



**UNE AUSTRALIENNE:
HILDA RIX NICHOLAS
in PARIS, TANGIER and SYDNEY**

03 May – 13 July 2014

The richness and beauty of the work of Hilda Rix Nicholas will be the focus of a major exhibition at Sydney's Mosman Art Gallery, 03 May – 13 July 2014.

Hilda Rix Nicholas (1884 –1961) was an Australian painter of great ambition who established her career in the early decades of the 20th century both internationally and in Australia.

The exhibition **UNE AUSTRALIENNE: HILDA RIX NICHOLAS IN PARIS, TANGIER AND SYDNEY** examines the artist's early career and the profound influence her experience in Europe had on her art practice in 1920s Australia.

Emily Hilda Rix Nicholas was born in Ballarat, Victoria in 1884 to artist Elizabeth Rix and respected mathematician and education inspector Henry Finch Rix. From 1902–1905, she studied art under Frederick McCubbin at the National Gallery of Victoria Art School. In 1907, following the death of her father, Hilda aged 22, travelled to Europe with her mother and sister Elsie. With family support, Hilda was encouraged to make art and study abroad.

Hilda Rix Nicholas trained in the studios of London and Paris - where she kept a studio. Her fine-art practice alternated between drawing and painting, landscape and figuration. Hilda became part of the annual summer artist colony in Étapes on the north west coast of France where an enchantment with the rural fishing folk became frequent subject matter.

Hilda also journeyed to North Africa - study trips that were significant and liberating for the artist. Along with Ethel Carrick Fox, Rix Nicholas was one of the first women to practice her art openly in the streets of Tangier in Morocco. Hilda's colourful observations of the everyday - its people, market life and street scenes, are full of light and still fresh today. During her early time in Europe, Hilda successfully exhibited in London, the prestigious *Paris Salon* and later at the *Société des Peintres Orientalistes Français*, 1914.

After World War I and the death of her husband, Major George Matson Nicholas, an Australian soldier, Hilda returned home in 1918, relocating to Sydney and a studio in Mosman for four years. Idyllic scenes of Sydney Harbour, its social life, views of The Blue Mountains, NSW and a series of acute portrait work would develop. During her time in Sydney, Rix Nicholas continued to revisit her experiences garnered during her time abroad. As she considered herself a war widow artist, she continued to draw and paint powerful portraits of returned Australian soldiers and along with Streeton and Lambert, entered a war memorial mural competition for the Melbourne Public Library.

Hilda Rix Nicholas was feted as an international artist and her paintings in and around Sydney reflected her cosmopolitan training including her exposure to the European post-impressionists. The artist would exhibit her paintings in Sydney and Melbourne, and to great acclaim back in London and France in 1925 - where she was elected as an Associate of the *Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts*.

In 1926, Rix Nicholas embarked on an extended painting tour by car, of regional New South Wales and Queensland. The artist chose to settle in Delegate in the Monaro region of southern New South Wales in 1928 to marry grazier Edgar Wright, and at the age of 46 gave birth to her only child, Rix, in 1930. Living at *Knockalong* homestead, Hilda Rix Nicholas continued her art practice until ill health intervened and she died in 1961.

The Mosman Art Gallery exhibition features important paintings and drawings from Hilda's time in France, Tangier and Sydney, which have not been exhibited together since her solo exhibitions of the 1920s.

Works are on loan from the public collections of the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, The Art Gallery of South Australia, Australian War Memorial, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, Bega Regional Gallery and from JB Hawkins Antiques, Bridget McDonnell Gallery, as well as private collections. A number of key works are on loan from the private collection of the Rix-Wright family.

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a Mosman Art Gallery exhibition / Curator Julie Petersen / full colour catalogue available

SYMPOSIUM – SUNDAY 01 JUNE 2014:

Out There! Australian women artists and the modern world.

This Symposium takes as its theme the early experiences of Hilda Rix Nicholas to explore the international engagement of Australian female artists with the modern world.

Speakers include:

- Elena Taylor (Curator of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Victoria)
- Jeanette Hoorn (Professor of Visual Cultures and Director of Gender Studies in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne)
- Catherine Speck (Coordinator of the Art History Program offered jointly by the University of Adelaide and the Art Gallery of South Australia)

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Where: MOSMAN ART GALLERY - cnr Art Gallery Way & Myahgah Road, Mosman, NSW

On view: Saturday 03 May – Sunday 13 July 2014

Open: 7 days, 10am – 5pm

Admission: Free

Gallery Reception: 02 9978 4178

Information & event bookings: www.mosmanartgallery.org.au

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image: Hilda Rix Nicholas, *The bathers*, 1921, Sydney, oil on canvas, 50 x 61cm, Private collection