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Nobody's Darlings: the lives and legacy of Australian women artists in Europe

Rediscovered: Dangerously modern Australian women artists

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Lecture summary

Every new exhibition is a learning curve for the curators. You begin with both assumptions and an open mind as you research the exhibition theme. *Dangerously Modern Australian Women artists in Europe 1890-1940* brought many surprises including the rediscovery of art works that have not been seen publicly in over 100 years, as well learning more about works hidden in plain sight in the Art Gallery's and other public collections.

This lecture will focus on six artists: the globetrotting yet ultimately tragic Eleanor Ritchie Harrison, Australia's first female professional artist of Chinese descent Justine Kong Sing, political agitator and suffragette Dora Meeson, European adventurer Mary Cockburn Mercer, the sophisticated and fashionable Helen Stewart, and the glamorous and hard-working Eileen Mayo.

Slide list

1. Title slide
2. Introduction
3. Eleanor Ritchie Harrison, Santa Barbara, early 1890s photograph, Santa Barbara Historical Society
4. *Dangerously Modern* installation view, Eleanor Ritchie Harrison's *A winter morning on the coast of France* 1888 on the end wall
5. Eleanor Ritchie at art school, with her 4 sisters and other students, London or Paris 1879 photograph, private collection
6. Eleanor Ritchie Harrison San Francisco c1886 Albumin photograph, private collection
Lovell Birge Harrison (American, 1854-1929) c1891-96 Santa Barbara Historical Society
7. *Victorian Artists Society Winter Exhibition 1890*, Melbourne, 1890, cover designed by Charles Conder
Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne 1880s photograph
Victorian Artists Society Winter Exhibition 1890, Melbourne, 1890, pages
8. M Hirst Browne, 'Some Australian Women', Illustrated Sydney News, May 9 1891
Mrs Birge Harrison, an Australian artist Table Talk, April 23 1890
Melbourne Gossip by Viva The Sydney Mail, April 26 1890
9. Eleanor Ritchie Harrison *A winter morning on the coast of France* 1888. Before conservation treatment
10. Eleanor Ritchie Harrison *A winter morning on the coast of France* 1888. During treatment
11. Reverse of *A winter morning on the coast of France* showing the stretcher and early label
12. Eleanor Ritchie Harrison *A winter morning on the coast of France* 1888, oil on canvas, 88 x 159 cm; 122 x 194 x 10 cm frame, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by James M Hardigg 2025
13. Eleanor Ritchie Harrison *A winter morning on the coast of France* 1888, oil on canvas, 88 x 159 cm Art Gallery of New South Wales

- Birge Harrison *The Return of the Mayflower* 1886, oil on canvas, 169 x 241 cm, private collection, USA
14. Birge Harrison *The Return of the Mayflower* 1886, oil on canvas, 169 x 241 cm, 1913 frame, private collection, USA
The Return of the Mayflower 1886 displayed in the fine art galleries of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago
<https://americandecorativeart.com/internalpages/inventory/pages/harrison.html>
 15. E Phillips Fox (Australia 1865-1915) *Autumn showers* 1900, oil on canvas, 153.2 x 193 cm frame, Art Gallery of New South Wales purchased 1900
 Sydney Long (Australia 1871-1955) *Midday* 1896, oil on canvas, 102.2 x 153 cm, 136.3 x 187.7 x 10 cm frame, Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased 1896
 16. Eleanor Ritchie Harrison *A winter morning on the coast of France* 1888, Art Gallery of New South Wales, frame made by Tom Langlands
 17. Eleanor Ritchie Harrison *Tired out* 1882, oil on canvas 51 x 58 cm, Courtesy Lauraine Diggins Fine Art, Melbourne
 Eleanor Ritchie Harrison *The Poacher's Daughter* 1886, oil on canvas, private collection
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 Newington College Rugby team 1887 Otto Kong Sing seated far right, courtesy Newington College, Sydney
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45. Photographic album belonging to Mary Cockburn Mercer, 1930s, Queensland Art Gallery
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Frank Davis, photographic portrait of Eileen Mayo 1920s-30s
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Marion Hoppé, photographic portrait of Eileen Mayo 1920s-30s
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Eileen Mayo *Australia (Kangaroo and Joey)* 1956, colour lithograph, 100.6 x 64.5 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales

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