

MAUD SHERWOOD

1880 – 1956



The Robert McDougall Art Gallery
Christchurch City Council
New Zealand

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Introduction

Late in 1925 Maud Sherwood left New Zealand after a short visit never to return again. From this point on she became a true expatriate New Zealand artist joining many of her contemporaries who followed a similar path and stayed away.

The works in this exhibition whilst they span the thirty year period between 1918 and 1948 are mainly concerned with the artist's activity in Europe and North Africa during the late 1920's. These were years in which she not only expanded her subject references but also her language as a watercolourist. Also this was a time when her profile as an exhibiting artist was at its peak. The fact that Maud Sherwood left this country did not diminish her standing as a New Zealand artist.

As a painter the foundations of her style were firmly laid under the training of Mabel Hill and James Nairn. Even Frances Hodgkins was somewhat of an influence and inspiration but she was something of an independent. She once stated that "The great thing in art is to have something to say in your own way. Do it any way you like you must develop your own talent in your own way." For Maud Sherwood this approach was adhered to sharing the years of maturity as an artist.

Neil Roberts
Curator.

Maud Sherwood was born in Dunedin on December 22, 1880, the daughter of Elizabeth and Alfred Kimbell, a fruiterer. During the 1880's they moved to Wellington and here Maud attended the Wellington Technical College where she showed considerable talent in her art courses. While still a junior at the College she began in 1894 what was to be a steady progress through the art courses and examinations of the South Kensington School of Art, London. The successes culminated with the prestigious 1902 South Kensington bronze medal for a painting of a church interior. To mark the occasion and to encourage the newly established technical schools, Richard Seddon as Prime Minister and Minister of Education presented the medal at a special ceremony. In his speech Seddon urged the young students to "persevere with their work and to win honours abroad".

The constant measuring of the achievements of New Zealanders with those in Britain, the cultural and political 'homeland', was an important feature in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Important too for Maud Sherwood was the fact that the National Bronze medal brought with it a free studentship for further art studies abroad. However Maud Sherwood remained in Wellington for a while longer taking a permanent position on the staff of the Wellington Technical College in 1904 on the death of Nairn. Six years later her first solo exhibition was held at the McGregor Wright Gallery in Wellington and it was in the following year that she finally left the College to use her scholarship to travel abroad.

Maud Sherwood (nee Kimbell) arrived in London in January 1912, thirty-two years of age and a competent artist. For a few weeks she surveyed the art courses available in London. Then, probably encouraged by Frances Hodgkins with whom she had been in contact for some time, she crossed the channel to Paris. Here she was taken around Parisian studios and joined very briefly the Studio Colarossi where Frances Hodgkins was tutoring at this time. Soon however she moved to the studio of Tudor Hart where fellow expatriates Owen Merton and Cora Wilding were also studying. In the mornings they worked on figure studies from the model and in the afternoon visited the Louvre or painted out of doors. That summer Maud Sherwood went with 28 other pupils with Tudor Hart on a sketching tour of southern England to paint the English villages.

The winter was spent back in Paris before travelling independently to Concarneau and Brittany. Here she met an American artist "a dear middle-aged American Mr Fromuth..." "I think his work is very very fine" she wrote. Of course she also met the other famous expatriate New Zealander, Sydney Lough Thompson. "I met Mr Thompson who made me feel inches taller by telling me that he remembered my work... had a jolly good tea out in the garden and afterwards saw hundreds of Mr Thompson's sketches." Maud also spent two weeks that summer painting in Holland and at Bruges.

Returning to Paris where she was interested in extending her figure painting from the model, Maud Sherwood next joined Gogio's classes where from

4-6pm the artists used a model without tuition. This was the time when her growing confidence and contact with other artists brought the realisation that further formal tuition was no longer necessary. She said in a later interview that she had not really had much formal training abroad. "The great thing in art" she said "is to have something to say and to say it your own way. If you study under teachers who naturally like a particular kind of art, unless you have great individuality you are inevitably influenced by the art of that teacher." These were the words of a mature artist who, following exposure to the studios and exhibitions abroad, was aware that her student days were over.

In October 1913 Maud Sherwood returned from Europe to Sydney where her mother and sister were now living and for the next two years lived in Sydney painting and exhibiting regularly. In August 1917 she married Alfred Charles Sherwood and the couple visited friends and relatives in New Zealand. *The White Horse* painted at Dawes Point in 1918 is probably a good example of Maud Sherwood's work around this period. With a freedom and confidence in the watercolour techniques she uses the extended colour ranges and broader painterly techniques of post-impressionist art. She was at this time appointed to the Council of the Society of Women Painters and exhibited with them in Sydney in 1919. She also visited Melbourne and it was after this period that her marriage to Alfred Sherwood ended.

The next few years saw Maud Sherwood painting principally from still life and the model and exhibiting works including the charcoal drawing *The Necklace* at the 1920 23rd Federal Exhibition in Adelaide. She was also sending works to New Zealand for exhibition at the New Zealand Academy of Art in Wellington and also in Dunedin. Solo exhibitions in Sydney include other figure studies such as *The Problem* and *Nude* of 1923 and in the following year Maud Sherwood's work was included in a London exhibition of Australian Art at the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley.

Her contact with New Zealand was however not completely broken and in 1924-25 she spent 14 months in Wellington where she painted *Winter Sunlight Hutt River* and prepared for a solo exhibition at the New Zealand Academy of Art. This material also travelled to the Canterbury Society of Arts in Christchurch and it was from this show that *The White Horse* was purchased for the C.S.A. collection.

Maud Sherwood then returned to Sydney where she prepared for what was to be a long period overseas. In February 1926 she, in the company of another Sydney artist Gladys Owen, sailed from Sydney for Europe visiting Colombo en route and disembarking in Naples.

In April they went to Capri where American artist friends had a villa. This was to be Maud Sherwood's summer base for several years and it was from Capri that many of her painting trips originated. She visited Naples, Rome, Florence and Venice where *Yellow and Blue Sails* was painted at Chioggia in 1926. Maud also took lessons in wood cuts and it is interesting to see in the later work *Venetian Fishing Boats* the artist experimenting with this technique. We also know that during this time they visited the smaller villages of Portofino, San Michelle, Grasse and Rapolli and spent time in the North Italian cities of Milan, Sienna and Genoa. *Dolcequa near Genoa*

and *Doria Costella* were painted at this period. The picturesque qualities of the European villages were major interests at this time.

The following year in 1927 Maud Sherwood sent work to the Salon des Artistes Indépendance in Paris and was again working on studies of the small villages around Nice and returning to paint in Venice. *Venetian Fishing Boats* was printed this year. The summer was spent principally along the Mediterranean coast of southern France at Nice and St Tropez. In the autumn they travelled north to Paris for 3 months and from there planned their next major excursion. December 20th saw them travelling south again to Marseilles and on to Tunisia where they stayed for 10 weeks amid the oriental colour and tumult of the Arab world. *Arab Cafe Tunis* a small ink and wash drawing reflects some of these experiences.

Their next journey in 1928 took the travellers to Spain where they visited Barcelona, Madrid, Toledo and Segovia and from where we get *Man of the Land* and *Seller of Red Chillies*. From there they moved north through France to Brittany and on to Paris where Maud Sherwood again exhibited at the Salon des Artistes Indépendance. Paris was then their headquarters for several months but the autumn saw them moving south again to a base in Pisa.

Once more the Italian village scenes provided Maud with a wealth of subject matter. Visits are recorded to Luccia, Pescia, Caligliana to Florence, Bardonechia, and later to Assisi and Spoloto. The next six months were spent in Capri and then Maud Sherwood was again exploring around Rome in Trevi, Fillerlino, Viterbo and Monte Fiasconi. *The Boot Market* and *Monte Fiasconi* have returned to New Zealand from the period spent principally visiting the various villages around the French and Italian borders.

The next major base for the travelling artist was Rome where for most of 1931 Maud Sherwood lived in an apartment overlooking the Borghese Gardens and exhibited at the Prima Monstra Internazionale, a Art Coloniale, and the Monstra de Sindicato Regionale Ficolisto Belle Arti del Lasio. 1932 was Maud Sherwood's last year in Europe with work sent from Rome for exhibition at the London Royal Academy before she finally sailed from Naples for Australia.

Australia was Maud's home for the remaining 23 years of her life. Based on a home and studio in Sydney she painted and taught and exhibited extensively sending work for exhibitions as far afield as Melbourne, Brisbane and overseas to Paris. For some time she also continued her travels now using a caravan to tour the back-country areas of N.S.W. and producing works like *Australian Landscape*, *Farmyard* and *The Blue Mountains*. As in the early period of her life, commendations and recognition mark the late 1930's with the award of a Coronation medal in 1937 and the Australian 150 Anniversary Exhibition medal in 1938. *After Glow*, *Silo with Cows* and *Farm Horses* are produced at this period with the latest works in this exhibition being the still life *Morning Paper* *Granny Smiths Journal* of 1946 and the *Self Portrait* of 1948.

Maud Sherwood died in Sydney on December 1st 1956. Looking back on her career as an artist she is remembered for her vigorous and broad treatment of form and for her strong sense of design, features well illustrated in this small exhibition of her works between 1918 and 1948.

Catalogue of Works in this Exhibition

1. *The White Horse, Dawes Point 1918*
Watercolour
2. *The Farmyard*
Watercolour
3. *The Necklace 1920*
Charcoal
4. *The Problem 1923*
Watercolour
5. *Winter Sunlight Hutt River Valley 1924*
Watercolour
6. *Yellow and Blue Sails Chioggia, Venice 1926*
Watercolour
7. *Flower Seller*
Watercolour
8. *Afterglow*
Watercolour
9. *Doria Costella near Genoa 1926*
Watercolour
10. *Man of the Land 1928*
Watercolour
11. *Docegua Near Genoa 1926*
Watercolour
12. *Montefiascone 1930*
Watercolour
13. *The Boot Market Montefiascone 1930*
Watercolour
14. *Trevi, Italy 1930*
Monoprint
15. *Somewhere in France c1928*
Watercolour
16. *The Artist c1935*
Watercolour
17. *Farm Horses*
Watercolour
18. *Silo with Cows*
Oil on Board
19. *In the Blue Mountains*
Watercolour
20. *Morning Paper Granny Smith's Journal*
Watercolour
21. *Australian Landscape N.S.W.*
Watercolour

Drawings and Prints
22. *Nude, c1923*
Conte Chalk
23. *After Service Filletino near Rome 1930*
Linoblock
24. *Capri*
Linoblock
25. *Three Men Watching Bowls*
Woodblock
26. *Seller of Fried Chillies*
Woodblock
27. *Arab Cafe Tunis*
Ink and Wash
28. *Venetian Fishing Boats*
Woodblock
29. *Self Portrait*
Pencil/Conte