

Between the Heads: Views of Middle Harbour

Beyond the majestic sandstone heads that guard Sydney's harbour lies the tranquil beauty of Mosman, the ancestral lands of the Borogegal and Cammeraigal peoples. The dramatic landscape of this coastal region and its swift suburbanisation during the 20th century have provided enduring inspiration for generations of Australian artists.

We are delighted to present a selection of new acquisitions to the Mosman Art Collection, displayed alongside beloved works from the Mosman Art Trail, the Balnaves Gift, and rarely seen paintings depicting local landscapes and figures. 19th and 20th-century artists captured the raw beauty of the North Shore of Port Jackson, recording in detail its remote landscape and recording the events and progress of colonial and suburban Mosman. Today, contemporary Indigenous artists offer a different perspective, focusing on historical First Nations figures connected to these shores, and restoring their presence within the landscape.

Generous philanthropy has played a vital role in the creation and preservation of the Mosman Art Collection, which boasts a wealth of artworks with both local and historical significance.

Thanks to the support of Mosman Art Gallery's benefactors, conservation efforts and further research have uncovered hidden details, such as secondary images behind works by Arthur Streeton and Emanuel Phillips Fox.

Maddison Wing

The Queen of Sydney 2024

black tea, tobacco, rum, seawater, sepia ink on paper

Depicting Cora Gooseberry, the second wife of important Aboriginal public figure and diplomat, Bungaree, Wing's double portrait reprises an 1844 pencil portrait and later lithographic print made by 19th-century artist, Charles Rodius. The daughter of Mooroo boora (Maroubra) (c.1758-98), a prominent leader of the Murro-ore-dial (Pathway Place) clan, south of Port Jackson, Cora became a knowledgeable navigator and guide to the colonists, accompanying them over the Blue Mountains and showing them rock carvings at North Head. She was granted alongside Bungaree in 1815 land around Georges Head and Middle Head. Using primary resources with which Gooseberry had been paid (tobacco, rum, sugar and tea), mixed with water from Chowder Bay, Wing's portrait links this powerful Elder to local Cammeraigal and Borogegal land.

Mosman Art Gallery Collection; Acquired 2024.



Caroline Oakley

Young Bungaree 2012

watercolour, mixed media and textile

First presented in Mosman Art Gallery's exhibition *Bungaree: The First Australian* in 2012, Gamilaroi artist Caroline Oakley's portrait reimagines Boongaree/ Bungaree, noted Aboriginal chief and navigator from Kuring-ai, as a young man. Almost all extant portraits of the leader, painted by Western portraitists portray him in European costume and with a brass plate inscribed 'Bungaree: Chief of the Broken Bay Tribe', a fictitious title. Selected as chief by Governor Macquarie in 1815, Bungaree was the first Indigenous recipient of a land grant by colonial authorities. With no acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the local Borogegal people, fertile land on Georges Heights was allocated to this project, intended to introduce sedentary agriculture amongst Indigenous peoples (it was unsuccessful). Figures of kangaroos alongside Bungaree recall rock carvings on sandstone headlands around the harbour, attesting to the long and enduring presence of Indigenous people and their custodianship of the land in this area.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated by Caroline Oakley, 2025.



Valentine Delawarr

Mosman Bay Falls c. 1890

oil on board

Painted by the late Victorian painter of Dutch background, Valentine Delawarr, this scene of Mosman Bay Falls depicts intrepid young men delighting in the wild bushland of lower Mosman Bay (today Reid Park). The successive residents of The Rangers, a mansion built on the western headland in 1844 by Oswald Bloxome, were pivotal in developing the residential suburb and opening up Mosman to local tourism. Key to this was a group of impressive waterfalls, 100 feet high, at the head of Mosman Bay, named Harnett Falls after local entrepreneur Richard Harnett. They became a major scenic attraction for weekend picnickers, provided they were willing to “spend an hour on horseback, crossing the steam ferry at Billy Blue’s Point, riding 5 miles through a perfect fairyland of flowers and verdure, rocks and caverns”¹. This beautiful scenery was strongly encouraged as subject matter for artists and early photographers, particularly after it became more accessible with increased ferry services in the 1870s. The urban development of the area was rapid, although only visible here by the boundary fence of The Rangers and the remains of an old stone wall on the right. By the mid-20th century, the creek that fed the waterfalls had run dry, and the area was largely paved over to accommodate residences and the modern Rangers Avenue.

Mosman Art Collection

1. Tue 10 Jan 1860 - The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954)
Page 2 - A visit to Harnett’s Falls. Mosman’s Bay, North Shore



Constance Gordon-Cumming

Sydney Harbour, New South Wales, from North Head 1875

watercolour on cardboard

The last daughter of a large aristocratic Scottish family, Constance Gordon-Cumming became a pioneering Victorian travel writer and early influencer. Remarkably, she travelled to the furthest reaches of the British Empire alongside diplomatic parties, and upon her return to the United Kingdom published dozens of travel memoirs, and exhibited her watercolours in large colonial exhibitions.

Topographically accurate, her panoramic view of Sydney Harbour was painted in situ from the heights of North Head during a brief stay in the city over the winter of 1875. She has carefully recorded the placenames of the eastern harbourside suburbs in pencil, noting the presence of the major edifices of the colony and recording dozens of sea vessels darting across the harbour. Gordon-Cumming's view emphasises the natural beauty of the landscape. Her view is dominated by the group of native Xanthorrea (Gadi) grass trees, unwittingly including a botanical reference to the Gadigal people of Sydney Cove.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by John Charrington & Pamela McBride, 2024.



Emanuel Phillips Fox

Study for *'Enfant de la Premiere Communion'* 1904

(Houses and Poplars Seen across Water sketch) (verso)

oil on board

Fox met his English-born wife, Ethel Carrick, in the St Ives painting colony in Wales in 1901 the pair married in 1905, creating a powerful symbiotic artistic partnership. Fox's love of brilliant sunshine and the varied effects of light were forged in the summertime painting trips he was encouraged to make as a student, a practice he later shared with his wife in Australia and on their travels. This small oil sketch, depicting one of the Catholic rituals of rustic French life, is of an anonymous young girl dressed in white sitting contemplatively on a bench, in the dappled sunlight of garden subjects for which Fox would become most well-known.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Marshall and Caroline Phillips, 2024.



Ethel Carrick

Untitled (Balmoral Beach) c. 1915

oil on canvas on board

Painted in Sydney, likely in the immediate aftermath of her husband Emanuel Phillips Fox's sudden passing, this small jewel-like landscape by Ethel Carrick depicts a view of the far northern end of Balmoral Bay, overlooking the naturally-formed "Babies' Pool". This intimate and atmospheric landscape was painted on the spot, capturing the ephemeral effects of a hazy morning with thin graduated washes of blue, textured brushstrokes loosely describing the rocks, seafoam and leaves of trees in the foreground. With only a white smudge of a boat's sail in the centre of the painting, this beach scene is far removed from the exciting crowds Carrick so loved, instead describing a mood of solitary contemplation.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Susan Rothwell AM, 2024.



Josefia Lemon

Serene Middle Harbour 2008

watercolour

This intimate watercolour of a leafy view of Middle Harbour attests to the enduring appeal of this picturesque location for artists. Painted by local contemporary artist Josefia Lemon, with delicately translucent washes glossing over architectural details, *Serene Middle Harbour* expresses the peaceful residential nature of present-day Mosman.

Mosman Art Collection; Acquired by Murray and Breda Block through the 'Art Purchase Endowment', 2007.



Arthur Streeton

Sydney from Mosman c. 1914

pencil, coloured pencil and wash on paper

This rapid and heartfelt pencil-and-watercolour sketch of Sydney Harbour from Mosman was painted en plein air, from a cherished spot on the headland of Ashton Park facing Athol Bay, which Arthur Streeton said offered the 'finest views imaginable' and still does to this day. In this sketch, Streeton carefully conveys the industrial and natural changes to the idyllic landscape he knew so well. Placed in the centre of the image with an oriental flourish reminiscent of his paintings of Egyptian minarets, is Robertson's Point Light, built in 1909 at the tip of Cremorne Point and Ashton Park headland from where he was drawing, which had recently been rezoned to house the new Zoological Park (Taronga Zoo).

Mosman Art Collection; Donated by members of the Mosman Art Gallery Acquisition Fund, 2024.



Gladstone Eyre

Balmoral Beach looking towards North Head and Manly c. 1900
watercolour on paper

With dramatic coastal vegetation and rock formations of Wyargine Point occupying the majority of the foreground, Gladstone Eyre's large panorama of Balmoral Beach emphasises the overwhelming natural beauty of the area. Once the site of an important Cammeragal settlement, public access to Balmoral was guaranteed in 1886 when it was proclaimed Balmoral Park, quickly becoming a local favourite. Originally from Launceston in Tasmania, in Sydney Gladstone Eyre painted many watercolour landscapes of the harbour as well as society portraits in oil. Immersive in scale, Gladstone's view includes a variety of sea vessels, from distant three-masted ships and steamers travelling through the dramatic profile of the heads to two men paddling a rowboat close to shore.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated by Gary and Mary Smoker, 2020.



Albert Fullwood

Sydney Harbour with Fort Denison and City Skyline 1897

watercolour on paper

This panorama of ships (with Fort Denison nestled amongst them) is sharply delineated against the murky greens of the forested Domain and Mrs Macquaire's Chair. With a low horizon, Albert Fullwood leaves a large expanse in which to portray the gentle blush of a pink and purple sunset over the silhouetted skyline of the newly prosperous city. We can identify the spires, smokestacks and sandstone campaniles of grand colonial buildings such as the ornate Lands Department Building and the General Post Office, in today's Martin Place. Sunsets were a particularly popular motif for watercolour paintings at this time, providing a romantic tinge to observational scenes of industry and colonial progress. These are no simple passenger ferries, or even merchant ships, the magnificence of these huge vessels, including a three-masted warship and two first-class steam cruisers indicates that this view was captured around the time of the Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in June 1897.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Denis Savill, 2024.



Albert Fullwood

Sydney (Fireworks on the Harbour) 1897

ink and wash with Chinese white on paper

25 x 37.2 cm

Although an expatriate British artist, Albert Henry Fullwood enjoyed huge public exposure as a principal artist-illustrator within the Australian publishing industry, which played a crucial role in developing local visual culture and national sentiment. In June 1897, Queen Victoria celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, marking 60 years of continuous reign, the first monarch in Britain to reach this milestone. The anniversary was celebrated with much enthusiasm and pageantry throughout the Empire, especially in Sydney, one of its furthest colonial outposts. A detailed program of the planned festivities was published in the local newspaper and expensively reported on by roving journalists. With a mastery of ink and china white pigments inherited from his time in illustrated newspapers, Fullwood's dramatic nighttime scene was likely painted from a ferry, faithfully immersing the viewer in the incredible display of pyrotechnics and electrical lights spelling out the Queen's initials and various messages of celebration.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Denis Savill, 2024.



George Halstead

View from Watson's Bay 1860

oil on canvas

Although little is known about the artist George Halstead, it is believed that he emigrated from England around the time of the Gold Rush, and soon after settled in Sydney. Often painting from the vantage point of Burrawa-ra, South Head, Halstead recorded the rapid technological developments of the colony. *View From Watson's Bay*, records a crucial technological development for the growing city: the installation of the first telegraph line in New South Wales, which ran from Woolloomooloo to the Signal Station at South Head, completed in early January 1858. Here only the poles have been installed, yet to be garlanded with their electricity cables. The establishment of this swift mode of communication between the southeastern extremity of Sydney was viewed as a growing necessity in this age of frequent maritime traffic and trade, particularly in light of the wreck of the *Dunbar*, which occurred near the Heads on the 20th of August 1857.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Neil Balnaves AO, 2011.



William Raworth

Untitled (View from Middle Head of Russian Fleet) c. 1882

watercolour on paper

While the first fortifications on Mosman's headlands date back to 1803, a renewed concern for resisting invaders from the Heads in the 1870s and 1880s saw the construction of three sets of fortifications on the forested headlands of the outer harbour: Lower Georges Heights Commanding Position, the Georges Head Battery and a smaller fort located on Bradleys Head. Here, a member of the Artillery Regiment in his distinctive blue uniform and pillbox hat stands next to the 68-pound gun installed into the cut sandstone of Middle Head (next to Queen Victoria's initials) after having been rolled down Military Road. Commanding the entrance to Port Jackson, the cannon was never used to prevent an attack. This view likely depicts the squadron of Russian war cruisers, led by the flagship *Afrika*, which arrived peacefully for trade and commerce in early 1882, with the local press noting at the time that they would have been formidable opponents if they had come in another guise.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated by Elizabeth Beveridge, 2020.



B.E. Minns

Untitled (View of Sydney Harbour from Georges Heights) 1923
watercolour on paper

Benjamin Minns, like Albert Fullwood and Julian Ashton, was employed in the illustrated press in the late 1880s and exhibited his pen-and-ink works alongside them in the newly formed Society of Artists. Works from this time record his association with the bohemian artist camps at Edwards Beach and Sirius Cove. Many of his early works in watercolours were rare sensitive portraits of First Nations people, some of which were acquired by the National Art Gallery, now the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Later in life, during the 1920s, Minns found fame as a landscape painter in watercolours. Here with a rapid and sure touch of layered transparencies, Minns presents a sweet scene of a pair of daytrippers enjoying the panoramic harbour views of Georges Heights towards the densely built shores of South Head.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated by Elizabeth Duguid, 2024.



Elioth Gruner

Taylors Bay 1913

oil on board

One of Australia's finest landscape painters, early Modernist artist Elioth Gruner devoted himself to painting the coastline of New South Wales during two distinct periods, between 1912-14 and then again in 1917-1920. These periods of focussed outdoor painting are a testament to the artist's tireless physical interaction with the landscape, spending summers on the beaches of Sydney, bodysurfing and camping with friends. In comparison to Gruner's bright panel paintings of Bronte, Bondi and Manly from this same period, full of people and movement, his subdued, tonal painting of Taylors Bay is almost entirely uninhabited. The view instead delights in the softly glowing languid atmosphere of low tide on a hot afternoon.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Neil Balnaves AO, 2011.



Sydney Long

Clifton Gardens 1905

watercolour

The same year this work was painted Sydney Long expressed his vision, penning an article in favour of “the joy of making new ones [artistic traditions] suitable to his [Australian] surroundings”, calling on artists to “express the lonely and primitive feeling of this country”. Almost entirely devoid of human presence save for a couple of minuscule white sailing boats, Long’s scene of Clifton Gardens is one of a secret sanctuary, with a clifftop clearing revealing vast views over a brilliant stretch of turquoise water, the natural environment majestic and all-powerful. In 1905 Clifton Gardens was the site of a well-known pleasure ground with patrons travelling by ferry to visit. At this time, it was on the cusp of being purchased and refurbished by Sydney Ferries, transformed into a much larger entertainment complex on the foreshore, including dancehalls and an enclosed swimming pier responding to newly relaxed public bathing laws.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government’s Cultural Gifts Program by Neil Balnaves AO, 2011.



William Howes

Old Bridge Across Mosman Bay 1892

oil on board

Little information remains about William Henry Howes, an artist who was active in the city of Sydney in the late 1800s, exhibiting at the Royal Art Society of New South Wales and submitting landscape paintings to the Wynne Prize at the National Art Gallery (Art Gallery of New South Wales). Residing in the city, Howes made frequent painting trips to the picturesque Mosman shores, no doubt heeding the advice of John Hoyte, the Society's first president. Hoyte wrote in 1880: 'There is a great scope in the beautiful scenery surrounding Sydney for those who may confine themselves to landscape painting, and the formation of this society will encourage artists to lend themselves to a faithful representation of that which nature has so bountifully placed within their reach'. Here, the old wooden footbridge across Mosman Bay, first built by Richard Harnett in the mid-1870s and soon to be replaced, is used by fashionably dressed couples promenading towards the tearooms at the site of the old whaling station (and just out of view), while others row on the calm waters of the bay.

Mosman Art Collection



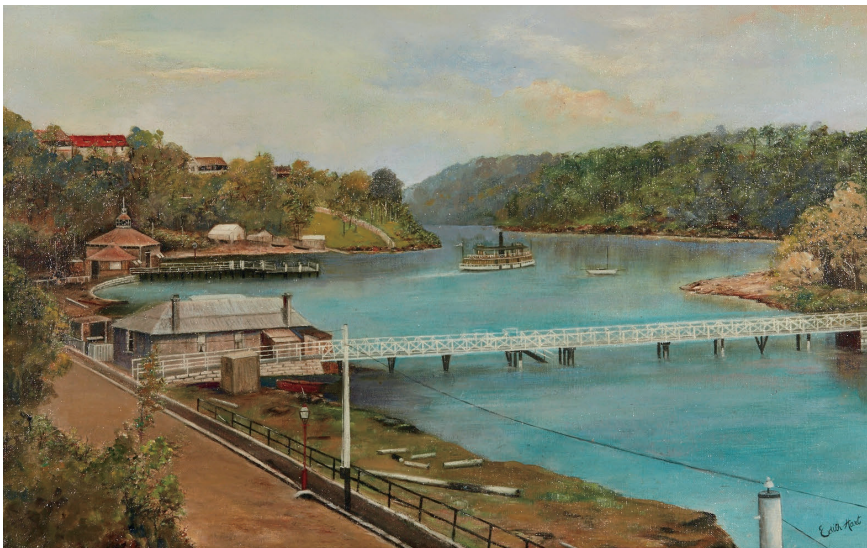
Edith Hart

Mosman Bay c.1900

oil on board

Painted around 1900 by the little-known Edith Hart, this view of Mosman Bay is crisp and precise in its depiction of the new infrastructure necessary to support the burgeoning suburb. The rickety footbridge has now been replaced by a sturdy and whitewashed structure. A tram service ran along Avenue Road, powered by overhead electric lines, connecting commuters with the ferry services to Circular Quay. An iconic K-class steam ferry, presumably the Kangaroo, can be seen departing here, a vital link to the centre of town.

Mosman Art Collection



Margaret Preston

Mosman Bridge 1927

woodblock print

Margaret Preston's artistic career was stimulated by a progressive attempt to create a style of art that would better illustrate the uniqueness of Australian culture. Her vibrant and distinctive woodblock prints, now regarded as the high point of her career, broke with conservative traditions of landscape painting and helped Preston to become the most vocal and highly regarded female modern artist in Australia. Her search for a national vernacular is apparent within her asymmetrical view of Mosman Bridge around 1927, expanded from her earlier treatments of this view to include and highlight Australian native flora in the foreground.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Neil Balnaves AO, 2011



Adelaide Perry

Taronga Wharf 1939

oil on board

In 1933, Adelaide Perry opened her own art school in Bridge St, the Adelaide Perry School of Drawing and Painting, joining privately-run modern art schools founded by artists recently returned from overseas such as Dorrit Black and Grace Crowley. Students were taught design and printmaking, with outdoor painting trips a regular feature of Perry's teaching. It is likely that this painting, *Afternoon, Taronga Wharf*, 1939 was painted during one such plein air painting excursion with her students, to the popular spot of Bradley's Head. The quick and intimate painting *Afternoon, Taronga Wharf* displays Perry's vigorous adoption of Modernist techniques and its curvy composition is closely related to her early landscapes printed in linocuts.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Neil Balnaves AO, 2011.



Charles Meere

View of Mosman 1940

oil on board

Charles Meere's *View of Mosman* is a view from the artist's home at 16 Rickard Avenue, a sinuous road on the crest of Bradley's Head, looking over Sirius Cove (a sliver of blue just visible amongst the trees in the centre) to the stacked, red-roofed apartment blocks of Raglan and Musgrave Streets on the neighbouring headland. Demonstrating the strong links between art and design that characterised Sydney modernism during the 1920s-1940s, Meere's landscape view is flat, crisp and stylised. Erasing superfluous detail, Meere arranges the natural and man-made elements of his view into a harmonious pattern of light and shade.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Neil Balnaves AO, 2011.



Will Ashton

House Boats, the Spit, Sydney Harbour 1937

oil on canvas on board

In the clear light of the golden hour, Will Ashton has here painted an almost aerial view of moored houseboats in the cove of Pearl Bay. His harmonious tones of pale yellow and green indicate the permanence and comfortable integration of these floating residences in the area. A feature of this cove of Middle Harbour since the turn of last century, by 1938 the distinctive fleet of houseboats counted nine permanent homes, most built from repurposed transport and industrial vessels including tugs, barges and even one former punt used to cross the Spit before the bridge was built in 1925.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Neil Balnaves AO, 2011.



James Jackson

The Spit, Sydney Harbour 1935

oil on canvas

James Ranalph Jackson was a veteran open-air painter of Sydney Harbour, especially of the Spit and of Middle Harbour, subjects that he painted consistently from 1910 until 1970, recording many important changes in the built environments of the foreshore. After an itinerant existence during the Depression, Jackson settled into a Mosman studio on Spit Road above Chinaman's Beach in 1936. The spectacular vista of the narrow Spit sandbar crossing Middle Harbour had captivated the artist. Deftly painted here with quick confident strokes and handling of colour, it glitters with light. A keen sailor, Jackson's main subject in *The Spit* was not the new utilitarian bridge across the bay, but a group of boats moored at Beauty Point, dotted throughout the centre of the painting, and a couple of diminutive figures walking along the mudflat beach.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Neil Balnaves AO, 2011.



Dora Toovey

Building the New Spit Bridge c. 1953

oil on canvas

Celebrating the optimism of industrial progress and the possibilities of greater accessibility and connection throughout the city and its suburbs, Dora Toovey's painting of the New Spit Bridge in the early years of its six-year-long construction is infused with light. Dora Toovey was a long-time resident of Mosman, and like her former husband James Jackson, looked to her immediate environment for inspiration. The early-morning sunshine reflects on the calm waters of Middle Harbour while a billowing cloud of steam and smoke conceals the finer details of the building site, each painted with expressive, shimmering brushstroke. A dynamic work-in-progress, Toovey's painting of the bridge recalls the works of early Sydney modernist artists painting the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge in the 1930s, similarly enthralled with the creative possibilities of modern engineering. The Spit Bridge similarly attracted the attention of artists, with Roy Fluke awarded by guest judge Lloyd Rees the Mosman Art Prize in 1954 with a daring, semi-abstract interpretation of this same view.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated by Anne Marie Mairec, 2018.



Lloyd Rees

The Summit, Balls Head 1978

soft ground etching

The first sight of Sydney Harbour through a ship's porthole made an indelible impression on the young Lloyd Rees when he arrived in 1916. In his memoir, he recalled: it was one of those days of soft sunshine. A pearly, slight blue haze... and when we went through the Heads, all that layed back like a vast theatrical scene. The harbour would become a central theme in Rees' landscapes, from tonal and hyperrealistic pencil drawings of its sandstone borders he made in the early 1930s, to this commemorative suite of printed soft-ground etchings, made in 1978. Printmaking became an important part of Rees' practice as an established artist, and *A Tribute to Sydney* lyrically expressed the enduring presence of the harbour throughout his career. Like many of his artistic peers, Rees has contrasted the rough organic forms of the sandstone headlands of the North Shore with the vertical patterning of the city's skyline across the inky span of water.

Mosman Art Collection; Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Carolyn Rankin, 2025.



Jon Crothers

Middle Head Fortifications 1999

etching

A soft ground etching by Jon Crothers, a local contemporary printmaker (and a former student of Lloyd Rees) shows the heritage site of the Outer Middle Head forts as they are today—a curious geometric anomaly made up of concrete structures and fencing, snaking around an otherwise natural landscape. Here, despite the darkly cross-hatched skies, bushwalkers gather on the edge of the headland to observe passing white sailing boats. The stunning views offered by Mosman's extensive coastline have captivated artists and bushwalkers alike since the 19th century.

Mosman Art Collection

