⁶⁰ Dianne Teasdale, 'Painting from Nature', *Porcelain Artist*, May/June 1986, pp. 32, 33.

⁶¹ 'Videos for the China Painter', *Brush & Palette*, October/November 1988, p. 11. They were available from Dorothy Browne at 'Porcelain Art Videos Pty. Ltd.' Northbridge, NSW, videos \$53.95 each and books \$15.95 each.

⁶² Di Teasdale, 'Porcelain and Beyond', *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, June 1989, p. 30.

⁶³ Teasdale, November 2004.

⁶⁴ ‘arts & parts’, *Brush & Palette*, February/March 1988, p. 20. An advertisement stated that she would conduct a series of forthcoming seminars on porcelain moulding, painting on silk for beginners, designing and making a silk jacket, in the ‘arts & parts’ china painting shop in Glenelg.

⁶⁵ ‘Di Teasdale’, *Brush & Palette*, April/May 1992, p. 11.

⁶⁶ It was then normal policy at big APAT exhibitions for each state to be allocated an area in which the resident china painters exhibited their work, but Brown deliberately placed her work near her South Australian friends.

⁶⁷ Interview by the author with Sandra Brown, 4 September 2004, with further written communication 21 September 2004 from Brown. She gained Certificates of Drawing I, II in Meadowbank Technical and Further Education in the late 1980s, and subsequently a Certificate of Drawing and Design in the University of New South Wales Professional Studies, which led to a Bachelor degree in the 1990s. In 2004 she gained a Master’s Degree in the University of New South Wales.

⁶⁸ Sandra Brown interview, 2004.

⁶⁹ Editor, ‘Sandra Brown – the Porcelain Palette’, *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, March 1986, p. 14.

⁷⁰ Porcelain Palette’s *Newsletter April-May 1987*. Brown also offered accommodation at \$5 overnight for country and interstate students attending short courses. People accepting the offer had to provide their own sheets, towels, pillow and meals, but nevertheless it was an indication of Brown’s kindness and her desire to create a friendly social atmosphere around the short china painting seminars.

⁷¹ Sandra Brown, ‘Abstract Waratah’, *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, March 1989, pp. 4, 10; Brenda Matthews, ‘The Bicentennial Year’, *Open Medium*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1988, p. 3. The bisque vase had been hand-made for Brown by fellow APAT member Seija Kris, the painted vase had been personally selected by the Curator of Ceramics and Glass at the Powerhouse Museum Mr. Christopher Thompson from those exhibited, and had been paid for and donated to the Powerhouse Museum by the porcelain artists of New South Wales

⁷² Fiveash’s plate featured in the accompanying publication by David Symon, Manfred Jusaitis, *Sturt Pea: A most splendid plant*, Board of the Botanic Gardens and Herbarium, Adelaide, 2007, p. 103.

⁷³ The firm of Wards in Adelaide produced small kilns especially for firing china painting.

⁷⁴ Personal knowledge by the author of the background of each of the four women. Sanders, Faulks and Prentice are still china painting in Adelaide in 2008. King has ceased china painting and is currently a highly-skilled and exhibiting quilt maker.

⁷⁵ The Northern Branch was based in the Barossa and Clare area. There was also a separate group of china painters in the Mount Gambier area.

⁷⁶ SACPA patroness Mary Joseph was Chairperson of the Women’s Executive Committee for the Jubilee.

⁷⁷ ‘In Memory of Catherine Helen Spence’, *Brush & Palette*, February 1986, pp. 6, 7.

⁷⁸ Another small group of china painters in Adelaide dedicated to working for charity, called themselves the Australian Porcelain Decorators’ Association, with most members also in SACPA.

⁷⁹ ‘STOP PRESS!!’, *Brush & Palette*, December 1992/January 1993, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Betty Putland, ‘President’s Message’, *Brush & Palette*, August/September 1993, pp. 3, 4. with an addition by the editress.

⁸¹ The Fourth Australasian APAT Exhibition was held in the Hyatt Regency Hotel, North Terrace, Adelaide, in September 1993.

⁸² Julie French, ‘A.P.A.T. Convention’, *Brush & Palette*, October/November 1993, p. 8. French was the Australasian President for the 4th APAT Convention.

⁸³ A copy was given personally to the author without notification to which journal Ambridge sent it.

⁸⁴ Personal letter from Brown to the author, September 2004. It was after Brown had her Master of Design (Hons) and she had, by that time, considerable experience in exhibiting within the fine arts world, as well as the china painting world.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ The author was an art student in that School during the 1990s.

⁸⁷ Interview by the author with Jillian Varga, 7 February 1998. Varga trained in the Adelaide Teachers’ College, and holds a Bachelor of Education degree.

⁸⁸ ‘This and That’, *Brush & Palette*, October/November 1998, p. 5; Private conversation by the author with the 2008 secretary of SACPA, Saturday 7 June 2008. Renewed membership in 2008 is down to seventy two members, including those in the northern branch, although some may yet renew their relapsed membership and increase that number.

⁸⁹ Interview by the author with Dianne Longley, 6 November 1977. She became well-known for her work in solarplate (photopolymer) prints, with her work included in many major exhibitions within the contemporary art world. Her Master’s research at Flinders University was *The Book, The Print, The Artist and the Digital Era*

⁹⁰ The author, who was in Longley’s etching class, showed Longley how to etch china and told her about china painting.

⁹¹ Given to the author by Longley, printed copy of her ‘Response’ submitted for the Gouger Street Precinct, Stage Two, p. 2.

⁹² Beverley Ambridge, Julie French, ‘Art for Public Places’, *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, December 1977, p. 30.

⁹³ Longley, November 1997.

⁹⁴ Personal letter from Diana Williams to the author, July 2004.

⁹⁵ *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, June 2001, included approximately thirty pages of coverage, much of which were photographs of the china painting.

⁹⁶ Considerable correspondence and e-mails from Williams to the author during this period.

⁹⁷ 'From the Editor', *Australian Porcelain Decorator*, June 1994, p. 5; Atsuko Kyogoku, 'Japanese Newsletter' pp. 5, 9.

⁹⁸ Robinson has visited China and Hong Kong on several occasions, established contact with Chinese china painters and was an invited guest at the opening of a large china painting exhibition in Hong Kong in 2007.

Discussion

My research shows there has been a continuity of china painting practice in South Australia from the last decade of the nineteenth century into the first decade of the twenty-first century with several changes in the fortunes of china painting during that time frame. I argue that there were three important periods of china painting, each serving a different purpose in the lives of its practitioners.

Grace Cochrane points out that convention places hierarchical values on art practices to suit the purpose of a particular group and that function of a piece is important in value judgments.¹ Perceptions of china painting's functional domestic use have been instrumental in its recognition of china painting as only a minor form of female craft or decorative art, yet these beliefs in turn have contributed to china painting being largely ignored in academic discourse. Nonetheless, women's decorative arts are of increasing interest to art and social historians, and the significance of those items in public gallery and museum collections is undergoing re-evaluation. As Cochrane observes, 'every object changes its meaning through the changing public and domestic contexts in which it is placed'.²

This thesis contends that the changing contexts in which china painting was taught and exhibited from the 1890s to the first decade of the twenty-first century were factors that contributed to the shifts in fortunes of china painting in South Australia. The changing format of the education of women was a key factor that influenced china painting practice throughout that period.

I argue that the first of the three peaks in the fortunes of china painting in South Australia occurred when it was taught in the School of Design in the 1890s and exhibited as a skill for use in the State's developing pottery industry. The second peak occurred in the 1920-30s

when it was taught in conjunction with other art skills at the South Australian School of Arts and Crafts, and became one of a range of media used by multi-skilled artists who exhibited china painting alongside fine art in the (Royal) South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions. Following the 1965 revival, the third peak of china painting occurred in the 1970-80s when it was taught in home studios by teachers with minimal art training themselves. China painting then rapidly became a popular domestic social hobby, strongly influenced by American china painting philosophies of copying pretty studies based on romantic, nineteenth century floral art. It was neither exhibited in the usual gallery format, nor easily viewed by the general public, and was not accepted as fine art by the art world establishment.

Training for Industrial Employment

Although ideologies of the Victorian era placed middle-class women in the home supported by the male bread earner, there were occasions when it was necessary for middle-class women to enter gainful employment. The problem then arose how to accomplish this without loss of social status. Improved education for women was the key. That, and women's suffrage, were items of public debate and promulgated in the speeches and writings of the redoubtable South Australian, Miss Catherine Spence. For women interested in art, a formal education in an art school enhanced their prospects as art teachers and for those seeking to use art skills in a wider field, training in china painting and design through an art school could possibly lead to employment in a pottery industry.³

The prospect of a pool of trained personnel for the anticipated expansion of the local pottery industry persuaded Harry Pelling Gill to introduce china painting classes into the School of Design, Painting and Technical Art in 1894. Rosa Fiveash was the teacher. Fiveash had gained the highest grade of the Art Teacher's Certificate awarded by the English South

Kensington School of Art and Science in 1892, and then travelled to Melbourne to master the techniques of china painting and firing.

In May 1894 china painting from the School's class was first exhibited to members of the School of Design Art Club. However the most important exhibition to showcase the class's china painting was in the large, prestigious, month-long South Australian Chamber of Manufactures Exhibition of Art and Industry in March 1895. Several of Fiveash's pupils, including Laurence Howie, received awards for their china painting. Although that exhibition also included fine art exhibits, the primary purpose was to display products of the various industries and, as such, it indicated to the viewing public that the School of Design was at the forefront in training artists for industry.

Another indication that china painting was introduced with a commercial agenda in mind was shown by an 1896 *Register* article commenting that carving, china painting and needlework designing, which were specialties of the school, would benefit from additional classes in drawing and design for the 'application of art work to industries' where 'the designer must of necessity direct the workman'.⁴

Despite the good start for china painting, it ceased to be taught in the School in 1897. A bad drought in 1895-6 exacerbated a developing economic depression in South Australia, resulting in high unemployment and the anticipated fine china industry in South Australia failed to eventuate. Nevertheless china painting did not disappear. As I explained in chapter three regarding the role played by Laurence Howie, formal china painting classes were again resumed in 1906, but ceased during the First World War when Howie went overseas with the Australian armed forces in 1915. Women exhibitors in the South Australian Society of Arts Exhibitions kept china painting, then described as 'applied art', in public view during the war

years.⁵ The fortunes of china painting did not rise again till the 1920s with the revival of the Arts and Crafts era.

Training Multi-skilled Artists: the Arts and Crafts Era of the 1920-30s

The British Arts and Crafts movement inspired by William Morris, influenced South Australian culture in various ways.⁶ Gill had been well acquainted with the movement's philosophies and the value it placed on hand-crafted objects. Howie, who had been trained and employed under Gill as a teacher, espoused the same values following his return from the war in 1920 and appointment as Principal of the (renamed) South Australian School of Arts and Crafts.

The 1920-30s saw a revival of the arts and crafts movement in South Australia. Howie was responsible to Charles Fenner, the Superintendent of Technical Schools, who emphasised the importance of a variety of craft classes in the curriculum of the School of Arts and Crafts. The School trained art and handicraft teachers, commercial artists and those seeking professional careers in the fine arts in line with this philosophy. In 1923 Howie introduced china painting into the curriculum, with Gladys Good as the teacher. The introduction of exams and certification for subjects, including china painting, allied with expectations that china painting students would also enrol in additional units of study, discouraged a hobbyist approach and enabled professional artists to become multi-skilled in crafts as well as fine art. Annual exhibitions of the School of Arts and Crafts displayed china painting alongside fine art, so emerging artists and the viewing public became accustomed to the sight of multi media exhibitions.

China painting then enjoyed a marked revival in South Australia in the 1920-30s, becoming one of several media practised and exhibited by a number of professional South Australian female artists.

In the 26th Federal Exhibition in 1923, fifty-two china painting entries by women were exhibited alongside 159 entries of paintings by both sexes.⁷ Women exhibitors in Federal Exhibitions were aware that purchasing policies of the Art Gallery from the Elder Bequest did not include china painting, and, as discussed in chapter four, the Art Gallery was using the Morgan Thomas Bequest to establish its European and Asian ceramic collections. Nevertheless South Australian china painters were not perturbed. They had sufficient confidence in their ability to paint and exhibit fine art work if they chose, and, unlike china painters of the 1970-80s, were not concerned if their china painting was classified as craftwork, applied art, or decorative art. Nor, in their china painting, did those 1920s exhibiting women artists feel the need to conform to the conservative viewpoint of the importance of landscape painting. Their target audience was the female viewer possibly influenced by local newspapers articles advising women on artistic home decoration.⁸

Flowers were always popular decorating material, whether placed live in a charming lustred vase or china painted on the outside of a vase. Australian flora was popular with some china painters such as Maida Wright's 1921 vases depicting native lilac and clematis.⁹ Others, such as Lois Laughton in 1928, abandoned recognisable images and exhibited vases decorated in brilliant lustres of red, blue and gold.¹⁰ By the 1930s, other china painters such as Maude Gum departed from naturalistic imagery altogether and painted geometrical designs on small jugs. Coffee cups and saucers, and even complete coffee sets were exhibited in the 1920s, for example Mamie Venner's *Black Coffee Set* at four guineas in the Spring Exhibition, October 1925. This indicated some changes in local culture, with perhaps morning coffee as an alternative to afternoon teas on the social agenda of busy women.

Multi-skilled artists exhibiting china painting had advantages during the 1928-30s Depression. A number of small sales made a useful income whereas sales of large framed oils or watercolours could be problematic. Catalogues of the South Australian Society of Arts exhibitions during those years indicate that, instead of numerous tea sets and coffee sets, small brooches were popular exhibits and generally cheaper.¹¹

The multi-media skilling of exhibitors in the 1920-30s was a particular feature of the period in South Australia. One of the strengths of the Society of Arts lay in the number of artists from both the School of Arts and Crafts and Ashton's Academy of Arts on its executive and committee, all of whom were knowledgeable in a wide range of arts and crafts. Many women committee members included china painting in their repertoire of skills.

Pottery exhibits slowly increased during the 1930s and, as interest in studio pottery increased, china painting decreased. However the major factor in the decline of china painting in that period was the onset of the Second World War, when necessary supplies from overseas became unavailable and women became involved in war-time employment or joined one of the women's services. After the war ended, a few elderly women exhibitors in the Society of Arts continued with their china painting practices and also taught a few pupils privately as shown in chapter five. Nevertheless interest in china painting decreased to such an extent that china painting classes in the (renamed) South Australian School of Art ceased by 1958.

A Serious, Popular, Social Hobby

Women were faced with choices after the Second World War ended and men returned home, with many resuming their previous occupations. Some women employed during the war wished to continue remunerative work, so shifted into various industries and had money of their own to spend. However there was also a push to return women to a life of domesticity

and child-bearing, with home ownership and new white goods promulgated to make life easier. Decorating the home, owning a car, finding enjoyable hobbies and socialising with other women in similar circumstances became the new way of life for many. This was especially so for those middle-class women who were financially supported by their husbands and did not wish to pursue a full-time career after marriage.¹² My research reveals that china painters in the 1960-70s revival in South Australia were predominantly from that group.

One of the big differences between the first two notable periods of china painting and the third period following the 1965 revival in South Australia, was the way it was taught and the education of the women involved. Although Necia Birch and Valda Ellis, who were at the forefront of the revival, had good natural ability in art, significantly their teaching experience was in other fields. To them, china painting was merely an interesting new hobby. Very few of those who decided to teach china painting at that time possessed multi-media art skills, nor did they exhibit fine art in exhibitions such as the Royal South Australian Society of Arts or the Contemporary Arts Society. The students they attracted through demonstrations in shopping malls and country shows, also had minimal art knowledge and only wished to produce pretty paintings on china that they could proudly display in their homes. Classes were held in small home studios of the teachers and were social occasions. Originality of designs was not considered important. Students and most teachers were happy to trace, adapt, or copy pretty 'how-to-paint' studies, especially of double pink roses, from the popular American china painting magazines.

China painting exhibitions in the 1960s were small affairs, they included work by students and their teacher, and were held in the teacher's home studio or church halls for only a day or so, and without catalogues. Moreover, in keeping with the traditional image of middle-class women working voluntarily - or – in an unpaid capacity for a worthy cause, a percentage of any sales made at those exhibitions, went to a charity.

Nevertheless friendships between teachers developed throughout Australia, as did networking with American teachers via the American periodical *The China Decorator*. Charming, entrepreneurial American teachers, mainly women, regularly visited Australia, became personal friends to many Australian teachers and nominated them for membership in the prestigious International China Painting Teachers' Organisation (ICTPO). The headquarters were in America, but branches were soon established in Australian states

My research shows that the American influence was the major factor in the third peak period of china painting in South Australia from 1965 to the late 1980s. As I explained in chapter seven, 'All the Way with the USA', the zeal with which American women china painters sought to convert the Australians to follow their lead was reminiscent of earlier American women described as 'Torchbearers' who emphasised the morally uplifting influence of conservative art. Australian teachers who attended the large ICTPO Conventions in America noted the wealth of many American teachers and their predilection for collecting antique china painting, especially that depicting double pink roses. Painting these roses, not from life but by copying antique European styles, underpinned the style of painting the Americans so assiduously promulgated as 'the right way to go' with china painting in the 1970s. This was faithfully followed in Australia. This was a contributing factor to the invisibility of china painting to the Australian fine arts world of the 1960-80s, at a time when post modernism and conceptual art held sway.

Australian china painting teachers also enthusiastically followed the American exhibition format based on the commercial business world. This consisted of a convention with priced demonstrations, and it was held in conjunction with an exhibition of work by teachers only, and according to stringent exhibiting regulations. Work exhibited tended to be similar in style, mainly floral china painting with a preponderance of double roses. Viewers were overwhelmingly other china painters. Admission fees were charged to view the exhibitions

which were held in hotel ballrooms. Masses of hand painted china were crammed onto numerous tables along with flowers, tablecloths, door prizes, free give-aways of hand painted china, demonstrations, social breakfasts and dinners, and commercial booths. There were no exhibition catalogues listing individual entries with titles and prices, and no critical reviews appeared in newspapers or art magazines. Donations to charity were made from the final profit. Such events were quite unlike serious exhibitions of Australian art, and were another reason why china painting was ignored by the fine arts world, despite the insistence by most Australian china painters, following their American colleagues, that china painting of the 1970-80s was indeed fine art and definitely not craft.

Erica Doss, when addressing 'Issues of Labor and Leisure in Post-World War II American Art', observed that, 'anxious to make leisure as productive as possible, Americans flocked to hobbyism, the "do-it-yourself" movement ... and the cultures of ... keeping themselves "busy" with ... paint-by-number-kits'.¹³ The value of productive leisure is discussed by Steven Gelber in his study of the role hobbies played in American leisure time, where he noted that hobbies could be taken seriously and it was acceptable to make money from your hobby.¹⁴ American women china painters did indeed take their hobby seriously, and American china painting teachers were behind the production of the many pretty studies pushed onto the Australian market with full instructions on how to copy them. This reinforced the 'hobby-copyist' approach to china painting, which was in marked contrast to the production of original artwork embedded in the professional approach to china painting taken by artists of the 1920-30s. Gelber also pointed out how hobbyists organised shows to display their hobbies in public, and that these were a link between the reclusive world of home hobbies and the outside business world.¹⁵ This was certainly the case with the exhibitions included with the conventions organised by china painting teachers in America and subsequently in South Australia in the 1970-90s. This ethos inculcated a feeling of professionalism and exclusivity to china painters, with the insistence that only teachers were

permitted to exhibit, and moreover the public had to pay in order to view their work, not all of which was necessarily for sale. This again, was out of context with art exhibitions mounted by various private South Australian galleries and the Royal South Australian Society of Arts.

Pointers for the Future

As I pointed out in chapter eight, Australian china painters broke from the American organisation in 1987 and a few South Australian china painters who had received formal art training insisted on taking a stand to establish an Australian identity in their china painting. However, this neither halted the slow decline in the numbers of china painters in the 1990s, nor did it gain acceptance of china painting within the establishment of the Australian fine arts world. The majority of South Australian china painters were, by the 1990s, elderly women who retained their conservative outlook on what was 'good art'.

By the start of the twenty-first century, teachers found it increasingly difficult to attract new pupils from the younger generation. Cultural values and the education of women had changed over the last decade. Increasing use of computer technology added a new dimension to education and contemporary art and few of the elderly china painters kept pace with those developments. Moreover the rising generation of young artists who might have once been interested in forms of decoration that could be used on pottery/china were turning to other forms of art/craft. Peter Timms questions the changes occurring in contemporary art when he observed that many tertiary arts schools such as the Victorian College of the Arts and the University of Tasmania's School of Art ceased offering ceramics at the end of 2002.¹⁶ This may partly explain Sandra Brown's finding that her china painting expertise was helpful to some studio potters at that time.

Women's social practices also changed. By the end of the twentieth century, few young Australian women held afternoon teas or collected pretty china for their glory boxes in anticipation of decorating a home after marriage. Even fewer were interested in taking up china painting, especially if it meant painting conservative images of flowers and fruit. This shift placed uncertainty over the future of china painting in South Australia in the twenty-first century.

Nevertheless, as my research shows, there have been fluctuations in the fortunes of china painting in South Australia during the last century or more. There are indications of changes again in the direction of china painting. Articles from various overseas countries in the South Australian based *Australian Porcelain Decorator* show an increase in 'globalisation' and a reciprocal interest between Australian and Asian china painters. Where this will lead china painting, remains for future researchers to discover.

Hand painted china has never completely disappeared from view, either as a form of art/craft practice especially favoured by women in home studios, or as a collectable item in its own right. I noted, during research for this thesis, that signed, well-executed china painting by South Australian women artists is increasingly sought after in the 'collectables' market that exists outside State Galleries, and that prices for china painting are escalating.¹⁷ One possible reason for this is the expanding public awareness and increasing interest in women's decorative art practices following the inclusion of art histories in some tertiary institutions.¹⁸

My art history research concentrates on the varying fortunes of china painting, but there is another interesting aspect to china painting outside the parameters of this thesis. The extensive variety of china painted items indicates an area for future research regarding how china painting fitted into women's social and cultural history in South Australia. I noticed an astonishingly wide variety of china blanks painted by South Australian china painters listed in

the 1920-30s exhibition catalogues of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts, and I also observed many different pieces displayed in the homes of china painters interviewed for this thesis. Each different piece was deliberately chosen for a specific purpose, as was the design painted thereon. From porcelain door plates in the 1890s, to porcelain lidded jars used to hold the ashes of loved ones in the late twentieth century, china painters have used their skills for specific events in their lives, and not necessarily for exhibition. For example, as distinct from table use, plates have been china-painted as birth plates, wedding plates, anniversary plates, clock faces and more, each serving a specific purpose within women's social culture.

Such history is overlooked by most art historians and social historians as the evidence is usually on items hidden away in cabinets and cupboards in the private domestic environment. It is an extensive area for further research before those items disappear and records are lost.

¹ Grace Cochrane, 'Truth or Trap: the Australian contemporary crafts movement's pursuit of art ideals', PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1998, chapter 6, pp. 208-10.

² Cochrane, chapter 6, p. 209.

³ Discussed in 'Background to Training Women for a Suitable Professional Career', chapter 2 of this thesis.

⁴ 'School of Design', *Register*, 10 February 1896, p. 6. No author stated.

⁵ 'China painting in the Federal exhibitions', chapter 4 of this thesis. The comment on applied art was printed in the Preface of the 1915 Federal Exhibition catalogue. The 1915 Federal Exhibition contained china painting by Howie, Miss Irwin and Maida Wright.

⁶ Christopher Menz, *Morris & Company: Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts & Crafts Movement*, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1994, pp. 9, 10.

⁷ 'China painting in the Federal Art Exhibitions', chapter 4 of this thesis. In the catalogue, the included illustrations of exhibited landscapes were all painted by male artists.

⁸ 'Buying a House', 'Thinking Women: Ideal Living-Room Evolved' and 'Home decoration: Things to Remember', were separate articles in the Adelaide newspaper, *News*, 26 May 1926, p. 11.

⁹ 'Applied Art', *Catalogue, Winter Exhibition, South Australian Society of Arts Winter Exhibition of Paintings and Craft Work*, May 1921.

¹⁰ 'Craft Work', *Catalogue S. A. Society of Arts Inc., Spring Exhibition 1928*, items nos 215, 216

¹¹ *Catalogue, S.A. Society of Arts, Autumn Exhibition of Paintings and Craftwork, April, 1930*, Gwynith Norton no. 145 Brooch, (no subject mentioned) for one guinea. Prices for paintings in this exhibition were often around five guineas.

¹² 'The Post Second World War Years and Middle-class Social Culture', chapter 6 of this thesis.

¹³ Erika Doss, 'Sharrer's "Tribute to the American Working People": issues of Labor and Leisure in Post-World War II American Art', *American Art*, vol. 16, no. 3, (Autumn, 2002), p. 75.

¹⁴ Gelber is discussed under 'Literature review', chapter 1 of this thesis.

¹⁵ Steven Gelber, *Hobbies: Leisure and the culture of work in America*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1999, pp. 51, 52.

¹⁶ Peter Timms, *What's Wrong with Contemporary Art?*, University of New South Wales press, Sydney, 2004, pp. 137-139.

¹⁷ The author was approached by an official valuer in 2008 to validate a signed, but undated, hand-painted c. 1920s porcelain brooch that had a value of \$750 placed on it. The author has observed that prices for quality South Australian hand painted china have quadrupled from 1988-2008.

¹⁸ For example, the post graduate Art History studies organised by the University of Adelaide in conjunction with the Art Gallery of South Australia.

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