AGSA

Martha Berkeley Georgina, Emily and Augusta Rose

Interpretive Resource



Artist Martha Berkeley was born in England in 1813 and migrated to South Australia with her husband Captain Charles Berkeley and sister Theresa Walker in 1836. They arrived in Adelaide only six weeks after its proclamation on 28 December and the lack of infrastructure meant that they, along with the other settlers, were required to live in tents on the banks of the Torrens for eight months. Berkeley spent 16 years in South Australia where she worked as a professional painter, recording the colony and its citizens as it grew and developed. During this period, she often painted miniature oil portraits on commission. This gained her much respect as an artist and allowed her to support her family financially even when they fell on hard times after the death of her husband.

Georgina, Emily and Augusta Rose, c.1848 is a group portrait which shows Berkeley's daughters, dressed in their Sunday best, possibly painted to celebrate the girls' baptism in the New Church. The portrait shows the eldest, Georgina, offering a sprig of honeysuckle to the youngest Emily with Augusta Rose on the left. The girls are placed in the family's garden, with the landscape beyond suggesting the River Torrens and the Adelaide Hills. As well as representing motherly love, the group portrait suggests wealth and social success in the new province.

Image (below) and image detail (cover)
Martha Berkeley, Australia, 1813–1899, Georgina, Emily and Augusta Rose, c.1848, Adelaide, oil on metal, 36.4 x 39.5; M.J.M. Carter AO Collection 2007. Given in memory of Di Townsend, Betty McIlwham and fellow Gallery Guides' education programs for children., Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

Martha Berkeley - Georgina, Emily and Augusta Rose c.1848



Early Years

Responding

Look closely at the clothes and objects around the children in *Georgina*, *Emily and Augusta Rose*, list some of your favourite clothes and toys. How are they different?

When do members of your family take photos? Share your favourite family photo with your class. How do you feel when you look at a photograph of your family?

Describe the children in this painting.
Do you think they are rich or poor?
What can you see that makes you say that?

Making

Paint a family portrait which shows the people and objects that are most important to you. Include your house or backyard.

Make a list of words which describe who you are. Think about images, objects, or symbols which would show these characteristics. Draw or paint a self-portrait which incorporates these images.

Primary

Responding

Many people immigrate from all over the world and for many different reasons. Research the history of immigration where you live. What are some reasons people immigrate? Interview someone in your family or someone you know well about their experience of migrating to a new place?

The girls in the painting are wearing clothes for a special occasion.

Think about an outfit you have worn for a special occasion? What made this occasion special?

In the background of Berkeley's painting you can see the River Torrens and the Adelaide Hills. Locate other works of art on display which depict a South Australian landscape. Find images of this place today, how has the environment changed?

Look at other colonial works of art on display in the Gallery. What imagery have the artists captured to show the change to the local landscape?

Making

You have been commissioned to create a portrait of someone you respect and admire. Consider the objects and attire you might include in this portrait.

The object located on the right hand side of *Georgina*, *Emily and Augusta Rose*, is a quadricycle, which was a type of four wheeled vehicle. Research how transportation has evolved since 1848. Invent a new type of transport. Draw a diagram to show how it works and choose a name for your design.

Secondary

Responding

How has Berkeley represented wealth and prosperity in *Georgina, Emily and Augusta Rose*. Locate a work of art where an artist has depicted poverty or despair. Discuss how the artists' representations differ. Take into consideration style and symbolism.

Writer Dr. Kiera Lindsey stated that "Martha Berkeley's body of work offers a distinctive and idiosyncratic window into colonial Australia". Research examples of Berkeley's work which supports this statement.

Colonial works of art often showed the early years of settlement from the perspective of wealthy and prosperous settlers. What was the role of these representation? What is the role of artists today?

Martha Berkeley and Teresa Walker were among the very first women to work professionally as artists in Australia. Curate your own hypothetical exhibition with progressive Australian female artists as your focus. Write a review on your exhibition which informs the reader about the selections you made. **Tip** Consider important moments in Australian history as well as artistic styles and techniques.

Making

When Berkeley arrived in Australia, she was interested in the flora, fauna and landscape. She would often record her observations by sketching and creating detailed botanical watercolours. Using watercolour paints, capture the flora and fauna where you live.

Berkeley was familiar with portrait artists Anthony Van Dyck, Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Lawrence. Berkeley was also part of a long tradition of the Regency portrait miniature which was popular in England during the 1800s. Research miniaturist paintings and create your own miniature of a family member or close friend. How will you capture their characteristics on such a small scale?



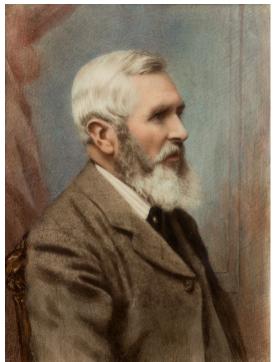


Image (top)
Mabel Terry Lewis, Britain,
1872–1957, Mrs. George
McCulloch (miniature),
c.1895–1900, London, oil
on canvas, 15.2 x 11.4 cm;
Gift of Mrs J Coutts Michie
1928, Art Gallery of South
Australia, Adelaide.

Image (bottom)
Mabel Terry Lewis, Britain, 1872–1957, Mr. George
McCulloch (miniature),
c.1895–1900, London, oil
on canvas, 15.2 x 11.4 cm;
Gift of Mrs J Coutts Michie
1928, Art Gallery of South
Australia, Adelaide,
Stewart Adams.

Resources

Art Gallery of South Australia: Collection – Martha Berkeley http://bit.ly/2qOtmFy

The Australian: Martha Berkeley portrait captures daughters in their Sunday best http://bit.ly/2OH76Xr

The Conversation: how our art museums finally opened their eyes to Australian women artists http://bit.ly/2T89QRj

Migration Museum https://bit.ly/2Qbvsu0

Books

Hylton, J. Colonial Sisters: Martha Berkeley & Theresa Walker South Australia's first professional Artists, Art Gallery Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1994

Art Gallery of South Australia Open daily 10am–5pm

North Terrace Adelaide SA 5000 agsa.sa.gov.au





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