WATSON, Anne Fanelle
14 A. June 1977
THE ART OF ROLAND WAKELIN

Volume one

ANNE WATSON, B.A.(HONS.)

SYDNEY, 1975.
I Self Portrait 1923 38.1 x 31.3 cm.
Art Gallery of N.S.W.
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Necessity - and tradition - demand an academic thesis be as objective and factual as possible. But when discussing the life of a human being and analysing the output of that life total objectivity must, I think, be relaxed - particularly when creativity has determined the nature of that output. Roland Wakelin was an artist to the fullest extent of the word; he lived his painting, he was inextricably involved with it. And for this reason analysis of his art must entail some analysis of the man behind it. I have thuse attempted to combine a factual a account of Wakelin's life and the development of his painting style with a more subjective analysis of his personality, of individual paintings and the way these reflect the nature of this personality.

Many people close to Wakelin throughout much of his life are to be thanked for their comments on his character and their helpful suggestions and information on the more tangible events and occurrences in his life - in particular, Wakelin's only daughter, Mrs Judith Murray, Miss Grace Cossington Smith - former
artistic collaborator, and Lloyd Rees whose reminiscences and recollections of Sydney's art and artists earlier this century were a constant amazement. Virginia Gerritt's interview with Wakelin (1964) has also been most helpful as has the information contained in the catalogue to the Wakelin retrospective exhibition compiled by the staff of the Art Gallery of N.S.W. in 1967. Thanks must also go to Daniel Thomas of the Art Gallery and Professor Bernard Smith of the Sydney University Fine Arts department for their valued suggestions in the writing of this thesis. The paintings catalogued and reproduced here have been selected from a variety of collections, both public and private - the latter too numerous to mention. My thanks to those who let me into their homes to photograph their paintings (often at some inconvenience) and who helped with catalogue details.
INTRODUCTION

Roland Wakelin has been variously labelled Post-Impressionist - one of the founders of the modern art movement in Australia, realist and romanticist. The contradiction and inconsistency implied here is perhaps resolved when one considers that not at any stage in his artistic career could Wakelin's art be strictly classified within any one of these art-historical categories; although he approached all he never utterly embraced any one distinct category. That Wakelin's art did pursue various directions is to be expected in such a long painting career (over sixty-five years). But what has emerged is a large body of work which, although not of great significance historically, bears witness to a lifelong search for artistic 'truth'. This was not a profound philosophical truth. It was more a simple truth to self - to the painting of one's own vision of nature free from sophisticated theorizing or the dictates of popular taste:

He belonged to an era that still found magic in the visual world, and he strove to infuse this magic into his painting without applying conscious self-analysis or metaphysical overtones.  

But this, the essential Wakelin, did not become evident until the last thirty years of his life. Preceding it was a period of experimentation and investigation that was also, in a sense, part of this search for truth. Wakelin was unable to accept unconditionally the outworn artistic conventions then in vogue in his native New Zealand and later in Australia. He began painting in Australia in 1913 — when this country was bereft of any truly imaginative artistic leaders. He questioned accepted ideas which ignored recent trends and eventually challenged them in his own painting. Wakelin's turning to Cezanne — and the fundamentals of European Post-Impressionism — was thus largely determined by his innate artistic honesty and directness, his inability to pursue current local fashions for their own sake. And this aspect of his personality survived a lifetime. It denied him extensive popularity, but at the same time underlined the strength of his convictions.

Wakelin found in the Post-Impressionists, and most importantly, in Cezanne, a strength and unassuming candour absent in contemporary Australian art and sympathetic to his own ideals:
Wakelin's work has no tricks or deftness, for he himself has something of the fumbling quality of Cezanne, the fumbling of the seeker after a truth felt rather than seen.

This contact with European modernism led Wakelin in a number of exploratory directions; from a short-lived, partly Neo-Impressionist style, to the radical, orphistic 'Colour-Music' paintings, to the partially Cezannesque works of the twenties and thirties. All were in some sense a part of his search for a valid alternative means of expression. And excluding the brief, but obviously unsatisfactory period of near abstraction in 1919, Wakelin remained always dependent upon reality. It was this dependence that ultimately determined the direction his art was to take. As James Gleeson has said:

For all his interest in theory and ideas, Wakelin never wandered very far from the visual facts. Unlike many who found inspiration in Cezanne, he was never tempted to take the steps that would lead to complete abstraction. Instead he used the discoveries of the master to draw him closer to the realities of natural form and it is in the work from 1934 onwards, when all earlier influences had been assimilated, that the essential Wakelin emerged.

2 Herbert Badham, A Study of Australian Art, Currawong, Sydney, 1949, p. 117.

3 James Gleeson, "Tribute to a Pioneer", Sun, Sydney, 5 April, 1967, p. 36.
During the 1930's and 40's Wakelin's previous 'avant-gardism' was exceeded and replaced by the more radical abstractionist painting of such artists as Grace Crowley, Rah Fizelle and Ralph Balson and the surrealist art of James Gleeson, Eric Thake and Albert Tucker. During this time also, Wakelin's own style underwent a decisive and quite noticeable moderation in both conception and interpretation of subject. Whether this constituted a fully conscious reaction to the newly emergent abstractionist styles or rather an unconscious, natural trend towards the romantic is difficult to determine. Wakelin did himself admit in later life a certain incapacity to fully appreciate the new art forms. Indeed, he believed the derivative style in which he was painting was now incompatible with his need for a

4 "It's ironic you know . . . . I was one of the pioneers of the modern movement here, but the world has gone on pretty fast and today I'm considered a bit old-fashioned. I don't mind that. I follow my own bent. I always have. If I'd been born fifty years later I'd probably have worked in today's modern style, but for me to do that now would be impossible. I don't want to anyway . . . but I don't see where it will lead. The best of it has a lot of quality, but I feel there is a limit to what can be achieved with it." (John Hetherington, Australian Painters, Sydney, 1967, pp. 32-33.)
more subjective individuality. He must certainly have been aware that a close emulation of Cezanne must lead inevitably and logically to complete abstraction. That he was unable to accept these implications and yet saw no immediate alternative direction for his art seems to have played some part in his adoption of a more personal, sober style. And it was this style, virtually unchanged, that remained valid for Wakelin for the rest of his life. It was, of course, subject to some variation - in approach, interpretation and quality - but its relaxed, sometimes naive directness remained basic.

Also basic to Wakelin's entire oeuvre was an interest in conveying the solidity, the tangibility of form. In earlier works this was allied to an interest in structural and formal design that necessitated a certain flattening and reduction of form, emphasizing the surface interplay of shapes and minimizing illusional depth. In later years colour and light functioned more significantly: the formal

5 "Cezanne was the major influence of my life and I once made the mistake of trying to paint as he did. Not for long though. If I'd gone on doing that all I would have achieved would have been to turn myself into a little Cezanne. I wanted to be myself and all my life I've tried to be myself." ibid., p. 36
reduction and organization of preceding years was replaced by a more descriptive approach that emphasized depth, three-dimensionality and a newly discovered lyricism.

Throughout his artistic career Wakelin always found inspiration in life around him - his family, friends, suburban scenes and the shores and waters of Sydney Harbour near which he lived for much of his life and which provided the subject for so many of his paintings. Compelled to work during the week at a day job, however, Wakelin was never able to exist as a professional artist - painting periods were confined to weekends and to the annual fortnight's vacation. Yet despite these limitations his friends have all stressed his complete dedication to painting. They speak of his reserve, his quietness, but also his lively sense of humour. Perhaps, as Douglas Dundas, a painter and close friend said of the artist, "Reticent in everyday life . . . Wakelin the man speaks to us most eloquently through his Art." 6

The following thesis will attempt to analyse

this art, its implications for our understanding of the artist, his approach and attitude to life, and its significance in the history of Australian painting.
Christened Roland Shakespeare,\(^1\) Wakelin was born on 17 April, 1887 at Greytown in the Wairarapa Valley fifty miles north of Wellington in New Zealand's North Island. The youngest in a family of sons and one daughter the immediate Wakelin family history was little different from that of many of the country's early settlers. Roland's grandfather, Richard Wakelin, a journalist with quite strong political inclinations\(^2\) emigrated to New Zealand from England in 1850 accompanied by his wife and their three children.\(^3\)

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1 His father was an avid reader of the playwright's work - and this was apparently inherited by Wakelin. Lloyd Rees refers to it as Wakelin's "second great aesthetic interest". (The Small Treasures of a Lifetime, Sydney, 1969, p. 103.)

2 He had been involved in the writing of a number of radical publications for the Chartist movement in England.

3 The reasons behind this decision to emigrate appear to have been chiefly political. Dissatisfied with English right-wing politics Richard Wakelin saw in New Zealand opportunity for economic growth and political freedom inconceivable in contemporary England.
father, Richard Alfred, was born in Barnacle Hall, Coventry (the Wakelin home) five years prior to the family's emigration.

On arrival in New Zealand the grandfather lived for some years in Wellington before settling in Greytown North. As editor of the Wairarapa Standard here until his death in 1882 Richard Wakelin was able to fully air his political and historical views.

Roland's father, Richard Alfred, remained in the Wairarapa Valley establishing a business as sawmiller and building contractor. He was also for some years Mayor of Greytown. His marriage to Emily Noakes (born 1847 in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand) resulted in a large family of six sons and one daughter.

Of these seven children Roland appears to have been the only one to display any serious artistic interest - and this seems to have been stimulated more by innately determined factors than by any intrinsic family involvement with art. The sole 'artistic' member of the family who could have been at all influential was an uncle (George) who apparently painted
occasionally in watercolour as well as producing a number of woodcarvings. (Wakelin recalls his uncle's Ajax Defying the Lightning decorating the grounds of this relative's cottage.)

What thus appears to have been Wakelin's naturally creative disposition was discernible at an early age; as a boy he sketched and painted, both at school and at home. Interviewed in later life he recalled his excitement when, in his early teens, two brothers, Norman and Francis, bought him his first oils.

Wakelin attended the local school until he won a scholarship to Wellington Technical College in 1902. Here he passed the civil service examination in 1903 by which time his parents had also moved to Wellington - his father resuming the previous contracting business.

Till now, financial conditions had not permitted Wakelin to proceed with the artistic training he sought. But in 1904 while working with the Taxation Department he was able to attend the

5 ibid.
Wellington Technical College art classes at night and on Saturdays. Here Wakelin studied the antique under Henri Bastings and later attended life classes under Bastings and H. Lindley Richardson. Unfortunately little is known of Bastings — his style of painting or his mode of teaching. In 1898 he first exhibited with the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts and the fact that these were all New South Wales landscapes suggests Bastings was a recent arrival from Australia.

However, there is no record of his ever having exhibited with the Royal Art Society of New South Wales or the Society of Artists in Sydney or of the

6 "Things were cheap in those days. I took a room, managed to rent a house for next to nothing with a number of other art students .... There we had our life classes on most nights and on Saturday and Sunday. We paid model fees and ate well enough ...." (ibid., p. 2.)

7 On the council of the N.Z. Academy of Fine Arts 1902-6. Secretary to the Academy 1907-10. Moved to Greymouth (South Island) from where he was an artist member of the Academy. Treasurer of the Academy in 1917.

8 Annual Exhibition - July 1898.
" " 60 - The Margin of the River Bed, N.S.W. - oil 3 gns.
" " 69 - A Riverbed, N.S.W. - oil, 3 gns.
" " 193 - An Old Boat - watercolour, 1-10.0
existence of any paintings. This absence of surviving records and the fact that his work is mentioned neither by Wakelin nor in the available books on New Zealand art suggests Bastings may perhaps have exerted little decisive influence as an artist or teacher at this stage.

A little more is known of H. Lindley Richardson. English born, he studied at the Westminster School of Art in London and the Academie Julian in Paris. But despite these early European contacts Richardson's New Zealand work (he came to New Zealand in 1903 on a three year agreement to conduct life classes at the Wellington Technical College) remained virtually unaffected by contemporary trends. Specialising in portraiture, his paintings of both the Maori and local white population⁹ are at best competently, if rather unimaginatively handled. Clearly, neither Richardson nor Bastings could have acted as a great source of inspiration for the young student.

⁹ e.g. A School Girl c. 1921, oil, 31 3/4 x 19 3/4, Auckland City Art Gallery. (illus. Gil Docking, 200 Years of New Zealand Painting, Lansdowne, Melb., 1971, pl. 76.)
Wakelin made his first trip to Sydney during the summer holiday period of 1908-9, visiting his brother Frank then living and working in Sydney. Obviously impressed by this initial visit to Sydney he vowed he would return "as soon as possible" to "that stimulating atmosphere" \(^{10}\) and later recalled the impact of his first contact with the Sydney art scene:

To me the art world of Sydney at that time was exciting after what I had been used to in Wellington - views of the Southern Alps predominated, but in retrospect I can only think of it as in a somnolent state.\(^{11}\)

The fact that Wakelin considered Sydney's art in 1908 to be "exciting" gives some indication of the comparatively backward state of New Zealand art during the first decade of this century. The New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts was, according to Wakelin, directed by lawyers and doctors "as artists were not considered capable of managing their own affairs."\(^{12}\) Students saw mainly Royal Academy paintings and particularly the works of the earlier nineteenth century

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10 Interview with Virginia Gerritt op. cit.


12 Correspondence between Wakelin and Gil Docking at the Auckland City Art Gallery, 29/9/70.
artists, Turner and Constable. Very little was known of French Impressionism let alone the more recent international trends.

The Impressionist vision of nature had never achieved a consolidated footing in New Zealand as it had to an extent done in Australia during the 1880's and 1890's. A number of overseas artists - Girolamo Piero Nerli, Petrus van der Velden and James McLaughlin Nairn - had settled in New Zealand and attempted to introduce and infuse a more progressive spirit into the prevailing conservatism. But the impact of these artists with their 'plein-air' painting, their interest in colour and their new expressive styles went virtually unnoticed in artistic circles at the turn of the century. This may partly be explained by the special physical characteristics of the New Zealand landscape that denied an Impressionistic interpretation as Gil Docking has suggested\(^\text{13}\), but the very cautiousness of the majority of New Zealand's artists and critics also did much to hinder any real development

\(^{13}\) "The general appearance of the New Zealand landscape, with its dark tonality, clear light and strong land forms is not, on the whole, an easy subject for the genuine impressionist painter . . . ." (Gil Docking, op. cit., p. 72)
or experiment in art. As a result no longstanding schools were established that could have disseminated and consolidated the new concepts introduced by these artists.

James Nairn, a Scotsman, was, however, particularly influential as a teacher at the Wellington Technical College from 1891 until his death in 1904. Nairn was not a true Impressionist - he did not use their broken palette - but he was interested in light and colour and particularly in open air painting. In 1897 he established the Wellington Art Club whose members made excursions around Wellington specifically to sketch and paint. But Nairn's influence was not as far-reaching as it could have been; in New Zealand Painting: An Introduction the authors stress that few of Nairn's followers really grasped his intentions or continued his methods after his death in 1904:

"... apart from the physical qualities of the New Zealand landscape there was a persistent hostility towards any painter using broad techniques in the handling of mediums. A reviewer in 1896 observed that this kind of painting is 'happily on the wane, the days of three splashes to the right and three to the left, constituting the picture being numbered'." ibid.

For those with more insight, the question was not so much one of a direct stylistic influence, but one where Nairn's ideas helped to change their general attitudes towards painting.\[^{16}\]

Although Wakelin did not benefit directly from Nairn's teaching (Nairn died the year Wakelin began studying art at the college) he nevertheless appears to have had inherited an interest in the Scot's fundamental teachings — particularly his insistence on a direct, spontaneous interpretation of nature. Early in 1906 interest was revived in the Wellington Art Club — and Wakelin, with several other artists, was apparently responsible for initiating this revival.\[^{17}\]

Obviously, then, Wakelin was already revealing the sensibility, the readiness to experiment and absorb fresh ideas that was to determine the nature of his art for many years. The desire to sketch and paint directly before the motif seems even more revolutionary when one considers that history painting, with its non-expressive didacticism was particularly

\[^{16}\text{ibid.}, \text{p. 68.}\]

\[^{17}\text{"... when there was no other art club in Wellington a group of enthusiasts re-established the Wellington Sketch Club. The names of those active artists were Fred Sedgwick, Roland Wakelin and George Garnham ..." ibid., p. 67.}\]
popular at this time. Australian art, similarly suffer-
ing a temporary lull in its development, had at least
absorbed some aspects of the Impressionist ideology
through the earlier efforts of the Heidelberg painters.
In New Zealand, where these remained largely unheeded,
such works as Louis John Steele's The Spoils of the
Victor\(^{18}\) (1908) or Frank Wright's sentimental The Close
of Day\(^{19}\) (1909) were a great artistic success. With
their detailed, unimaginative and rather poster-like
realism such works had little to recommend to the
young student - and it was in such an artistic atmos-
phere that Wakelin received his earliest training.

Wakelin's first contribution to a public exhibi-
tion was that of the Wellington Academy of Fine Arts
in 1908. Four works were exhibited\(^{20}\) although none
appear to have survived. Prior to this the artist

18 oil, 14\(\frac{1}{2}\)" x 10", Auckland City Art Gallery, illus.
Gil Docking, op. cit., plate 58.

19 oil, 43" x 73", Auckland City Art Gallery, illus.,
ibid, plate 60.

20 Catalogue No. 208 - "Sunset" - oil - 7 gns.
" 215 - "The Harvest" - oil - 10 gns.
" 266 - "Autumn" - oil - 3 gns.
" 327 - Design for catalogue cover -
compensation work.
had entered several competitions (1905, 1906) winning the prize in one for his monochrome study of a "figure from the antique" (1906). The Wellington Academy of Fine Arts performed a similar role in New Zealand as did the Royal Art Society of New South Wales in Sydney, its annual exhibitions constituting the only official exhibiting forum for students at the time. Wakelin exhibited with the Academy each year (1908-12) until his departure for Australia. In 1912 he was on the council of the Academy, and in 1918 contributed to its annual exhibition in the Australian section as a member of the Royal Art Society of New South Wales.

The evidence of his earliest surviving oil painting (plate 2) reinforces my view that Wakelin had already absorbed much of Nairn's teachings.

21 The Academy was the predecessor of the National Art Gallery - established in 1936.

22 Friday, 13 December, 1912.

23 Cat. No. 51 - Violet and Grey - oil - 16 gns.  
Cat. No. 61 - Still Life - oil - 9 gns.

24 Untitled (1907), cat. no. 1.

25 The similarity of interests noted on page 16 must certainly have stimulated Wakelin's enthusiasm for Nairn's approach to painting.
Brushwork is fresh and spontaneous, colours naturalistic and loosely applied and there has been some attempt to render light and atmospheric effects through softened outline and indistinct details. Colours, however, are subdued, tonal, opposed to the bright chromatics of the French Impressionist landscape but perhaps more in keeping with the less light-saturated New Zealand landscape tones. Due probably to Nairn's restricted view of Impressionism as much as the special qualities of the New Zealand countryside and light, Wakelin has not adopted the Impressionist colour or method of paint application. One is reminded here of the early nineteenth century English Romantics - of Constable and Turner - more than Impressionism, and this would seem to underline the conservative bias of Wakelin's early art training. What is of importance in this work, however, is that here we almost certainly have evidence of direct 'plein-air' painting, of an interest in depicting atmosphere and a close reliance on nature.

In such works by Nairn as Winter Morning, Wellington Harbour (1894, watercolour, 10½" x 18", National Art Gallery of Wellington, illus., Brown & Keith, op. cit.) and Wharf at Kaikoura (1903, oil, 10¾ x 13½, Auckland City Art Gallery, illus., ibid.) colour is solid, applied heavily in thick strokes, not the small juxtaposed strokes of the Impressionists. Colour is vivid, strong, but not pure.
for inspiration. Wakelin does not idealize or dignify, he does not fabricate or change. He remains direct and true to visual reality - and such an approach was certainly not typical among New Zealand's artists early in the twentieth century. The painting reveals no great technical virtuosity or originality of vision. It is simple and unaffected, without academic 'finish' or anecdotal detail.

By 1908, however, Wakelin seems to have gained a more complete knowledge of at least the fundamentals of French Impressionism. His small Landscape (plate 3), signed and dated 1908, is perhaps too small to derive any definite conclusions about the contemporary large-scale oils, but the development here from the earlier work - in both choice and handling of colour - is quite evident. It is possibly an experimental sketch only and not representative of Wakelin's general style at this time, but the quiet achievement of the painting denies, I believe, its utter uniqueness within the artist's oeuvre; Wakelin's use of small, juxtaposed strokes of colour to construct form, his

27 cat. no. 2.
choice of colours to suggest light, even heat, is here too successful and too sensitive. Although the colours are mostly premixed, there is no attempt to create smooth areas of tone as so many of Wakelin's contemporaries were striving for in their history paintings. Painted basically in warm tones, Wakelin even employs a range of 'unnatural' pinks and violets to reinforce the suggestion of heat and sunlight. Landscape is still far removed from the bright luminosity, the pure colour combinations of much French Impressionist painting. Its significance at this stage rests in that it is at least moving towards the type of concepts that came to be defined as representative of the Impressionist movement in general - a concern for reproducing on canvas the optical effects produced by sunlight and atmosphere on objects - but particularly landscape - and to do so using colour, pure and directly applied.

Apart from this painting, a very small, circular self-portrait (c. 1910-12)\(^{28}\) and a work dated 1912\(^{29}\)

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28 Although undated this work, according to Wakelin's daughter, was painted in N.Z. It is a very young Wakelin - but tells us little about his contemporary style. See cat. no. 5.

29 The Shady Tree 1912 - See cat. no. 8.
(which I unfortunately have not had access to view),
the only evidence I have found of Wakelin's larger
scale works from this period in New Zealand comes
from two press reviews referring to a painting by
the artist entitled "8 A.M.".

Everything that Mr Roland Wakelin does is worth
attention and I extend a warm welcome to his
laudable efforts to tackle the figure in motion ... It is a picture of colour and action, a good
subject tackled honestly, and on the whole with
much success. Far better for our young artists
to try - and maybe fail - to do their best with
such subjects than to go on everlastingly turn­ing
out little bits of namby-pamby landscape.

A second article noted that:

The artist has gone, coat off, for a difficult
subject and has overcome. Such pluck and
energy are most commendable in view of the
general fondness for painting the 'pretty',
with the least possible exertion and the
smallest knowledge of drawing and perspective.
There is life and movement in "8 a.m.".

Exhibited in the 1911 (October) annual exhibition
of the Wellington Academy, this well-publicised

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30 Both clippings are undated, with no reference to the paper's
name, but they may be definitely ascribed to the period of
the exhibition where this work was shown - October, 1911.
The references cited are reviews from two distinct papers -
and only two local newspapers existed in Wellington at that
time - the _N.Z. Times_ and the _Evening Post._

31 Catalogue no. 235 ("8 a.m." - oil - 19.19.0)
painting no longer survives. According to descriptions in these reviews, however, its subject depicted "wharf labourers handling a string of cargo" with a background of steamers, wharves and buildings. Painted in strong sunlight, the men are working in partial shade.

Both articles stress the unconventionality of the painting's "difficult subject," suggesting that even at this early stage in his artistic development Wakelin was already reacting against prevailing academic standards and tastes. The very fact that his work did solicit press reviews indicates he must have achieved at least some recognition as a painter by this time. It is unfortunate neither article analysed the painting a little more deeply - some reference to style, colour and technique would have been most informative. However, I feel the evidence does imply almost conclusively that by 1911 Wakelin was very much aware of the limitations of the stereotyped academic works then in vogue and that he was making some exploratory progress towards a more original conception and treatment of his subject. It was such dissatisfaction that generated his enthusiasm for contemporary Australian art when he first saw it in 1908
and that determined him to eventually return and settle in Sydney.

Of Wakelin's New Zealand graphic works little again appears to have survived. The earliest drawing, dated 1910 (plate 4)\(^{32}\) reflects the rather academic nature of the artist's early training. Drawn from a life-class model its careful shading and precise delineation shows little real imagination or originality of style - although it does indicate some basic technical ability.

A pencil drawing entitled *Tom Smith* and dated 1911\(^{33}\) reveals an individuality and expressiveness lacking in the earlier work. One senses the earlier drawing to have been purely and simply a technical exercise. But in the later example - possibly completed outside the art class - Wakelin has deliberately elongated hands and face in an attempted characterization, perhaps even light caricature, of the sitter.

A later life-class drawing (plate 5)\(^{34}\) completed

\(^{32}\) Untitled. cat. no. 4.
\(^{33}\) cat. no. 6.
\(^{34}\) cat. no. 7.
in 1912 prior to Wakelin's final departure for Sydney, suggests an even more pronounced development—both technical and analytical. More confident and proficient now in the handling of contours and light and shade, Wakelin has here attempted to convey the mood of the model, to evoke a particular atmosphere through facial expression, pose and pencil technique. Whereas the 1910 drawing seems to remain purely within the limits of a technical procedure—a depiction of the human figure in a certain pose according to certain conventions—one feels that the artist's sensitivity to the model in the later drawing has been as much a concern as the more technical objective of accuracy in depicting pose and external anatomical form.
Wakelin left New Zealand in December, 1912 with the intention of settling permanently in Sydney. His parents had died within a year of each other in 1907 and this, coupled with New Zealand's conservative artistic situation, removed any real desire to return to his home country. On arrival in Sydney Wakelin enrolled almost immediately in the New South Wales Royal Art Society classes\(^1\) - a reflection not only of his compulsive need to paint (and this was to remain with Wakelin all his life), but also of his eagerness to learn and absorb all that Sydney had to teach him in the realm of art. In view of this enthusiasm it is not surprising that he was eventually attracted to the less popular, but

\(^{1}\) "I joined the R.A.S. classes under Dattilo Rubbo and Norman Carter early in 1913 and whilst earning my living at a Government job went four nights a week to the life class. But I enjoyed most the Saturday afternoon painting class ... ." (Roland Wakelin, "Post-Impressionism in Sydney: Some Personal Recollections", op. cit., p. 91.)
certainly more stimulating ideas on art just beginning to infiltrate Sydney's creative circles during 1913.

The man claimed to be responsible for the dissemination and encouragement of these ideas was Dattilo Rubbo. A teacher at the Sydney R.A.S. classes, he also had his own "atelier" in Rowe Street, Sydney where he conducted painting classes for ladies during the day and took ordinary art students in the evening for life classes:

(Wakelin)
We worked along more or less academic lines though Rubbo was an inspiring teacher with a vital and lovable personality always ready to encourage originality in his students.2

Born in Naples, 1870, Rubbo studied at the Royal Academy there under Professor Domenico Morelli and in 1896 was awarded the Academy Diploma as a Professor of drawing. He emigrated to Australia in 1897, establishing his own art school in 1898 and in 1900 joined the R.A.S. of N.S.W. as an elected member of its council. Although retaining his position as an instructor at the Society's art classes for twenty-eight years

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Rubbo appears to have earned notoriety more for his dynamic personality than any significant contribution to painting. Wakelin, in later life, continually acknowledged his indebtedness to the Italian during these early formative years: "... with his virile personality and tremendous enthusiasm he [Rubbo] was an inspiration to us all . . . ." Yet, "He wasn't a great painter . . . .", Wakelin remarked. Primarily a portrait painter, Rubbo worked generally along conventional, rather academic lines, surprising in a man who encouraged his students to remain receptive to new possibilities in art and who was to fight so many battles on their behalf.

Rubbo, however, was not responsible for the initial introduction of these new ideas to the Sydney art world. For this, credit must be given to a young woman who returned to Sydney from Europe during 1913: Norah Simpson had spent a short time in London studying at the Westminster School of Art, and it was here that students were being introduced to Post-Impressionist methods and concepts primarily through the efforts of

4 Interview with Virginia Gerritt, Feb., 1964, p. 3 of script.
three English painters - Harold Gilman, Spencer Gore and Charles Ginner:

I began to study under Dattilo Rubbo in, I think, 1911, when I was 16, and left Sydney on a trip to Europe with my parents in 1912. During the few months we spent in London I attended classes at the Westminster School of Art where Harold Gilman, Spencer Gore and Charles Ginner were teaching, and it was through Gilman that I got my first introduction to modern painting and sculpture.

Simpson had already visited Paris before returning to Sydney and had viewed the Post-Impressionists at first hand:

On a trip to Paris at this time I was able to see a considerable number of French Impressionist and Pointillist paintings and works by Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Matisse, Picasso etc. in the private collections of several of the Parisian dealers to whom I had introductions from Gilman. Both in Paris and London I collected what photographs and books I could dealing with Post-Impressionist and Cubist works, which I took back to Australia in 1913.

Motivated by her own personal interests Miss Simpson's directly gained knowledge and her understanding of the more recent trends in European art was, by

5 Norah Cockren (nee Simpson) to Bernard Smith, 11 August, 1960.
6 ibid.
Australian standards, uncommonly comprehensive. And accompanied by the example of her own paintings the influence she exerted was strong enough to alter the thinking, and consequently the painting, of a number of those studying in Rubbo's classes. According to Simpson Wakelin was particularly receptive to these new ideas, but she also included Grace Cossington Smith and Roy de Maistre in the small group of students at the Royal Art Society classes who responded enthusiastically. Wakelin himself later acknowledged Norah Simpson as being virtually responsible for introducing modern art to Australia:

I remember Rubbo showing us some of Simpson's own paintings which fascinated me, mainly I think at that time because of the new developments in colour technique. Simpson's "Studio

7 "... as far as I can remember, Roland Wakelin was the only painter I knew who appeared to have any understanding of what it was all about." ibid.

8 ibid. Grace Cossington Smith did not join the R.A.S. class until 1914.

9 But, according to Wakelin, his first real introduction to modern art was a reproduction of Marcel Duchamp's Nude Descending a Staircase: "On Sundays we went out painting landscape and it was on one such expedition to Pearl Bay with Geoff Townshend that we saw in the Sunday Sun a reproduction of Marcel Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase" then showing at the famous Armory show in New York. This was our introduction to modern art." - Wakelin, "Post-Impressionism in Sydney ..." op. cit. (This would have been around February, March or April of 1913 although I have been unable to locate the reproduction to corroborate Wakelin's statement.)
Portrait, Chelsea" may not appear revolutionary to painters of this generation, but at that time such a painting was likely to give old gentlemen apoplexy.\(^{10}\)

Although Norah Simpson had returned to Sydney with a number of her own paintings completed overseas under the influence of the English Post-Impressionists, none appear to have survived. \textit{Studio Portrait, Chelsea}\(^{11}\) (plate 7), the work to which Wakelin refers, is not dated and has been the subject of some controversy.\(^{12}\) It does seem almost definite, however, that the picture was completed after Simpson's return to London in May, 1915\(^{13}\) and was not therefore among those paintings influential for the young students in Rubbo's classes

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{10} ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} 51 x 40.5 cm, oil on canvas, unsigned, Art Gallery of N.S.W.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} The painting is unsigned and undated. Inscribed (according to Wakelin, by Rubbo) on the back of the canvas are the words "painted in studio" and below this on the stretcher, "Jan. 1915". Simpson denies the possibility of this dating. (See extract from her correspondence with Daniel Thomas in the following footnote.)
  \item \textsuperscript{13} "I cannot honestly say that I remember painting the picture although it looks vaguely familiar to me and I think in all probability it is one of mine. But it certainly was not painted in Rubbo's studio nor anywhere else in Sydney, nor can it have been in January 1915. I am quite certain of this because I recognize the room I worked in in Chelsea after my return to London in May, 1915 . . . . I cannot account for the statement on the back of the canvas at all." - Mrs Norah Cockren to Daniel Thomas (Art Gallery of N.S.W.), Dec. 2, 1960.
\end{itemize}
Lack of examples does thus prevent a complete analysis of the ideas involved in these early works and compels sole reliance on Studio Portrait... from which to draw assumptions as to the nature of Simpson's earliest 'Post-Impressionist' experiments. But that some connection between the 1912-1913 works and the post 1915 painting did exist was substantiated:

Wakelin tells me that although this picture is evidently painted 1915-17 after Norah Simpson had left Australia the face at least with its use of colour in the shadows resembles the work of Norah Simpson which had so much excited him and others in Sydney between 1913 and 1915.  

With its constructive use of bright colour, but its comparatively 'orthodox' choice and treatment of subject matter, Studio Portrait, Chelsea may best be understood in the light of English Post-Impressionism rather than the French movement. Simpson would have missed the exhibition of Post-Impressionists held in the Grafton Galleries, London (November-January, 1910-11), but for a number of English artists, particularly Gilman, Gore and Ginner, this exhibition proved

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to be a turning point for their art. It helped to affirm both their growing dissatisfaction with the now institutionalized Impressionism and their admiration and enthusiasm for the Post-Impressionist, and even Fauve, artists' work.\textsuperscript{15}

Consolidation of this small, but definite body of English artists interested in Post-Impressionism was not fully achieved until the formation of the Camden Town Group in 1911. Prior to this date a nuclear group of painters, united by their common modernist interests and centred around Walter Sickert, Lucien Pissarro (son of Camille) and Spencer Gore, had been developing for several years.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Carrying the title "Manet and the Post-Impressionists", the exhibition was organized largely by Roger Fry - avid supporter of the modern aesthetic. Fry was also the first to apply the term 'Post-Impressionist' to the group of artists succeeding French Impressionism: "For purposes of convenience it was necessary to give these artists a name, and I chose, as the vaguest and most non-committal the name of Post-Impressionism. This merely stated their position in time relative to the Impressionist movement." (Roger Fry, Vision and Design, London; 1920, p. 191.) - Thus the term 'Post-Impressionism' was never conceived to designate a coherent, united movement. It was used in the broadest sense to include not only Cezanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin, but also, at the time of the exhibition, the Symbolists - Denis and Redon, the Neo-Impressionists - Seurat, Signac and Cross, and such Fauve painters as Matisse, Vlaminck, Marquet and Derain.

\textsuperscript{16} Since about 1905.
Although Sickert's was more a tonal Impressionist than a Post-Impressionist style his personality and the ideas he expounded were sufficiently forceful to attract the younger artists discontented with accepted and now outdated modes. Sickert's studio in Fitzroy Street, Camden Town became the meeting place of these "young men who looked to France".  

Harold Gilman and Spencer Gore, already firm friends, were the first to arrive followed by Lucien Pissarro and later (among others) Augustus John, Charles Ginner and Robert Bevan. Many members of the group had lived and worked in France when Post-Impressionism was well-established; Ginner had lived there until 1908, Gore worked in Paris and Dieppe from 1904 to 1906 and L. Pissarro had been involved in the


18 This amalgamation was first called the Allied Artists Association. Formed in 1908 it was styled on the pattern of the Salon des Independants as a means of providing regular, jury-free exhibitions. The formation of the Camden Town Group in 1911 arose out of a need to consolidate and express ideas more clearly than possible in an organization formed solely for exhibition purposes. The Group's first exhibition was held at the Carfax Gallery in 1911. Three others were held but all were a financial failure. 1914 - under the presidency of Gilman - its name was changed to the London Group.
development of Neo-Impressionism almost since its beginning in Paris in the mid 1880's.

But despite these direct contacts the paintings by such Camden Town artists as Gore and Gilman retained their distinctively English feeling. As in the French movement colour became the liberating force for the English 'Post-Impressionists' - colour applied in brilliant, bold strokes, used decoratively and constructively rather than realistically. Gore's Icknield Way (plate 8) and Gilman's Interior (plate 9) both demonstrate this. Forms, too, were subject to a reductive process with emphasis given to surface design and pictorial structure. This new constructive approach is particularly evident in Gore's 'Cezanne-influenced' works. 21 Yet as Charles Harrison has noted, "Apart from the benefits they were also able to draw from late nineteenth century French painting, what distinguished the better painters of the

19 1912, oil on canvas, 63.8 x 76.8 cm, Art Gallery of N.S.W.


21 e.g. Richmond, Winter (1914) illus. ibid., pl. 25.
Camden Town Group was their selection and interpretation of subjects . . . ."22 Strongly influenced in this respect by Sickert's preoccupation with the intimate, everyday life of the local people23, Gore and particularly Gilman both remained close to and thoroughly dependent on the reality surrounding them:

By their unromantic, unpatronizing treatment of figures, interiors and urban and suburban landscapes these painters accorded due respect to the most valuable (if comparatively uncelebrated) aspects of late nineteenth century British painting: a concern to come to terms with the facts of an existence which a literary mythology did not any longer seem appropriately to embroider; a respect for the appearance of otherwise uncelebrated people; and a willingness faithfully to record the conditions and surroundings in which ordinary unglamorous lives were lived.24

Unlike much 'social realism' the Camden Town paintings were not intended as comments or criticisms according to a strict ideological programme: the


23 The Camden Town area was a notoriously drab, working-class part of London. Sickert painted its inhabitants with unusual frankness - e.g. L'Affaire de Camden Town (1909, oil on canvas, 24" x 16", private coll., illus. ibid., p. 77)

24 ibid. (Harrison), p. 82.
familiar, the everyday became the subject for their art purely because it existed, it was recognized, and accepted as part of life. Charles Ginner, in his article on "Neo-Realism", perhaps underlines the importance of this particular aspect of English 'Post-Impressionism':

It is a common opinion of the day, especially in Paris . . . that Decoration is the unique aim of Art. Neo-Realism has another aim of equal importance . . . . It must interpret that which, to us who are of this earth, ought to lie nearest to our hearts, i.e. Life in all its aspects, moods and developments. Realism, loving life, loving its age interprets its epoch by extracting from it the very essence of all it contains of great or weak, or beautiful or of sordid, according to the individual temperament. 25

Here was the essential credo of the Camden Town Group and it was this particular form of Post-Impressionism that Norah Simpson inherited from the English painters and with which she returned to Australia. From the example of her only surviving painting, Studio Portrait, Chelsea, her association with Gilman would

25 This article on Neo-Realism was published in the New Age (Jan. 1914) and used as a foreword to the exhibition of the London Group at the Goupil Gallery that year. In it Ginner also acknowledged Cezanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin as "learning from . . . Life itself."
appear to have been particularly close. \textsuperscript{26} Gilman's use of facets of toned-down fauvist colour in the treatment of flesh in his \textit{Mrs Mounter at the Breakfast Table} \textsuperscript{27} and \textit{Interior} (plate 9) is repeated quite emphatically by Simpson in her \textit{Studio Portrait} . . . and it is perhaps significant that this is the most radically 'modern' feature of the painting. What appears to be a form of primitive carving behind the sitter in the portrait bears witness also to the influence of Gauguin and the growing interest in primitive peoples and their cultures that he in part generated. \textsuperscript{28}

1913 - the year that Simpson returned from Europe - may therefore be regarded as a crucial period in the development of Wakelin's approach to painting.

\textsuperscript{26} Simpson, herself, mentions the influence of Gilman: "... and it was through Gilman that I got my first introduction to modern painting and sculpture." (Cockren to Smith, \textit{op. cit.})

\textsuperscript{27} illus. \textit{Colour}, vol. 10 (June, 1919), p. 108.

\textsuperscript{28} That Simpson, too, formed an interest in 'primitive' art is evident not only from her painting, but also from her correspondence (with Bernard Smith - 5th Sept., 1960): "I also had collected a number of reproductions of 'primitive' Italian, French and Flemish painters and of early Egyptian, Etruscan and Greek sculpture. Personally I was quite as enthusiastic about such works as I was about the moderns . . . ." Here 'primitive', however, is used in the sense of ancient or pre-renaissance, not that produced by contemporary 'primitive' cultures.
Only recently arrived from New Zealand he was, by 1914, already quite deeply involved with the small 'avant-garde' of artists - Simpson, Roy de Maistre and Grace Cossington Smith - dissatisfied with existing standards as he no doubt had been in previous years.

Simpson has noted that Wakelin was among the few "who appeared to have any understanding of what it was all about": 29 "Not unnaturally, I suppose, I found that both the reproductions I had brought back and my own interest in modern painting met with considerable resistance and hostility in art circles in Sydney . . . ." 30 Isolated from the mainstream of art and to this time invariably unreceptive to its recent trends, contemporary Australian painting lacked any real innovation that could have provided stimulus for an enquiring young artist. Tom Roberts and Rupert Bunny were in England, Charles Conder was dead and Arthur Streeton's earlier high-keyed, light saturated landscapes had developed into a repetitious

29 Norah Cockren to Bernard Smith, 11 August, 1960.
30 ibid.
national standard. Hans Heysen and Norman Lindsay were particularly popular at this stage, but their work was far removed from contemporary European developments and, in many ways, reacted against it. The 'aestheticism' of Blamire Young and J. J. Hilder emphasized intensified colours and muted, flowing forms, but was still very distant from the solid form and colour of many of the Post-Impressionist and Fauve paintings. Other accepted, but lesser artists generally reflected the narrowness of vision that characterized the leading painters in Australia early this century. When Simpson says that "not unnaturally" her ideas met with "resistance and hostility" it is quite clearly indicated that any practical experimentation would also meet such "hostility". This was to be the experience of Wakelin, and to a lesser extent, Grace Cossington Smith and Roy de Maistre, for a number of years.

In October of 1913 Wakelin married Estelle Robinson, living throughout this year and the next at various suburban addresses (Woollahra, McMahon's Point, Waverton). Working in the Federal Land Tax office until the outbreak of World War I in 1914,
he continued to attend the Royal Art Society classes at nights and on Saturdays. 31

Wakelin had actually won a year's free tuition at these classes for his sketch of a large work called *The Toilers*. 32 The painting that developed from this sketch was exhibited in 1914 - Wakelin's first contribution to an Australian exhibition. Accepted for hanging in the Spring Exhibition of the Society of Artists, 33 its earlier rejection by the Royal Art Society perhaps indicates a freedom of handling the selection committee's members were as yet unprepared for. 34 However this was not

31 Wakelin remained at the R.A.S. classes until about 1916.

32 Apparently a study of wharf labourers as his New Zealand 8 A.M. had been.

33 Cat. no. 104 - *The Toilers* - 100 gns.

34 Members of the R.A.S. selection committee in 1914 included Rubbo, W. Lister Lister, J.R. Jackson, J.W. Tristram and James Muir Auld. Apart from Rubbo most were staunch upholders of a traditionalist or 'anti-modernist' viewpoint. The Society of Artists' selection committee included Julian Ashton, Elioth Gruner, Norman and Lionel Lindsay and two women - Mildred Lovett and Florence Rodway. Generally unprogressive by contemporary standards, they at least had a broader, slightly less conservative outlook than the R.A.S. The discrepancy in attitudes between members of the two Societies did cause some antagonism, even rivalry between the two groups - and this may have motivated the Society of Artists (primarily Julian Ashton) to accept Wakelin's painting.
Wakelin's first rejection. An earlier work, *Solitaire*, painted, according to Wakelin, between "Dec. 1912 - Jan. 1913"\(^{35}\) was also rejected by the R.A.S. for showing in its Cabinet Exhibition of Autumn, 1913. A photograph of the painting is all that now survives, \(^{36}\) but it is nevertheless of interest for the important reason that it was painted very early in 1913 and, therefore, prior to Wakelin's first contacts with modernism through Norah Simpson. The subject - a rather portly, middle-aged man seated at a table in what looks like a study and pensively contemplating the game before him - is conventionally, but still competently handled. Tonality is dark and brushstrokes carefully blended, but the lighting is subtle and soft and reinforces the quiet atmosphere of the picture. No attempt has been made to idealize or 'dignify' -

\(^{35}\) (Wakelin to Daniel Thomas, Art Gallery of N.S.W., 31 Dec., 1960) - "I came across this ... photograph of a picture I painted soon after my arrival in Sydney (Dec. 17th, 1912) say Dec. 1912-Jan. 1913. Glazings over grisaille. It was rejected from the R.A.S. Cabinet exhibition Autumn 1913."

\(^{36}\) The photograph accompanied the letter quoted above and is now held in the files of the Art Gallery of N.S.W.
Wakelin's interpretation is direct and realistic without becoming coldly objective.

Apart from the fact that Wakelin must have been virtually unknown at this stage, one would think there could have been little cause for rejection unless it was the lack of sophisticated technique, the directness of the painting that offended. That Wakelin was again rejected over a year later with his *The Toilers* (the sketch for this had actually been acclaimed by the R.A.S.) suggests he was already applying at least some of the new artistic concepts promoted by Norah Simpson. The interest in the reality of labour, of the life of the working classes indicated by the title, is itself, whether consciously or not, allied to the type of subject matter that preoccupied members of the Camden Town Group.

Speaking of this period, Wakelin later wrote in 1928:

The spirit of adventure was abroad. Here were new fields to explore - a means to express something much more vital than what we saw in the paintings around us. We commenced to heighten our colour, working in stippling touches.

The Toilers is unfortunately now lost\(^{38}\) making it impossible to gauge the extent to which these new ideas were explored in the paintings of 1913 and 1914. However, a number of works do survive from 1915 - a much more successful year for Wakelin. Three paintings - *Pearl Bay*, *The Emerald Coast* and *The Fruit Seller of Farm Cove* - were accepted by the R.A.S. for their annual exhibition.\(^{39}\) *Pearl Bay* no longer survives, but Wakelin did make reference to it at a later date:

> At the end of 1914 I painted a new version of a sketch I had made of Pearl Bay the year before. I used only alizarin crimson, french blue and cadmium yellow with white applying the colour in juxtapositions of small dabs in emulation of the Impressionist method of simulating the vibration of light.\(^{40}\)

*The Fruit Seller of Farm Cove*\(^{41}\) (plate 10) continued this use of colour: "Encouraged by this effort [Pearl Bay] I painted a 4' x 3' canvas of 'The Fruit Seller of Farm Cove'.\(^{42}\)

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38 The work was apparently lost when Wakelin went to England. (Interview with V. Gerritt, p.6).


40 Interview with Virginia Gerritt, p. 5. 41 cat. no. 10.

42 Interview, op. cit.
The technique of Wakelin's earliest major works were thus inspired by the divisionism of Impressionist art rather than the more expressive styles of the Post-Impressionist painters. What is important, however, is that Wakelin was, in The Fruit Seller... and other contemporary paintings, one of the first Australian artists to employ a truly Impressionist broken palette using pure, unblended colours applied and juxtaposed in distinct strokes of paint. The Heidelberg painters had juxtaposed colours to create more luminous effects, but they had almost always premixed their paints. Wakelin's small painting of The Outcrop (plate 11), sketch-like in its brisk and spontaneous application of paint, explores the possibilities of colour — in both shade and sunlight — to a much greater extent than the Heidelberg painters had ever done.

But although all Wakelin's surviving 1915 paintings — The Outcrop, The Fruit Seller..., Balmoral and the portrait, Ginger West (illus. i) — apply the Impressionists' broken colour system to some degree,

43 cat. no. 13. 44 cat. no. 12. 45 cat. no. 11.
none could be described as truly 'Impressionist'.
Wakelin was concerned with "simulating the vibration
of light", but not with the dissolution of form and
outline in this light. These paintings approach more
closely a Neo-Impressionist rather than an Impression-
ist conception of form. In Ginger West and The Fruit
Seller . . . Wakelin achieves an almost Seurat-like
sculptural solidity and stillness quite opposed to
the transient, muted effects of Monet or Camille
Pissarro. In later life Wakelin acknowledged his
admiration for Seurat, 46 but it is not definite
whether the 1915 paintings were the result of a direct
Neo-Impressionist influence or whether Wakelin's par-
ticular approach here was arrived at via the work of
the English 'Post-Impressionists'. That Wakelin
never employed the true pointillist technique of
scientifically organized spots of pure colour per-
haps supports the latter view.

The Impressionist/Neo-Impressionist style of the
Camden Town artist, Lucien Pissarro, may have been
influential at this stage, but again there is no definite

46 From a conversation with George Lawrence, painter and close
friend of Wakelin.
supporting evidence. Norah Simpson would probably have known Pissarro's paintings, but she may or may not have discussed them with Wakelin. Quite possibly she was not as enthusiastic about this artist's work as that of other members of the Camden Town Group. Pissarro did, however, employ a semi-pointillist technique applying his colours with more spontaneity than the careful, exact pointillism of the Neo-Impressionists. He emphasized design and pictorial structure, but nevertheless inherited the Impressionists' love for painting the effects of sunlight and atmosphere. But although in theory his interests were quite similar to Wakelin's, in practice the paintings produced by each artist were rather different.

47 Simpson refers only to Gore, Ginner and Gilman when she speaks of the English 'Post-Impressionists'. In 1912 Lucien Pissarro was not considered as radical as these artists.

48 Lucien Pissarro, with his father Camille, was involved in the production of the earliest Neo-Impressionist works with Seurat and Signac (c. 1884-5). Although he painted in a true pointillist technique at this stage this was later to relax into a more tonal, fluid style. Pissarro came to live in England in 1890.

49 Wakelin was also interested in pictorial structure and in obtaining atmospheric effects; both were explored quite compatibly in The Fruit Seller of Farm Cove.

50 Pissarro's paintwork in such pictures as Ryland's Copse (1913, illus. W.S. Meadmore, Lucien Pissarro, London, 1962,
This would seem to suggest Wakelin may have been influenced, not by reproductions of Pissarro's paintings, but by discussion of his technique and approach alone.

Again, the emphasis on formal structure in Ginger West or The Fruit Seller of Farm Cove may have been a conscious reaction on Wakelin's part to the fluid and 'insubstantial' aestheticism of such artists as Blamire Young or J.J. Hilder. It may also have resulted from his own innate desire for solid, tangible form \(^{51}\) - an interest that was reinforced and stimulated by his recently gained knowledge of the Post-Impressionist artists' (Cezanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh) similar aims.

But it appears that an Australian painter, Emanuel Phillips Fox, was also influential for

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(cont.) pl.9) is altogether more substantial, less 'broken' than Wakelin's application of colour. Pissarro also placed greater emphasis on solid, monumental form and on a more expressive brush technique.

\(^{51}\) This interest was already evident in Wakelin's Solitaire of 1912-13 where the 'weightiness' of form seems to have been deliberately exaggerated.
Wakelin during these formative years. Born 1865 in Melbourne, Fox studied at the National Gallery Art School, later spending many years in Europe. There his contact with, and awareness of, French Impressionism was far more direct than Tom Roberts' had been some years earlier - and consequently, the impact of Impressionism on his work more thorough and far-reaching. Continually preoccupied with light and its play on objects, Fox worked with a high-keyed palette using large amounts of white to obtain brilliant, but subtle, light effects. His brush technique emulated the broken strokes of such Impressionist artists as Monet, Sisley and Camille Pissarro although his colours were often pre-mixed. Nevertheless, in such works as The Ferry (c.1910) or Summer (c.1912) Fox achieves a weightless luminosity, a vibrancy unparalleled in other Australian 'Impressionist-inspired' paintings. And

52 Referring to the painting of his The Fruit Seller of Farm Cove, Wakelin remarked, "Phillips Fox show at the R.A.S. rooms Oct. 1913 was much in mind at this time regarding colour." (Wakelin to Daniel Thomas, 7 Dec., 1961).

53 Oil on canvas on stretcher, 152.4 x 114.6 cm, Art Gallery of N.S.W.

54 Oil on canvas on stretcher, 207 x 90 cm, Art Gallery of N.S.W.
it was the colour that Fox used to gain such light effects that had the greatest impact on Wakelin. Speaking of Phillips Fox's 1913 exhibition in Sydney, Wakelin recalled:

(It) made a great impression on me . . . . We'd never seen colour like that before. That was the thing that struck me most. Fox had been to France and had seen impressionist pictures that were scarcely known here then. Painting had been on the brown side - more tone than colour - this was expression through colour; we'd never seen it before.

Norman Carter, a teacher with Rubbo at the Royal Art Society classes, was, according to Wakelin, largely responsible for stimulating interest in Phillips Fox prior to this 1913 exhibition. Carter had studied under Fox at Melbourne's National Gallery Art School and had apparently passed on his knowledge of Fox's painting procedure to his own students in Sydney. Wakelin could not have failed to absorb at least the more important aspects of this information about Fox - his broken brush technique,

56 Len Fox, E. Phillips Fox - Notes and Recollections, Sydney, 1969, p. 29.
57 ibid. Carter's own style was little influenced by Fox.
his interest in light and most importantly, his colour. That Wakelin already knew something of such techniques through Norah Simpson and through his own knowledge of European art is also important. But the opportunity of being able to view these Impressionist-derived formal innovations at first hand via Fox's work may have proved to be as, if not more, stimulating and inspiring than the monochrome prints of the French masters on which he was otherwise forced to rely.

Wakelin's 1915 paintings bear no obvious resemblance to those by Fox, but they do reveal an analogous concentration on the achievement of a palpable luminosity through a system of vibrant, juxtaposed colours. Both artists also commonly rejected the current fashion for depicting what had come to be seen as the 'typical' aspects of the Australian landscape - the dazzling heat, the dry earth and those relentless blue skies. Unlike Fox's informal,
typically Impressionist composition, however, Wakelin concentrated on formal structuring and a careful pictorial organization. And his use of colour was far more revolutionary than that of Fox: by laying it directly on the canvas, often unmixed, Wakelin deliberately emphasized his process of applying colours - technique and method had become as important as overall conception. Yet this was not merely a technical exercise; it was Wakelin's answer to the inability of existing painting procedures in Australia to convey a sense of warmth and atmosphere without becoming lyrical or romantic. The paintings of 1915 are not 'revolutionary' in any sense of the word, but they did at least depart quite radically from the 'acceptable' and traditional use and application of colour.

Besides Wakelin's entries, another 'modern' work - Grace Cossington Smith's The Sock Knitter 59 (plate 12) - was also accepted by the Royal Art Society for exhibition in 1915. With its long strokes of decorative, in some cases almost Fauvist colour, its

59 1915, oil on canvas, 61.6 x 50.7 cm, Art Gallery of N.S.W.
flattened, stylized background and simplified composition it reveals an even deeper awareness of European trends than do Wakelin's contemporary paintings. Cossington Smith had, in fact, travelled in Europe for two years (March, 1912-Apri, 1914) prior to this exhibition. Although she does not recall any significant impact of the original moderns on her work it is difficult to believe _The Sock Knitter_ was not influenced by at least a partial awareness of Post-Impressionism and even Fauvism. That she was naturally drawn towards the ideas on modern art introduced locally by Norah Simpson perhaps confirms this.

The fact that both Wakelin's and Cossington Smith's works were accepted for the 1915 R.A.S. exhibition does not necessarily reveal a broadening of outlook on the part of this traditionally conservative body. As Wakelin commented,  

> It was surprising that . . . these pictures were chosen with little opposition, in view of the fact that the division-of-colour stippling technique was something quite new in Australian painting. However, the storm broke loose shortly after and Rubbo was accused of leading
his students astray. 60

It is difficult to understand why "the storm broke loose" after the exhibition and not before. Members of the selection committee were those of the previous year and no doubt still held similar artistic views. Perhaps it was Rubbo's advocacy that gained them admission to the exhibition. He himself exhibited a very sentimental, traditionally conceived work entitled *Where Daddy Fell*. 61 Although ready to defend more progressive attitudes he was obviously not yet prepared to incorporate them in his own art.

"Surprising" as it was for Wakelin to have his work accepted for exhibition by the R.A.S. in 1915, the following year proved more predictable. Both Wakelin's and Cossington Smith's entries 62 were at

60 Virginia Gerritt interview, p. 5.
61 R.A.S. cat. no. 138 - illus. in exhib. catalogue. Whereabouts now unknown.
62 Wakelin: Cat. no. 74 - Landscape, no. 75 - Down the Hills to Berry's Bay, no. 76 - Still Life, no. 77 - Holiday. Grace Cossington Smith: Cat. no. 59 - Study of a Head, no. 60 - The Reader, no. 61 - Sunny Morning.
first solidly opposed admission to the annual exhibition. But Rubbo, on the R.A.S. selection committee, finally "won the day". 63

(Wakelin) A hostile atmosphere had arisen due, I think to complaints from die-hards about Rubbo's liberal methods of teaching. A special meeting of the R.A.S. Council was called to deal with the matter, but Rubbo was not to be put down. 64

Opposition to what were becoming considered Rubbo's subversive activities among his students had been gaining momentum during 1916. Press criticisms of the R.A.S. exhibition in September give some indication of the antagonism felt by many towards what one writer termed this "frightfulness". 65 in art:

... and Mr Dattilo Rubbo has joined the pointillists ... and has dragged two students at least (Mr Wakelin and Miss Tempe Manning [?]) after him. The three of them splash merrily with spots of crimson and green and vermilion and yellow and the

63 "The R.A.S. stood for sanity, not progress apparently. Rubbo fought for us and won the day from the stolid members of the council." (Virginia Gerritt interview, p. 5).

64 Roland Wakelin, "Recollections of a Post-Impressionist", op. cit., p. 291.

65 "Art and Frightfulness", Sun, Sydney, 1 Sept., 1916, p. 6. The author remained anonymous, but was almost certainly Howard Ashton who wrote for the Sun at this time.
results are certainly amazing.\textsuperscript{66}

The sarcastic finale of this review was matched only by a second appearing in the same newspaper a week later which described Rubbo's work as "mere porridge" and those by his students as "positive nightmares".\textsuperscript{67}

Howard Ashton (son of Julian), art critic for the \textit{Sun} and staunch opponent of 'modernist' trends would have been one of the few critics in Sydney capable at that time of such vehement criticism - criticism which, directed primarily against Wakelin, was to continue for many years. That Ashton was also a member of the council of the N.S.W. Society of Artists in 1915 may also suggest a certain hostility directed towards the Royal Art Society\textsuperscript{68} - an hostility that was voiced through his outspoken censure of the work of Rubbo and his students.

\textsuperscript{66} ibid.


\textsuperscript{68} The Society of Artists was originally formed as a breakaway from the R.A.S. Those initiating the breakaway wanted membership confined to professional painters and participation in exhibitions confined to members of the Society. This discrepancy of policy remained the basic difference between the two societies.
In retrospect there seems little in Wakelin's work from this period that could have provoked such criticism. Yet in comparison with the majority of works hung in the 1916 R.A.S. exhibition Wakelin's Down the Hills to Berry's Bay\textsuperscript{69} (plate 13) was indeed quite radical. With its simplified form and outline, its rather clumsy drawing and its juxtaposed strokes of colour it challenged the fundamental conception of the lyrical, 'sunny' Australian landscape repeated since Streeton and Roberts until it almost precluded all other interpretations. The fact that Down the Hills . . . is not so very different from The Fruit Seller . . . of the previous year is of little consequence. What was important and so disturbing for the "die-hards" was that Rubbo and his students were serious in their intentions; they were continuing to paint as they pleased despite criticism from the press and members of the two art societies, and the threat they constituted had to be taken seriously. Hence the strong, if not clearly defined opposition to their painting. Wakelin quite justly commented, "Either the painters here were ignorant

\textsuperscript{69} cat. no. 14.
of all that was happening in Europe or they ignored it in a thank-God-we-are-sane-here attitude." 70

When Rubbo, Wakelin and Grace Cossington Smith began to challenge this 'ignorance' the reactions of some became a little more positive.

Rubbo's paint technique in his small untitled landscape 71 (plate 14) recalls the "splodges" of colour Howard Ashton used as a descriptive term for Rubbo's R.A.S. work that year 72 - and as such indicates a radical departure from the more finely painted earlier works. Rubbo goes much further than Wakelin here in disintegrating the landscape motif. Paint is applied in thick, impasto strokes, emphasizing surface texture rather than illusionistic depth. Colour is pure and boldly applied. Rubbo also shows less concern for a strict adherence to reality than

70 Roland Wakelin, "Post-Impressionism in Sydney . . .", op. cit., p. 91.

71 oil on canvas, later mounted on masonite, 26.7 x 35 cm, signed and dated lower left, Virginia Combe, Sydney (given to Miss Combe by a great aunt whose father was a friend of Rubbo's).

72 "... Dattilo Rubbo's badly conceived, cheaply sentimental splodges . . .", Art and the Amateur", op. cit.
does Wakelin in *Down the Hills to Berry's Bay*. As opposed to the latter's concern for volume and structure and the evident control of his painting technique Rubbo attaches importance to the spontaneity of his brushwork and the role it plays in his almost two-dimensional interpretation of the landscape.

According to Ashton's description it would appear that this small landscape was allied to Rubbo's large-scale works hung in the 1916 R.A.S. exhibition. If this is so it was restricted to a similarity of technique only, for Rubbo's subjects were still generally the conventional, narrative ones of earlier paintings.

One would think a work bearing the title, *The Last Cartridge*, could have given little cause for opposition at this time unless the technique in which it was painted departed somewhat from the accepted norm;

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73 R.A.S. cat. no. 24 - *Sunshine After Storm* - 50 gns.
" " " 25 - *The Last Cartridge* - 100 gns.
" " " 26 - *The Traitor* - 30 gns. (I have not been able to find the present whereabouts of these paintings. However *The Last Cartridge* was illustrated in black and white in the 1916 R.A.S. catalogue. Colour is indeterminate, but the paint was applied in quite clearly juxtaposed strokes.)

74 e.g. *A Toiled Scar'd Veteran* (pre 1911), Art Gallery of N.S.W., *Where Daddy Fell*, illus., catalogue, 1915, R.A.S. annual exhibition.
Rubbo's subjects were still conventional, but his colours and paint application were not - and it was this aspect of his work that caused alarm.

We may assume also that Rubbo's untitled landscape reflected the type of concepts he was encouraging in his pupils at this stage. Whether his was a role of instruction or merely encouragement is unknown. But that he did exert some influence on his students may perhaps be inferred from an analysis of Wakelin's paintings of the next few years where a greater interest in formal surface pattern rather than depth becomes evident. Whatever Rubbo's influence his painting is also of interest in that, for the first time among this small group of artists, strictly Impressionist divisionist principles were being transformed into a more expressive, fluid style - a style more closely allied to that of many of the Post-Impressionist artists (Van Gogh, Cezanne) than to their Impressionist forbears.

75 It would seem that as these concepts were relatively new to both Rubbo and Wakelin theirs was a relationship of mutual exchange of ideas and experiment rather than a purely teacher-pupil association.
Wakelin's *Seated Figure*\(^{76}\) (illus. ii) perhaps has more in common with the concepts involved in Rubbo's landscape than does his *Down the Hills to Berry's Bay*. Emphasis has been placed here on the surface texture created by a rugged paint application, and the disintegration of solid form and outline, of traditional three-dimensionality, through this technique. It too indicates a step towards expressive Post-Impressionist precepts - both formal and conceptual - although it is allied more to the Post-Impressionism of such English artists as Gore\(^{77}\) and Gilman than to the French movement's painters.

That Roy de Maistre was also involved with Rubbo and Wakelin in 1916 is evident from his *Mother and Child*\(^{78}\) (plate 15) painted in that year; although intimate and less broadly treated it does

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\(^{76}\) cat. no. 15.


\(^{78}\) oil on canvas mounted on pulpboard, 35 x 25.5 cm, signed and dated l.r., Art Gallery of N.S.W.
reveal tendencies similar to the paintings by Rubbo and Wakelin already discussed. Like them de Maistre emphasizes brush technique and surface texture - although his colours are tonal and less vibrant.

The 1916 works by Rubbo and de Maistre differ from each other and also quite obviously from such paintings by Wakelin as *Down the Hills to Berry's Bay* and *Seated Figure*. But despite this, all three artists reveal similar underlying concerns - simplification and reduction of form, the structural and expressive function of brush technique, an unrestricted palette and, above all, the importance of the individual's personal interpretation of his subject. None could be compared with the work of the French Post-Impressionists or readily discussed in terms of a Post-Impressionist 'classification' - the word has little true significance anyway*79* - but all were beginning to approach those particular aspects of painting that had come to be identified as commonly shared by the Post-Impressionist artists

*79 The term was originally coined by Roger Fry to classify a whole group of artists not one distinct and common aesthetic.*
1916 may also be regarded as the year of Wakelin's first real awareness of Cézanne, although, as Wakelin himself stated, this was only a partial understanding of the French artist's work:

Rubbo had shown me an article on Cézanne in the Forum by Willard Huntington Wright. This fascinated me though I couldn't rightly get the hang of it. However, I think I now became vaguely aware of pictorial structure which, if it existed in my work previously, well it was not my fault. Such things were not taught in art schools those days.

Just what Wakelin implied here by "pictorial structure" is not altogether clear. If he meant a considered formal organization then it was present in works painted prior to 1916. His sense of the term perhaps becomes a little clearer, however, through an analysis of Wright's rather difficult, 

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80 Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin - the most important of the Post-Impressionist artists - all exhibited, in varying degrees, an interest in colour, in expressive paint techniques and in the importance of design, the formal components of a painting. However all explored these interests in completely different ways and to quite different ends.

81 Extract from letter by Wakelin to the Art Gallery of N.S.W. accompanying their acquisition of his Down the Hills to Berry's Bay and dated 7 Dec., 1961.
but quite penetrating article on Cezanne reproduced in *Forum*\(^{82}\) and also printed in his book *Modern Painting, its Tendency and Meaning*\(^{83}\). Wright places great emphasis on Cezanne as an artistic 'organizer': "He [Cezanne] saw in objective nature a chaos of dis-organized movement and he set himself the task of putting it in order."\(^{84}\) Cezanne rearranged, altered reality to achieve an even greater 'reality', to penetrate the "inherent synthesis"\(^{85}\) of nature. Wright also discusses Cezanne's colour discoveries at length and his revolutionary use of colour to create a sensation of pictorial depth and recession:

Cezanne left no device untried which would give his work a great depth, a more veritable solidity. He experimented in colour from this standpoint, then in line then in optics. With the results of this research he became possessed of all the necessary factors of colossal organization. He knew that, were these factors rightly applied, they would produce a great sensation of weight, of force and of movement . . . .

The emphasis here is on the pictorial importance

\(^{83}\) New York, John Lane Company, 1915.
\(^{85}\) *ibid.*, p. 57.
\(^{86}\) *ibid.*, p. 54
of dynamic structure and plasticity of form. Only a deliberate and careful study of nature will reveal to the artist the means by which he can transform "essential" nature in terms of a painterly medium. Wright quotes Cezanne - "Penetrate what is before you and persevere in expressing yourself as logically as possible."\(^8^7\) - and also stresses that his painting was "the result of a mental process - an intellectual conclusion after it had been weighed, added to, subtracted from, modified by exterior consideration . . . ."\(^8^8\) Here is perhaps summarized the chief idea, the central theme of Wright's interpretation of Cezanne. Referring to the article, Wakelin stated that he "couldn't rightly get the hang of it"\(^8^9\) - and this, I think, is understandable; Wright himself seems to have experienced difficulty in explaining Cezanne's very personal, often rather obscure approach to painting and to nature. But what does remain and is quite clearly comprehensible is this emphasis on the need for a studied organization of the picture's parts through reference to

\(^8^7\) ibid., p. 45. \(^8^8\) ibid., p. 55. \(^8^9\) Wakelin to Art Gallery of N.S.W., ibid.
nature, an organization that reinforces rather than destroys movement and depth, and one that captures the 'essence' of nature's outer form. Explanation of the means by which Cezanne achieved this pictorial organization is rather abstruse, but Wakelin could not have failed to interpret the central message of the article. This is implied when he states, "... I now became vaguely aware of pictorial structure ... ."⁹⁰

Theoretical knowledge of Cezanne's approach could not, however, have been so very useful when it came to actually putting these ideas into practice. The article was not accompanied by reproductions that could have illustrated Wright's point and its often ambiguous passages must also have been the cause of some bewilderment. If Down the Hills to Berry's Bay was painted after reading this article⁹¹

⁹⁰ ibid.

⁹¹ In his letter to the Art Gallery of N.S.W. Wakelin does not make it definite that this work was painted after reading Wright's article. But as Wakelin was reminded of the article when discussing Down the Hills ... it does seem likely that it had some influence on his painting. He also remarks, "I was thinking a lot about colour gradations in terms of the spectrum." - Wright had described Cezanne's discoveries in this sphere in some detail (Forum article, p. 46), but just how Wakelin interpreted and applied them to his own painting is not clear.
it reveals no obvious Cezanne compositional influence. It does, however, reflect a movement away from The Fruit Seller of Farm Cove of 1915 towards a more 'earthy' scheme of colours, a greater formal complexity and organization, and, accompanying Wakelin's diminishing interest in creating light and atmospheric effects, a more 'sculptural' realization of form. If by "pictorial structure" Wakelin implied such developments then Down the Hills was among his first paintings produced with Cezanne directly in mind.

Wakelin's 1917 'sketch' (plate 16) for his Boat Sheds, painted in 1918, carried the mild schematization of form in earlier works to a more extreme conclusion - although it must be noted that this was intended only as a preliminary study, not a finished work. Nevertheless it is of interest in that it does

92 This interest was still quite prominent in the 'hazy' effects of The Fruit Seller of Farm Cove.

93 Wakelin's enthusiasm was such that he even called his house "Cezanne" in 1916.

94 cat. no. 16.
reveal a spontaneity and vigour lacking in Wakelin's more carefully finished paintings. Quite different from the 1918 Boat Sheds, it is perhaps more valuable to consider the study in its own right than in connection with its later counterpart. Using short, thick strokes Wakelin has reduced the landscape to a series of planes, emphasizing their interaction and colour on a two-dimensional surface rather than attempting to achieve a conventional perspectival depth. Such a concentration on formal surface pattern, on the abstract components of a landscape linked solely by colour and enlivened by brushwork was typical of much of Cezanne's work and dominated various later theoretical analyses of his painting. Wakelin appears, in this study, to be more fully conscious of at least the implications of "pictorial structure" and its significance for his own art.

The study is not typical, however, of Wakelin's earlier works. Later paintings failed to attain the dramatic reduction achieved here - and the contemporary Sunset at Berrima\textsuperscript{95} (plate 17) also lacks this bold expression and vitality of paintwork. Quieter

\textsuperscript{95} cat. no. 17.
in colour and brush technique, this is a more lyrical, restrained work, painted, one would think, to capture the particular effects of the scene rather than as an exercise in formal analysis and reduction. The small scale of the painting, its lack of detail, suggests that this too may have been a preliminary study. Both 1917 paintings hint at the experimental. Both differ radically from the preceding 1916 works and yet lack the accomplishment of the formally more successful 1918 paintings (plates 18 and 19). In that they anticipate the formalized compositions of these paintings reflects a transitional stage in Wakelin's stylistic development.

Whatever the interpretation 1917 does not appear to have been a particularly productive year for Wakelin. That the irrational opposition to his 1916 paintings had any affect on his artistic output is unlikely, but it is significant Wakelin did not contribute to either the Royal Art Society's or the Society of Artists' annual exhibition in 1917. Perhaps he was again rejected or perhaps he preferred to remain aloof from the prevailing antagonism that year.
Like many of his artist friends Wakelin did not enlist to fight in World War I during these years. He was strongly opposed to violence or war and, according to those who knew him, his convictions were such that he was unlikely to be swayed by idealistic appeals for patriotism or heroism. Throughout 1914, 1915 and 1916 he worked first as a ticket writer at Mark Foy's and David Jones' department stores and then as a clerk at the State Income Tax Office. Towards the end of 1916 Wakelin's friend, John B. Godson, an etcher with the commercial art firm of Smith and Julius, was joining the army and Wakelin was offered permanent work with the company early in 1917. Smith and Julius employed 'fine' artists rather than commercial artists and it was here Wakelin met such other artists as Lloyd Rees (to become a lifelong friend), Percy Leason and James Muir Auld.

96 Wakelin was unlikely to have suffered any social reprisals for his pacifism. Feelings of patriotism were not as strong during W.W.I chiefly because war was not as strong a reality then.

97 Sydney Ure Smith aimed to raise the standard of commercial art by employing fine artists. He was later to become president of the Society of Artists and was the founder of the publishing house of Ure Smith & Co. which published Art in Australia. (Wakelin) - "24 Bond Street was the centre of Australia for many of us young artists. It was
The job no doubt provided a more stimulating atmosphere than Wakelin had experienced with the Taxation Office, but still emphatically lacked the satisfaction and enjoyment painting could give: "In the main I believe it was mostly drudgery to him as he was devoid of slickness or technical cleverness of the type that makes commercial art easy and profitable."98 Wakelin's range of work included still life for catalogues, furniture and interiors and some figure work. Fortunately Smith (Sydney Ure) and Julius (Harry) were aware that this type of commercial art was not particularly fulfilling for Wakelin: "... Syd Smith saw to it that his powers as a colourist were made use of as much as possible in poster work and interior decoration ... but of course there were not enough fine colour commissions to fill Wakelin's time."99

Nevertheless working at Smith and Julius did bring Wakelin into close contact with other artists and created an opportunity for discussion and interchange of ideas. These discussions appear to have

(cont.) always full of the leaders of the day - Norman Lindsay, Hans Heysen and so on were always there." - Typescript, Virginia Gerritt interview, p. 7.

achieved particular force among the artists who
gathered at John Young's framing studio in Little
George Street, Sydney for lunch: "Some of us used
to take our lunch down to Young's . . . . John used
to brew us jugs of coffee and over these we had
great arguments on art, music, religion . . . ."¹⁰⁰
Performing a similar function to the Paris cafes of
the nineteenth century, these lunchtime discussions
no doubt provided a much-needed centre for argument
and exchange of ideas. They also created a sense of
cohesion and a source of inspiration for the lesser
known artists who patronised them. Among these were
Roy de Maistre (then de Mestre) who Wakelin had met
at the R.A.S. classes in 1913 and with whom he was
to be closely associated in the next few years.
Wakelin's friendship with John Young ("He had a
great feeling for art and artists."¹⁰¹), formed
during 1917, also provided a source of encouragement
as well as both moral and financial support.¹⁰²

Whether or not this exchange of ideas between
artists had any stylistic affect on Wakelin's

¹⁰⁰ Virginia Gerritt interview, p. 7. ¹⁰¹ ibid.
¹⁰² John Young was the first to buy a painting by Wakelin.
painting at this stage is not known. But the lunch-time meetings and the artistic environment at Smith and Julius may certainly have helped confirm and consolidate his own ideas whilst re-establishing his confidence in his art. The accomplishment of several paintings produced during the following years certainly reinforces this.
CHAPTER III

1918-1919

THE 'COLOUR MUSIC' PHASE

This brief period in Wakelin's artistic career achieves significance as the culmination, the climax of all those ideas and tendencies previously only tentatively broached in his art; his new awareness of the possibilities of colour, of formal design and of structural unity, gained indirectly through his acquired knowledge of European Impressionism and Post-Impressionism was now assimilated into a style far in advance of contemporary Australian art and beyond the comprehension of many of its critics. In collaboration with Roy de Maistre, Wakelin eventually produced the first abstracts painted in this country and, with de Maistre, attempted to educate a largely ignorant and highly conservative public in the aesthetics of the modern movement.

But this was in 1919. Although the paintings
produced during the preceding year were not quite such radical statements they do number among Wakelin's most enjoyable and formally successful early pictures. The simplification of form and emphasis on large plans surfaces evident in his 1917 Study for Boat Sheds (plate 16) became the central concern in these 1918 paintings. As such they marked a decisive and final break with the artist's earlier lingering Impressionist legacy - the divisionist brushstroke and palette. Colour is now generally applied in broader areas while interest in the formal interplay of planes is reflected in some instances in a heavy simplification of form. This is well illustrated in The White House\(^1\) (plate 18), and in Boat Sheds\(^2\) (plate 19) shown in the Royal Art Society's 1918 annual exhibition.\(^3\)

These are among Wakelin's first important, large-scale, completed paintings quite clearly inspired by the new directions in art - particularly by the Post-
Impressionists' and Fauvists' flattening of perspectival space, their emphasis on simplified shapes and the arrangement of these within the total design, and their quest for solidity and unity of composition. But despite this similarity of interests the evidence of the 1918 paintings does not point decisively to the absolute influence of any single artist or art movement. Cezanne's mode of vision is most nearly approached in *Boat Sheds* and *The Yellow House*\(^4\) (plate 20), but the interpretation and treatment of the subject in each case is essentially Wakelin's. Any similarity between the two artists at this stage appears to have been one of parallel pictorial objectives rather than pictorial solutions. Wakelin's forms remain solidly drawn and clearly delineated: Cezanne wanted to minimize drawing using colour alone to distinguish form and suggest depth. Wakelin had learnt something of Cezanne's colour theory through Wright's article in *Forum*\(^5\) and he appears to have applied this knowledge to some degree in *Boat Sheds* (he uses warm foreground colours graduating to cooler

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\(^4\) Cat. no. 18.

\(^5\) See footnote 82 page 64.
tones in the background) - but he did not employ Cezanne's technique of applying colour in strong directional strokes that disguised definite formal boundaries - nor did his penetration or analysis of form reach the extreme, near abstract level of the French master. What is significant in these 1918 works, however, is the importance Wakelin attaches to personal vision - a vision arrived at via a synthesis of the basic precepts collectivized under the term Post-Impressionism. At this stage he owed little to Van Gogh, Gauguin even Cezanne as individuals. Rather it was the emphasis on emotive colour, expression and the formal qualities of the picture - common to the movement as a whole and which distinguished it from Impressionism - that became influential for Wakelin between 1916 and 1920.

That Wakelin's awareness of the basic implications of the modern movement, gained initially through Rubbo and Norah Simpson, had broadened considerably since 1915 is evident in a comparison of his earliest Sydney paintings with those of 1918. The later sources which can be definitely ascribed as having contributed to this awareness are not numerous, but are important.
The article on Cézanne by Willard Huntington Wright in the 1915 issue of *Forum* (and shown to Wakelin by Rubbo) has already been mentioned. Printed in London and New York, *Forum*'s bulky contents included articles on a variety of topics - politics, music, philosophy and some (of a largely theoretical nature) on art. However, whether Wakelin subscribed to this journal on a regular basis after he had seen Rubbo's copy is not known.

The magazine, *Colour*, printed in England, also appears to have been read by both Wakelin and de Maistre about this time. First issued in August, 1914, emphasis in this monthly was on good quality colour reproductions of paintings - only a small part of its contents was given to discussion of art or particular artists. A series of seven articles

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6 page 64.

7 "About 1919 . . . reproductions in which there was the acknowledgement of modern ideas came upon Sydney mainly through the magazine 'Colour!'" - John Young in his evidence before the Supreme Court in Equity (N.S.W.) in the case arising from the 1943 Archibald Prize Award. (See typescript, Art Gallery of N.S.W., p. 70.)

8 Other articles appeared on a variety of subjects - music, theatre, fiction, connoisseurship, etc.
on modern art appeared in the July 1917 to January 1918 issues, but these were essentially essays on a theory of the development of modern art; they said very little about the contributions of individual artists or the more practical aspects of recent art movements. Those works reproduced were largely by a variety of lesser-known British artists and many reflected the impact of Post-Impressionism and Fauvism on local art. They emphasized the importance of colour, pure and vivid, used expressively and decoratively. Perhaps owing to prevailing war conditions there was a marked absence of paintings by the European originators of these movements. There is no evidence of a direct influence on Wakelin by any single artist whose works were illustrated in Colour. What could have proved influential later in 1918, and particularly in 1919, was their use and choice of colour. The 'decorative' nature of many of the paintings,

9 There were very rarely more than one or two reproductions by a single artist and these were almost never accompanied by discussion or explanation of the particular work. For the interested reader this must have been rather unsatisfying and not particularly illuminating.
their emphasis on design, on simplified form and flattened space may also have affected Wakelin's own style at this time.

The Studio and The Burlington Magazine were also available in Sydney during these early years in Wakelin's artistic development. But although more established and more widely read than either Colour or Forum they carried few articles on modern art. Those that were printed\textsuperscript{10} were not generally very enlightening - or comprehensive. Apart from these magazines, two important books on the modern movement were circulating in Sydney after 1915.\textsuperscript{11} Arthur Gerome Eddy's Cubists and Post-Impressionists\textsuperscript{12} (1914) and Willard Huntington Wright's Modern Painting, Its Tendency and Meaning (1915), both dealt extensively


\textsuperscript{11} It is not known when these were available in Sydney or when they were definitely read by Wakelin and de Maistre. We may assume, however, it was in the period, 1916-19.

\textsuperscript{12} Chicago, 1914.
and intelligently with such artists as Renoir, Monet, Cezanne, Gauguin and Kandinsky as well as the Cubist and Futurist movements. Their chapters on "Colour Music" (Eddy) and "Synchromism" (Wright) were to become influential for both Wakelin and de Maistre the following year.

Wakelin had four paintings accepted for the R.A.S. of N.S.W. annual exhibition in 1918 and one in the Society of Artists exhibition (October). 1918 was also a successful exhibiting year for Roy de Maistre. His Street Scene, Old Sydney was accepted by the R.A.S. and three others by the Society of Artists. That his work this year was not, however, acceptable

13 Evidence of the artists having read these books was given verbally by Wakelin to both Bernard Smith (Fine Arts Dept., Sydney University) and Daniel Thomas (Art Gallery of N.S.W.).

14 Cat. no. 95 - Nude - 15 gns.
" " 96 - The Yellow House - 7 gns.
" " 97 - Boat Sheds - n.f.s.
" " 98 - Farm Sheds - 5 gns.

15 Cat. no. 64 - Still Life - oil - 30 gns.
" " 131 - 10 gns.

16 Cat. no. 65 - The Tug - 8 gns.
" " 66 - Landscape - 6 gns.
" " 67 - The White House - n.f.s.
to conventional taste is evident from one review which referred to de Maistre's "alleged 'post-impressionist' efforts" as "crudities". "But", stated the reviewer, "he will doubtless see the error of his ways." Referring to this same exhibition (Society of Artists), Howard Ashton pronounced: "The Committee, however, has made a few mistakes, notably in neglecting to throw out some samples of art the charm of which depends on ignorance or, at least, negation of drawing and a sense of colour that a house painter might envy." Dismissing it as "bad art", Ashton was no doubt referring to Wakelin's and de Maistre's efforts - at that stage there was little else in contemporary Australian art that could have aroused such criticism.

But not all the reviews were quite so damning. One rather favourable (if sometimes ambiguous) article on Wakelin at least made some progress in understanding and appreciating his work. Headed "R.S. Wakelin,  

18 (anonymous) Sydney Morning Herald, Oct. 9, 1918, p. 10.  
19 Sun, Sydney, Oct. 8, 1918, p. 6.
Post-Impressionist", the reviewer referred to Wakelin as "Australia's only Post-Impressionist" and to his paintings in the R.A.S. exhibition as "artistic surprises":

Mr Wakelin submits four extraordinary pictures, a nude, a group of houses, a farm-shed and a group of boatsheds. At first glance this is so individual that the spectator receives a shock of probably dissatisfied surprise. These boatsheds are so rich in colour, so curiously painted. To find anything similar in art one must go back to the work of Cezanne, the great French master of modern Impressionism. His was an art built upon a new tradition, in which the artist forsakes the idea of decorating a flat surface and works for solidity and mass . . .

and

. . . Mr Wakelin has managed very well to convey the impression of solidity . . . .

For the reviewer, however, this - a striving for solidity and mass - was the only real purpose and achievement behind Wakelin's work. Otherwise, his colours were "screaming" and his nude "poorly drawn."

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20 I have looked unsuccessfully through all the available newspapers of this period in order to find the source and date of this review. The Daily Telegraph was not, however, available for reference and it could therefore have come from this paper. Also, discussing his Boat Sheds, Wakelin later referred to an article by Arthur Adams in the Daily Telegraph: "He must have pitched a good tale to Arthur Adams because he gave me a glowing report in the Daily Telegraph". (Letter to Daniel Thomas - 7.12.61) - which perhaps confirms my suggested attribution.

21 ibid.
Australian ignorance of the modern aesthetic was to cause similar misinterpretations and many indignant reactions for years to come.

Despite Wakelin's and de Maistre's success, Grace Cossington Smith's *Van Gogh's Room* (illus. iv) was rejected by the 1918 R.A.S. selection committee. This 'daring' work, with its crisp strokes of pure, vibrant colour (in imitation of Van Gogh) proved too much for the committee's 'broadmindedness' that year. Dattilo Rubbo was reading Van Gogh's life to his students; Cossington Smith's picture is an imaginary reconstruction of the Post-Impressionist's room based on the colours Van Gogh referred to in a letter.

Niel Gren, a Norwegian, was also, for a short time, associated with the small group of artists, centred around Rubbo, who absorbed with enthusiasm the new ideas then challenging locally accepted

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22 c. 1918, oil on paper, 19.4 x 17.5 cm, Art Gallery of N.S.W.

23 Three others - *Candlelight* (Cat. no. 92), *Reinforcements* (Cat. no. 93) and *Rocky Hill* (Cat. no. 95) - were accepted.

24 Information taken from the Grace Cossington Smith exhibition catalogue (Art Gallery of N.S.W.) and later confirmed by her personally.
artistic standards. Gren's *Woman at a Washtub*\textsuperscript{25} signed 1918, and a similar untitled and undated work\textsuperscript{26} (plate 21) lack the formal simplicity and solid structuring of Wakelin's contemporary paintings, yet they too were produced with Post-Impressionism in mind. The Norwegian's thick, textured application of paint derives much from the precedent of Van Gogh's expressive and emotional brush technique although his restrained, 'earthy' range of colours is closer to that of Cezanne. Gren was less concerned with colour than with the effects of light and shadow on solid form - an Impressionist legacy conflicting with the textured heaviness of his painting technique.

Towards the end of 1918 Roy de Maistre appears to have played a significant, if not influential role in the formation and determining of the direction Wakelin's painting was to take the following year. Born 1894 into an old pastoral family, de Maistre came to Sydney in 1913 to study the violin

\textsuperscript{25} oil on paper, 34.3 x 29.2 cm, Art Gallery of N.S.W.

\textsuperscript{26} c. 1918-20, oil on pulpboard, 34.3 x 29.2, signed 'Niel Gren' (1.1.), Mrs Clarice Thomas.
and viola at the Conservatorium and painting at the R.A.S. classes under Rubbo and Carter. Although his first contact with Wakelin was at these art classes, the friendship and artistic collaboration between the two does not seem to have been consolidated until 1918. The intervening war no doubt had much to do with this; Wakelin remained, during the war years, with the public service and then Smith and Julius. De Maistre, however, joined the Australian Infantry Forces in 1916. His discharge with tuberculosis nine months later necessitated a convalescence which, as we shall see, had much to do with the eventual formation of his ideas on the function of colour in art.

(Wakelin) I had seen little of de Maistre up to 1918 but apparently he had been working on some ideas of his own. One Sunday morning he arrived with Adrian Verbrugghen in tow to demonstrate his theory of colour in relation to music. Here was another new idea and we went into it with great enthusiasm.

According to Sir John Rothenstein de Maistre's son of Henri Verbrugghen then director of the Conservatorium of Music.


interest in colour had emerged during his tuberculosis convalescence when he became interested in the relation of environmental colour to mental health. Inspired by this new awareness of the psychological effects of colour de Maistre persuaded the Red Cross to allow him to experiment with shell-shocked patients.

This however, was only the starting point in the elaboration of his colour theories. As Wakelin had stated, de Maistre's ideas on colour had, by 1918, extended to a theory of the relation between colour and music. Just how this theory materialized is uncertain, but it would appear that although largely of de Maistre's own formulation he nevertheless relied on the ideas of others as an inspirational source and point of departure.

De Maistre seems to have been naturally inclined towards formal analysis and theorization. Wakelin, on the other hand, lacked such a capacity for intellectualizing - his was always a more direct, spontaneous approach.

Although de Maistre has painted some fine landscapes, he is essentially an indoor artist,
intellectually and emotionally disposed towards abstract formal experiment rather than a direct response to nature. 30

What would thus appear to have been the quite antithetical attitudes of each artist did not, however, become apparent until later years when their styles had fully matured. Influenced by Cubism and Surrealism de Maistre's mature art became introverted, intellectual. By contrast, Wakelin, whose mature style remained unaffected by any of the more recent art movements, was to write: "I believe that the artist must study nature, that the contemplation of nature should in fact be the dominating influence in his life . . . ." 31 But in the early formative years it would seem only natural that formal experiment, a search for suitable means of expression, should suppress at least a part of this response to nature.

Wakelin was never, however, a theorist and it is to de Maistre we must give full credit for creating


31 From a lecture on colour by Wakelin - undated - but possibly given to architecture students, Sydney Univ., post 1952.
'Colour-Music' as their paintings came to be termed. Lloyd Rees recalls that de Maistre, then a violinist with the Verbrugghen orchestra, had much more leisure time than Wakelin, was able to move about more freely and seek out "the few books on the new movements which might have bearing upon their plans and aspirations". De Maistre's knowledge of music, more advanced than Wakelin's, must also have played a significant part in the development of his theory.

Unfortunately lack of definite evidence of the theory's aesthetic assertions makes any discussion of possible influential precedents a little hypothetical. It is also difficult to deduce its implications from the few paintings surviving this 'Colour-Music' period. However it is doubtful that de Maistre's 'theory' was developed independently of other colour-music concepts quite common in much European art and art theory early this century. Released from a figurative dependence, painting's association with music,

32 Lloyd Rees, The Small Treasures of A Lifetime, p. 91. (De Maistre, according to Rees, was probably on a small private income.)

33 Ibid.
of pure colour harmonies with musical harmonies, was now much more viable; it was, perhaps, a predictable early consequence of the development of a completely abstract art.

Kandinsky, who had produced the first truly abstract paintings in 1910-11, persistently drew an analogy between colour and music. He based this analogy on the common ability of each, of painting and music, to produce some form of emotional response in the viewer or listener.34 Throughout his book, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, Kandinsky stressed that painting must be the product of the artist's subjective feelings and it must be directed towards evoking a related response in the viewer. As music has been the art which has devoted itself not to the reproduction of natural phenomena, but to the expression of the artist's soul . . . "36 so the artist . . . naturally seeks to apply the means of

34 "To use again the metaphor of the piano, and substituting form for colour, the artist is the hand which, by playing this or that key . . . purposely vibrates the human soul in this or that way", Wassily Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, New York, 1947, p. 47.

35 Written in 1910. 36 Kandinsky, op. cit., p. 40.
music to his own art. And from this results that modern desire for rhythm in painting, for mathematical abstract construction, for repeated notes of colour, for setting colour in motion and so on." 37 In addition to the 'spiritual' possibilities of abstract colour combinations, Kandinsky also perceived a more direct affinity between colours and musical sounds: "In music absolute green is represented by the placid middle notes of a violin" 38 and violet is "... in music an English horn, or the deep notes of woodwinds." 39 This aspect of colour-music, a close correlation between certain sounds and colours, was to be of particular interest for Wakelin and de Maistre.

Kandinsky, in Russia, had been the first artist to respond to an abstractionist urge and to have based these abstractions on an association with music. Colour was the means by which he achieved this association. In Paris (1912-13), Delaunay (Orphism) and Franz Kupka also explored the connections between music and colour through abstract painting. But although they gave their works such musical titles

37 ibid. 38 ibid., p. 59. 39 ibid., p. 63.
as Circular Rhythms (Delaunay) and Fugue in Red and Blue (Kupka) their art did not directly revolve around a colour-music theory. Colour, however, was most important.

Wakelin and de Maistre may have known something of Delaunay and Kandinsky through their reading, but it is doubtful either would have had access to the latter's writings. However we do know that both artists read Willard Huntington Wright's Modern Painting. Wright's chapter on "Synchromism" reads almost like a manifesto. He enthusiastically discusses the theories involved in the Synchromists' art emphasizing that theirs is a pure art, an art where colour alone is used to express and convey all that light, perspective and composition, allied to reality, had conveyed previously: "The perfect poise of all the elements of a painting expressed by the

40 Concerning the Spiritual in Art (Über das Geistige in der Kunste) was not translated from the original German into English until 1947.

41 Chapter XIII (pp. 277-304).

42 The two initiators of this short-lived movement were Wright's brother, S. MacDonald Wright and Morgan Russell. Their first exhibition was held in 1913 at Der Neue Kunstsalon, Munich.
single element of colour, is the final technical aim
of Synchromism."43 An analogy between colour and
music is hinted at, but this is not the theme of the
chapter. Rather, it is solely colour, autonomous
and pure, that is under discussion. Nevertheless,
statements such as the following seem so close to
de Maistre's and Wakelin's ideas (and to their
notion of a systematized colour 'keyboard')44 it is
difficult to believe they could not have been influ-
ential: "With MacDonald Wright and Russell the
palette was completely and scientifically rational-
ized so that one could strike a chord upon it as
surely and swiftly as on a keyboard of a piano: the
element of hazard in harmony was eliminated."45

Wright regarded the Synchromists' use of colour
to express form, volume, depth, as a continuation of
Cezanne's use of colour46 - as such, Synchromism was

43 Wright, op. cit. 44 see discussion pages 95-96.
45 Wright, op. cit., p. 299.
46 "... colour before Cezanne had been used for ornament or
for the dramatic reinforcement of the drawing or subject, and
in Cezanne colour had been employed to express subjectively
the emotions of volumes found in nature." ibid., p. 296.
the next logical step in the evolution of art. For Wakelin and de Maistre, only newly acquainted with the brilliance of Cezanne's vision, the force and logic of this argument could not have failed to impress them.

But it was Wright's chapter on Neo-Impressionism 47 that included a most concise discussion of the relationship between musical sounds and colour very similar to the basic notions of the de Maistre theory. Wright noted, as de Maistre was later to do, that as certain musical notes (e.g. C and G\textsuperscript{b}) played together produced disharmonious sounds so "In colour this principle also holds good. The complementary combination of red and green is harsh, but by placing red with one of the spectrum tones on either side a pleasurable harmony is at once established ... there is hardly a possible dual combination which cannot be made harmonious by the addition of one or two other colours." 48

And this was exactly the premise of the de Maistre/Wakelin colour keyboard. What was involved

47 chapter VII (pp. 164-186) 48 Wright, op. cit. p. 173.
in this case was the invention of a colour-music scale in which the spectrum colours were related to the musical scale:

(de Maistre) . . . the first scale I experimented with . . . was composed of 8 colour notes and was really nothing more than a natural scale based upon the seven principal colours of the spectrum, the eighth note being a repeat of the keynote to form an octave musical scale.

By inserting a tone of colour (representing sharps and flats) between each degree (i.e. each colour) a chromatic scale of twelve colours was produced:

One had only to take the theory as it applied to major and minor scales and transfer its

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49 Taken from Robert Hughes' *The Art of Australia* (Penguin, Aust., 1970, p. 118) and apparently spoken by de Maistre, Hughes states, "talking with Wakelin in Young's framing shop". Hughes makes no other mention, however, of the origins of these statements - whether they were recorded in written form and kept by either de Maistre or Wakelin, or whether they were only stated verbally. Whatever the case they could not have come verbally from de Maistre who was overseas when the book was written. The extract may have been derived from an article titled "Colour Music" and appearing in a local electronics journal, *Sea, Land and Air* (Oct., 1919, pp. 417-422). Here, Kae McDowell, the author, gives an explanation (based on de Maistre's own words) of the de Maistre/Wakelin colour keyboard that sounds remarkably similar to the explanation given in Hughes' extract. Hughes may have reconstructed the conversation he recorded and based it on the McDowell article. (She did, after all, gain her information directly from de Maistre.) I have been unable to contact Hughes to verify this point.
system to the colour keyboard. . . . I soon found that the colours representing the various notes bore the correct relation to each other, and that their importance in relation to the colour keynote was much the same as the corresponding degrees of the musical scale . . . .

Despite the similarity of Wright's pronouncements on the analogy between colour and music to those of de Maistre and Wakelin, the paintings by the two Sydney artists corresponded to those by the Synchromists in only a very limited sense. Colour, however, was a commonly shared and dominant interest and titles carried similar connotations (see preceding footnote). Wright's chapter on Synchromism was, I believe, only a starting point, an inspirational source for de Maistre and Wakelin. They absorbed the American's ideas, even adopted the term 'synchromy' (with colour) for their own art. Yet the practical application of

50 ibid.

51 e.g. Wakelin's Synchromy in Orange–Red Major (pl. 27), de Maistre's Rhythmic Composition in Yellow Green Minor (pl. 28) and Morgan Russell's Synchromy in Orange: to Form (1913-14, illus. Barbara Rose, American Painting, Switzerland, 1969, pl. 16), MacDonald Wright's Abstraction on Spectrum (Organization 5) (1914, illus. Rose, pl. 17). Both groups of artists produced paintings with a figurative basis. For the Synchromists, however, such figuration was usually obscure and confined only to the early works. And where Wakelin's and de Maistre's use of colour tended towards tonal harmonies (see above paintings) that of the Synchromists was usually pure and vivid.
colour-music concepts - the use of a harmonious colour scale - to their own painting was quite different and possibly developed independently of the earlier movement.

In his chapter, "Colour-Music", in *Cubists and Post Impressionists*, Arthur Jerome Eddy, like Wright, advocates the use of colour for its own sake as opposed to its traditional linkage with the world of objects:

The use of line and colour 'freely' to produce pure line harmonies and pure colour harmonies, with no reference to objects is . . . in a sense a far higher art - a more abstract art. 53

No reference is made to a direct analogy between colour and music or to the use of colour scales in painting - but Eddy does mention the invention of a colour organ by A. W. Rimington, Professor of Fine Arts, Queen's College (London), who also wrote a book titled *Colour Music, the Art of Mobile Colour*. 54

It seems, however, that Wakelin and de Maistre may already have known something of Rimington and may have read his book. During 1912, in ignorance of

52 chapter VIII, pp. 140-148. 53 *ibid.*, p. 147.

54 *ibid.*
Rimington's invention a Sydney businessman, A. B. Hector, also developed a colour organ or "mechanism" as it is referred to in *The Loan Hand*\(^5\). Both inventions were based on a common idea - a system of coloured lights linked electrically to the keys of an organ and projected onto a white screen - but whereas Rimington's keys remained silent when played, Hector's organ produced colour and music. Although Hector's invention is of interest what is of greater significance is that on learning of Rimington's similar discoveries Hector purchased a copy of Rimington's *Colour Music* . . . (Hutchinson & Co., London, 1912) - and Hector is known to have been involved to some extent in the 1919 'Colour-Music' of the Sydney artists.\(^5\) Wakelin and de Maistre would thus have been well aware of Rimington and well informed of the contents of his book.


56 "De Maistre was interested in music and Henri Verbrugghen and his son listened with interest to ideas of colour music which de Maistre had gone into with Mr A. B. Hector, scientist and chemist. Finally Hector, de Maistre and Wakelin with I think the help of young Verbrugghen formed a group . . . ." - from a record of lecture (undated) given by Sydney Ure Smith (perhaps to the Society of Artists) and now held at the Macquarie Galleries, Sydney.
Unfortunately the book now appears unavailable. However, it was partially reviewed (accompanied by a description of Rimington's colour organ) in an article headed "The Romance of Colour" and appearing in the 1912-13 edition of The World's Work ("an illustrated magazine [British] of National efficiency and social progress."). The author discusses Rimington's "unique" colour organ stressing not only its practical ("colour for colour's sake") significance, but also the psychological significance of its effects. She quotes from Rimington's book: "One object of colour is to appeal to the mind and emotions, to the mental sense of colour and its intellectual or emotional effect upon us." And it was just this particular function of colour that both Wright and Eddy ignored. Both authors concentrated on the formal and technical innovations that colour could make possible without discussing its more subjective properties. In his discussion of Synchromism Wright concentrates on the conscious, rational nature of the movement and its use of colour:


58 ibid., p. 269.
Their postulates are too definite to permit of the introduction of literary or musical transcendentalism; and their 'apports' are too significant to permit of any retrogression towards metaphysics or charm. Their palette has become co-ordinated and completely rationalized. 59

It appears Wright may have been effective in stimulating initial interest in an analogy between colour and music, and a number of other books (with sections discussing colour-music analogies) were published around 1918 that could have given greater force and authority to the colour-music argument. 60

To just what extent Rimington's book could have been influential is impossible to determine. Not only are we unable to analyse Rimington's ideas through a

59 Wright, op. cit., p. 302.

60 M. Luckiesh included a chapter, "Colour Music", in his The Language of Colour (New York, 1918, pp. 262-272). He discusses colour music as a combination of musical sounds and 'analogous' colours largely along the lines of Rimington's and Hector's 'colour-music' - but makes no reference to the application of a colour-music scale to painting. In his Colour in Everyday Life (New York, 1918, pp. 300-309) L. Weinberg wrote, "Colour music proposes to give up the clarity of representative painting for the sake of attaining the dynamic quality of music, the quality of pattern through time as well as space." - but again, nothing of colour-music scales. A. E. Hull discusses Scriabin's interest in and development of a colour scale related to the musical scale in A Great Russian Tone Poet-Scriabin (London, 1916, p. 226) but makes no reference to its possible application in painting.
reading of his book, but we also know very little of de Maistre's theoretical and aesthetic assertions from which to derive possible precedents.

Some explanation of the Sydney 'colour-music' theory was made, however. In August, 1919, both artists' experiments with colour culminated in an exhibition which they called "Colour in Art". The opening of the exhibition took place at night and for it Gayfield Shaw turned his gallery into a hall with seating and an illuminated stage. Works by de Maistre and Wakelin were displayed on the stage and both gave a lecture explaining their paintings and their artistic theories. The lecture no longer survives, but the catalogue accompanying the exhibition

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61 Held at Gayfield Shaw's Art Salon, Penzance Chambers, Elizabeth Street, Sydney, 8-16 Aug., 11 paintings (6 by Wakelin, 5 by de Maistre) as well as de Maistre's painted "interiors" (3).

62 Gayfield Shaw was not, however, a prominent supporter of modern art. He may, in fact, have been unaware of the exhibition's implications. Lloyd Rees writes, "The exhibition was held at Gayfield Shaw's because there was really no other 'worthwhile' private gallery then in Sydney. Not for one moment do I believe Gayfield Shaw understood what the young men were doing . . . . But he was a kindly man ready to give a helping hand and doubtless he realized the focus on his gallery would be to his advantage."

Surprisingly, the catalogue introduction, an extract from the lecture itself, makes no reference to an analogy between painting and music. Written by de Maistre and headed "Colour in Relation to Painting", it is not greatly enlightening. De Maistre refers to man's continual need for "self-expression through colour", to those for whom colour "... brings the conscious realization of the deepest underlying principles of nature... for those people it constitutes the very song of life and is, as it were, the spiritual speech of every living thing." De Maistre's discussion here of the emotional significance of colour alludes perhaps to Rimington's similar emphasis - and the Englishman may have proven influential in this respect. But the discussion is of the emotive importance of colour considered alone rather than in its relation to music. And although both artists gave their paintings 'musical' titles (Syncromy [sic.] in Blue Green, Major Key; Syncromy

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63 The original catalogue is held by Mrs Clarice Thomas of the Manly Art Gallery, Sydney. Copies are held at the Art Gallery of N.S.W.

64 This misspelling of synchrony recurs throughout the "Colour in Art" catalogue.
in Yellow Green Minor) the catalogue to their exhibition did not once mention the word "music". The exhibition was called "Colour in Art", the lecture "Colour in Relation to Painting" and the catalogue cover referred only to de Maistre's "new theory of colour organization as it applies to the Art of the Painter . . . ", and to the paintings by Wakelin "already known in Sydney as an exponent of modern methods of expression."

What appears to have been of importance then was not so much a strict analogy between painting and music - the ability of both to induce pure emotional responses, to affect the viewer or listener in a positive sense, but rather the importance of colour alone. Recourse to an analogy with music made possible the development of a colour scale based on the musical scale, but it was primarily the harmonious colour combinations that this colour scale or wheel provided for the artist that was of significance.

The lecture given jointly by de Maistre and

65 The catalogue cover was also decorated by a small triangle composed of various geometric shapes of different colours - a symbol of their colour interests?
Wakelin did make some discussion of musical/colour relationships – but only by way of explanation of the colour keyboards, discs and charts devised by both artists and included in the exhibition (illus. v and vi). Although the lecture no longer exists some evidence of the central ideas of this explanation survive through Hughes' extract (see page 95) and also through two contemporary press reviews of the exhibition which attempted to describe the theory based on the lecture give. The colour disc or wheel designed by both Wakelin and de Maistre, was intended to facilitate instant determining of harmonious chromatic scales. One could presumably

66 Colour Keyboard, oil on pulpboard, 12.5 x 121.5 cm, gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of Roy de Maistre, 28.2.69, Art Gallery of N.S.W. Chart displaying four colour scales, three colour wheels, two key wheels, oil, gift of Sir John Rothenstein, Art Gallery of N.S.W.

67 "Art Notes" by Gallery Boy, Sunday Times, Sydney, 17 Aug., 1919; "Pictures Set to Music", Daily Telegraph, 9 Aug., 1919, p. 8. (Both articles are anonymous. The second may have been written by Arthur Adams, the same reviewer who wrote for the Telegraph in 1918.

68 Although Wakelin was not instrumental in initially forming the 'Colour Music' theory his participation in the evolution of the 'movement' and the paintings and colour scales that developed from it was equal to de Maistre's. Lloyd Rees recalls, "He [Wakelin] certainly did share the enthusiasm and he did a great deal in designing colour scales and discs etc." - in litt., Lloyd Rees, 20.12.74.
choose the key (i.e. the particular dominant colour) one wished and, by referring to the colour wheel with its rotating slotted disc in the correct position over the colour segments, one could also determine which combination of colours and tones could be used to create harmonious relationships within the painting.

The eleven paintings by de Maistre and Wakelin in their 1919 exhibition were painted, we may assume, according to the exigencies of their colour keyboard and disc. Of these eleven only one appears to have survived to demonstrate the practical implementation of their theory. A second, Rhythmic Composition in Yellow Green Minor (plate 28) by Roy de Maistre, comes from the 'Colour-Music' phase and bears a title very similar to his Syncrasy in Yellow Green Minor included in the "Colour in Art" exhibition (Cat. no. 3 - 15 gns.), but was not, according to de Maistre, exhibited in 1919. Wakelin's Syncrasy in Orange-Red Major (plate 27) was, however, definitely included in the exhibition. Simply titled then as

69 1919, cardboard, 86.5 x 116 cm, Art Gallery of N.S.W.
70 thesis cat. no. 29.
Syncromy in Orange-Red (exhibition cat. no. 4-30 gns.), the painting has, I believe, achieved a very satisfying interplay of harmonious colours. Although highly simplified it remains within the figurative tradition, employing a scheme of bright, decorative, fauve-like colour that seems almost at odds with the realistic basis of the painting. De Maistre's colour, in keeping with the painting's 'minor key', is much more subtle. This "composition" was, (along with others by de Maistre and Wakelin), among the first completely non-figurative, large scale paintings produced in Australia. Titles of works in the "Colour in Art" exhibition suggest that de Maistre concentrated on the non-figurative and Wakelin the figurative; in most cases Wakelin's paintings have titles based on a definite subject - Landscape in Orange Key, Still Life Study in Blue Violet, Minor

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71 "The minor key, says de Mestre, always produces a greyer and less progressive colour-scheme than the major" - Kae McDowell, "Colour Music", op. cit., p. 422.

72 Although this is purely conjectural it is consistent with de Maistre's tendency towards the abstract (evident in the mature works) and with Wakelin's continuing dependence on reality.

73 "Colour in Art" cat. no. 6 - 15 gns.
Key\textsuperscript{74} - while those by de Maistre do not - **Syncromy**
in Blue Green, Major Key,\textsuperscript{75} Study in Orange Major.\textsuperscript{76}

A small watercolour\textsuperscript{77} from this 1919 'Colour-Music' phase appears to be the only surviving evidence available of Wakelin's excursions into the realm of pure abstraction - although clearly there must have been others:

(Wakelin) It was about this time we began painting 'abstracts' because this form seemed to offer a more logical application of the colour theory. They were perhaps the first 'abstracts' produced in Australia. Unfortunately all these seem to have been destroyed with the exception of one by de Maistre.\textsuperscript{78}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{74} "Colour in Art" cat. no. 8 - 10 gns.
\item \textsuperscript{75} " " " " " 1 - 20 gns.
\item \textsuperscript{76} " " " " " 7 - 10 gns.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Untitled, thesis cat. no. 30.
\item \textsuperscript{78} "Post Impressionism in Sydney ...", op. cit., p. 93. The de Maistre painting referred to here must be his Rhythmic Composition ... . Why the others may have been destroyed is discussed by Rees: "Wakelin's ... were evolved easel pictures and my impression was that he simply painted over them partly because he may have reacted against them but far more because he was short of painting materials. Wages then were very low and Wakelin would never sacrifice his family for his work - in spite of his passion for painting; so he painted on anything available and even for a time ground his own colours. I will admit that his humility made him doubt himself and such were the attacks of the time that he probably chose to paint over his abstracts than over his other work." in litt., Lloyd Rees, 20.12.74.
\end{itemize}
The watercolour, obviously a small, experimental sketch, employs variously lightly washed-in colours - oranges, purples, blues, greens, yellows etc. - in a purely geometric arrangement of shapes. Emphasis appears to be primarily on the interplay of colours. Although undated the work must surely be assigned to this period; at no other stage in his artistic career did Wakelin experiment with non-representational form.

Reaction to the comparatively radical implications of the 'Colour-Music' theory, deduced from the lecture given and the paintings exhibited could scarcely be termed 'favourable'. Wakelin recalls:

... our hearts sank when we saw the midday posters of the Sun. In six inch letters it asked 'Is it Art?' and in the paper itself Howard Ashton had given a column to a devastating condemnation of the whole show: 'Elaborate and pretentious bosh'.

The exhibition's opening night was attended by a large audience including many notables from the Sydney art world - Julian Ashton, Sydney Ure Smith,

79 From the original copy of an article by Wakelin written for the Art Gallery of N.S.W. Quarterly ("Post Impressionism in Sydney . . ." vol. 3, no. 2, Jan., 1962) and cited elsewhere in this thesis. Although referred to here and in other articles I have not been able to find this particular criticism by Ashton in the available editions of the Sun.
Dattilo Rubbo - as well as Henri and Adrian Verbrugghen and others from the Conservatorium.

(Lloyd Rees) The gallery became crowded to the door, and there was a big contingent from the conservatorium who I imagined had come to support de Mestre [sic.]. How wrong I was. Some of their members were red or white with anger because they considered that de Mestre had in some way tarnished their calling by daring to associate music with his 'terrible' paintings. 80

Opposition to the ideas of de Maistre and Wakelin was, in view of prevailing standards predictable and perhaps even understandable. It was, however, confined more to those artists and critics who saw their paintings as a destruction of established canons of beauty and consequently of art; 81 to those preferring to remain ignorant of recent trends in European art (and there were many) 'Colour-Music', and its implications, was a complete and utter reversal of what they believed constituted Art. The application of an intellectual and thoroughly unnatural colour system, the repudiation of

80 The Small Treasures of a Lifetime, p. 92.

81 Wakelin ("Post Impressionism in Sydney . . .", op. cit., p. 93) recalls a conversation between Julian Ashton and de Maistre where Ashton asked, "What I want to know Mr de Maistre is: Is it beautiful?" De Maistre replied, "Well I think so, Mr Ashton."
the necessity for dependence on a figurative basis were almost diametrically opposed to the academicism and monotonous naturalism still perpetuated in much Australian art.

However, not all the press reviews utterly denigrated the exhibition. The Sunday Times believed the public "... must look upon these new efforts of expression with a certain amount of sympathy and interest", although he concluded, "... the absence of drawing, of atmosphere, and of all the subtle nuances and lights and shades that abound in nature and are the principal elements in painting condemn the present experiment". A second article, headed "Pictures Set to Music", took a more enlightened viewpoint, explaining the colour-music theory very concisely and indicating some understanding of the two artists' works. Of Wakelin the author wrote:

His established work is highly attractive; it is quite unlike the usual painting, as he goes directly for suggesting mass and form by means of colour. His pictures are meant chiefly to be colour design, the building [sic] and landscapes in his pictures being incidental to the pattern and colour appeal.

82 "Art Notes", op. cit. 83 "Pictures Set to Music", op. cit.
Referring to the 1919 paintings by both Wakelin and de Maistre, the reviewer (Arthur Adams ?) concluded:

The pictures played in paint, are at first sight extremely vivid . . . . They hit; they attract; they are beautiful patterns; and they 'carry'. No matter how brilliant each seems it is keyed harmoniously.84

Despite the fact that the bulk of Wakelin's paintings surviving this 1919 period do not have 'musical' titles they do reveal, through their colour and schematized form, an inspirational source derived, like Synchrony in Orange-Red, from colour-music theories. Wakelin had stated85 that due to de Maistre's instigation, the theory began to evolve towards the end of 1918. Its practical application culminated in the 1919 exhibition and the painting of the first abstracts. The works produced during the intervening period reveal a gradual evolution towards the more brilliant decorative colour and abstract solutions arrived at towards the end of 1919; as their theory developed so did the 'daring' of their paintings.

A small sketch-like oil86 (plate 22) painted,

84 ibid. 85 see page 86. 86 Cat. no. 22
I believe, late in 1918 reflects Wakelin's earliest experiments with the colour-music theory as applied to painting. To what extent the theory had been worked out at this stage is not known - but this small, untitled landscape suggests at once an approach more radically reductive than that in preceding works as well as indicating the direction Wakelin's art was to take in the following year. Forms are here simply suggested by colour alone. The decorative pattern that results ignores traditional painterly preoccupations with line, depth and tone; formal design, realised chiefly through colour, here takes precedence over other considerations. Simplified form, colour and design had, of course, been central concerns in Wakelin's preceding 1918 works, but unlike these paintings, this small 'experiment' carried such preoccupations to a near abstract conclusion.

Hillside Houses, Berry's Bay (plate 23), a

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87 e.g. Boat Sheds (1918, pl. 21), The White House (1918, pl.19).
88 The painting approaches most closely the 1917 Study for Boat Sheds, (pl. 16).
89 Cat. no. 24.
larger scale, finished work, developed towards a similar goal, reducing form to essentials and emphasizing plane surfaces and their formal interplay. Paint is applied more assuredly in swift, broad strokes although colour is, as yet, restrained and mostly naturalistic. In Barn Near Tuggerah\(^{90}\) (plate 24), Berry's Bay\(^{91}\) (plate 25) and The Causeway, Tuggerah\(^{92}\) (plate 26), however, colour is finally released from a strict naturalistic basis — and it is in these paintings that evidence of a systematized theory of chromatics finally emerges. Barn Near Tuggerah, although still quite restrained, reveals a strict organization and arrangement of colour not evident previously. The careful ordering of what appears to be a dominant or key colour (green) suggests a reliance on a set scale of colours much as Wakelin's Synchromy in Orange-Red Major was to do. Berry's Bay similarly reflects a controlled, yet in this case, quite free use of colour approaching the fauve-like vividness of the 1919 exhibited work. However, unlike the Fauves, whose colour was a direct outcome of their more

\(^{90}\) Cat. no. 25. \(^{91}\) Cat. no. 27. \(^{92}\) Cat. no. 26.
spontaneous and decorative aims, Wakelin's colour is intellectual, methodical and rationally ordered (according to the colour-music scales). As a result his forms are almost always precisely defined and clearly differentiated.

This aspect of Wakelin's 1919 work became even more extreme in contemporary examples by Roy de Maistre. His _Boatsheds, Berry's Bay_ 93 (plate 29), despite its chromatic brilliance, relies heavily on a hard-edged delineation of form to control and define colour. Again, de Maistre's more intellectual approach resulted in a systematic and calculated precision never quite attained by Wakelin. Wakelin's _The Causeway, Tuggerah_, with its glowing prismatic colours reaches a compromise between de Maistre's geometric precision and his own more natural spontaneity. Forms are almost completely abstract, unrecognizable, yet unlike de Maistre's work, both outline and colour are softened, achieving an atmospheric, lyrical quality for which de Maistre, with his bold colour and clearly drawn

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93 1919, oil on board, 32.8 x 22.1 cm, signed l.l., Mrs Clarice Thomas.
forms, was to reveal little interest.

De Maistre's original involvement with colour arose largely from his apprehension of its psychological, emotional properties. The 'colour-music' theory that evolved was the logical outcome of this initial interest allied to his knowledge of music, his love of painting and his naturally analytical disposition. Both Wakelin and de Maistre were still unsure of the direction their art was to take and both seized upon the theory as a completely new and rational approach to art; what was appealing was that it provided the artist with a harmonious, but highly variegated set of colours - a rational formula within which he could work.

But although the theory liberated each artist's palette, at the same time it perhaps inhibited a more spontaneous creativity. Wakelin and de Maistre established a workable scale of colours based on the musical scale and they concluded, ultimately, that painting could be realised in terms of abstract coloured forms as music is realised through 'abstract' sound. Not at any stage, however, did either artist
exhibit an interest in extending this analogy with music to their own painting procedure. Music is a completely subjective experience; it is created subjectively and is capable of producing subjective response in the listener. De Maistre's Rhythmic Composition . . . may succeed in generating some sort of inner response, but ultimately it represents a very controlled and well-ordered arrangement of colour - and this is what was originally intended. Wakelin remained almost always bound to reality - subject remained a necessary basis for his art - and with this reliance on reality it is difficult to consider such a figurative work as his Synchromy in Orange-Red Major in relation to music, the most abstract of the arts.

Rimington and Hector conceived of colour-music as a purely visual and constantly changing play of colours accompanied by sound. As such, their usage of the term - colour synchronized with, and determined by, music - was far more literal and much more appropriate. Wakelin and de Maistre attempted to 'fix' these ideas in painting, but could not liberate themselves from confining their own colours
within boundaries or, initially, from applying them on a figurative basis. In this sense Wakelin's surviving 'Colour-Music' works approach more closely the Fauvist use of colour and figurative dependence (but without their radical distortion and rearrangement of form). They may also have been influenced by many of the reproductions of paintings in Colour magazine\textsuperscript{94} with their allied emphasis on bright, vivid hues and their continuing adherence to reality.

Whether through adverse public reaction or personal dissatisfaction with the direction their art was taking towards the end of 1919, the works painted by both Wakelin and de Maistre during the years immediately following represent what would seem a complete reversal of their basic ideas and attitudes. 1919 may therefore be regarded as an experimental period in the development of each artist's personal

\textsuperscript{94} It is impossible to speak of specific artists here. The magazine reproduced the works of so many artists (very few well-known) it is difficult to see how one particular painter could have emerged as a positive influence. None of the paintings reproduced suggest a direct comparison with Wakelin or de Maistre, but as has already been noted, the fundamental interests evident in many were related to those of the two Sydney artists.
style - and that the movement was, in fact, so short-lived, suggests not only its experimental nature, but also its inherent limitations. Speaking of this period later in 1960 Wakelin recalled, "I imagine de Maistre still has a nostalgic faith in those theories, but I soon abandoned the idea because I found it illogical." Unfortunately Wakelin does not elaborate on why he found it illogical. That he did, perhaps determined his adherence to the 'logic' of the Meldrum theory during the next two years.

95 From the typewritten original copy of Wakelin's "Post Impressionism in Sydney . . ." (Nov., 1960) which was later reproduced, omitting this statement, in the Art Gallery of N.S.W. Quarterly (Jan., 1962)
CHAPTER IV

1920-1922

THE MELDRUM PHASE

In view of the 'avant-garde' nature of the paintings produced by Wakelin during 1919, the works of the next few years are, by comparison, quite unprogressive. This was the period during which both Wakelin and de Maistre submitted to the persuasive influence of the Meldrum school of thought - an artistic dogma, systematic and seemingly rational, that gained many adherents in both Sydney and Melbourne during the 1920's. The theory, however, eventually proved unsatisfactory for both artists and its influence on their work short-lived.

Meldrum's book, Max Meldrum: His Art and Views, published in Melbourne in 1917, appears to have been largely responsible for the dissemination of its author's views - although Meldrum's renowned forceful personality seems to have consolidated the authority
of its stance. The first statement by an influential Australian artist of a consistent and readily comprehensible theory of art, the book's wide distribution contributed much to the growing popularity of Meldrum's ideas and to his own painting. Lloyd Rees, at this stage still working with Smith and Julius, recalls:

Wakelin was also influenced to a degree, as were almost all of us who gathered around John Young's luncheon table, including John Young. In fact . . . [he] played quite a part in spreading the doctrine by presenting all of us with a copy of the first Meldrum book.

Another artist at Smith and Julius - Percy Leason - also helped popularize the Meldrum theory at this time. A confirmed 'Meldrumite' by the beginning of the 1920's, Leason was partly responsible for instigating initial enthusiasm among the artists who worked with the Smith and Julius firm and who met at John Young's studio. Meldrum's exhibition at the Athenaeum Gallery (Melbourne) in September 1919, just after the rather unsuccessful " Colour in Art" exhibition may also have been influential for Wakelin at this stage. One might conjecture

1 Lloyd Rees, The Small Treasures of a Lifetime, p. 121.
that, comparing the popularity of the Meldrum exhibition (it included works by both Meldrum and his students and was received favourably in the Melbourne and Sydney press) with their own, both Wakelin and de Maistre gave second thoughts to the validity of their contemporary experiments. Lack of public acknowledgement did much to diminish their confidence and perhaps determined their eventual adherence to those ideas which were popular and acceptable.

The degree to which Wakelin absorbed Meldrum's teachings becomes evident only through an examination of the former's paintings produced between 1920 and 1922. Before doing so it would perhaps be relevant to discuss the principal thesis of Meldrum's book.

A Scot, Meldrum came to Australia at the age of fourteen in 1889 and studied at the National Gallery School, Melbourne under Bernard Hall. The conservative Hall played a significant role at this stage in determining Meldrum's lifelong preoccupation with tonal values. In 1889 Meldrum won a travelling scholarship and thereafter studied in Europe (chiefly
in France) for thirteen years. If such a prolonged exposure to European modernism would have had at least some stylistic impact on most receptive young artists of the day, Meldrum remained largely unaffected - except in an adverse sense - for he returned to Australia violently opposed to modern art and confirmed in his belief that the art of all the great masters was connected by a common adherence to "Truth". This, therefore, was the aim of all 'good' art. After his return to Melbourne in 1912 Meldrum established a school where he could practise and disseminate his ideas and formula.

Meldrum's 1917 publication\(^2\) was based largely on a lecture given in Melbourne and confidently entitled, "The Invariable Truths of Depictive Art". Basing his ideas ostensibly on a study of the old masters, Meldrum advocated that "All Great Art is a return to Nature": \(^3\) "The careful study of undisputed art" - this included Rembrant, Titian, Velasquez, ...

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3 ibid., p. 24.
Leonardo, etc. - "strongly leads me to the conviction that the art of painting is a pure science - the science of optical analysis or photometry. We must therefore assume its impersonality with the other sciences." 

For Meldrum painting was a "science", a purely objective exercise in translating and defining optical impressions "in the scientific order in which ... they come to the eye." The artist, therefore, merely records his visual impressions, unhampered by personal whims, in a rationally ordered way. And he does this by formulating a range of tones based on the degrees of light in the subject he is depicting. Because it would be "utterly impossible" to paint all the tones the eye could distinguish, Meldrum advocated a "definite formula of tone" to assist and simplify the painter's job. Colour was unimportant and for Meldrum its brilliance and developing autonomy in modern art was a sure sign of social and artistic decadence: "Colour by itself suggests nothing to our intellect.

4 ibid., p. 29. 5 ibid. 6 ibid., p. 39.
and would only appeal to uncontrolled sensuality."\textsuperscript{7}

But Meldrum's theory arose more from a decisive and indignant reaction against modern art than a careful study of the old masters. He rashly denounced colour and individuality - modern art's most overt manifestations - ignoring that it was precisely these two aspects that often determined the greatness of past art, and would continue to do so in future art. To comply with the evidence of "great" art, however, Meldrum did not deny the role of emotion or feeling in creativity: "No picture could be well painted were it devoid of feeling, for the craft is but the means and science by which the painter conveys the feelings which he has received from nature."\textsuperscript{8} Yet at the same time the artist must suppress individuality - the very agent of his emotions - and record only his objective perceptions. "Individuality in Art spells decadence!"\textsuperscript{9}, proclaimed Meldrum, failing to recognize its inevitability in any creative situation where the artist was allowed some recourse to his personal feelings.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7} ibid., p. 44.
\item \textsuperscript{8} ibid., p. 94.
\item \textsuperscript{9} ibid., p. 64.
\end{itemize}
As reflected in their paintings Wakelin's and de Maistre's ideas of 1919 on the psychological significance of colour, colour as pure painting, almost complete abstraction, emphasis on decorative composition, on design, on individuality, and their absolute adherence to the concepts of recent art movements were all diametrically opposed to the fundamentals of Meldrum's theory and the art that was its product. Yet both Wakelin and de Maistre painted works after 1919 akin to the tonal naturalism of Meldrum and quite unlike anything they had produced previously.

Unlike the paintings of the 'Colour Music' phase with their lively, decorative colour, those works produced during the following two years were characterized by their distinct lack of colour. "Colour is the third and least important factor in depictive art"10 pronounced Meldrum; tone facilitated a 'truer' reproduction of nature's colours in paint. Yet these tones must also be subject to simplification; "... the works of the great Masters ... have consisted of a grouping of the infinity

10 ibid., p. 43.
of Nature's tonality into a few average tones." 11 And most paintings of Wakelin's 'Meldrum' phase reflect a close reliance on these fundamental premises. In such works as Self Portrait 12 (1920, illus. vii), The Conservatorium 13 (1922, plate 30) and Portrait of John Young 14 (c. 1922, plate 31) colour is subdued, restricted - tonal. The 1920 Self Portrait, employing only black and white and their tonalities, is a supreme example of what here seems to constitute an 'exercise' in tonal painting. As Meldrum's teachings dictated, paint is applied in large patches of tone. Line and detail are suppressed; tone was presumably capable of suggesting planes and consequently "space and distance." 15 It could also produce the sensation of light and atmosphere. Suppression of line and detail were central to those works by Wakelin painted prior to 1920. He also applied paint in large, flat patches - but this

11 ibid., p. 40. 12 Cat. no. 31. 13 Cat. no. 39. 14 Cat. no. 40. 15 "Only perfect accuracy of tone can produce perfect modelling and give a complete sensation of light and atmosphere, space and distance." Meldrum, op. cit., p. 13.
was using colour, pure and vivid, not tone. In these 1920-22 paintings colour is entirely subject to restricted tonal gradations.

Because Meldrum's formula emphasized the mechanical process of painting - the accurate analysis and depiction of tonal relationships - few explored the possibilities of subject matter or decorative design. As a result this period is marked by a preponderance of still lifes and portraits. Painted indoors under the unchanging effects of artificial light, this type of subject matter facilitated more easily the application of Meldrum's theory.

Wakelin's three still lifes (with fruit\textsuperscript{16} - plate 32, flowers\textsuperscript{17} - plate 33 and brass pot\textsuperscript{18} - plate 34 - respectively) reveal a naturalistic sameness of approach and interpretation that reflects the restrictiveness of the Meldrum dogma - a dogma that based itself on just such a creatively inhibitive attitude. 

\ldots the indispensable links in the chain of the development of the science of appearances", wrote Meldrum in 1950, "are characterized

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item 16 Cat. no. 33. \item 17 Cat. no. 35. \item 18 Cat. no. 36.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
by the suppression of personal ideas and the interpretation of impersonal truths."\(^19\) And because Wakelin usually adhered rather strictly to Meldrum's ideas, analysis of his works in their own right can only be limited.

This is not to imply all the paintings produced by Wakelin at this time were mindless transcriptions of the Meldrum formula. Meldrum himself was a competent artist (this also greatly helped reinforce his ideas) and produced a number of quite pleasing, if rather standardized paintings.\(^20\) Wakelin's Still Life with Brass Pot (1921) and his Landscape\(^21\) (1920) introduced stronger light effects and bolder colours completely avoided in the more 'strictly' tonal works. As such they are perhaps more an expression of the application of his own individual

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20 e.g. Portrait of the Artist's Mother, 1910 - National Gallery of Vic., Picherit's Farm, 1910 - Art Gallery of N.S.W.

21 Cat. no. 32, illus. Daniel Thomas, Outlines of Australian Art: The Joseph Brown Collection, Macmillan, 1973, plate 87 (in colour)
interpretation and treatment of Meldrum's views.
Such works as the 1920 Self Portrait and The Conservatorium, however, remained closely bound to the prescriptions of the theory.

Incomprehensible as this virtual negation of his earlier efforts may seem there are a number of plausible explanations for Wakelin's 'change of sides'. In 1928 (Art in Australia) he wrote:

The next few years were mingled with uncertainty. We were repeatedly told that we were 'on the wrong track' and really wondered if we were, and I think unconsciously drifted in some degree back towards the academic.22

Lack of confidence intensified by adverse public reaction during 1919 may certainly have been responsible for both Wakelin and de Maistre submitting to a more 'acceptable' and certainly more conventional approach to art.

In December, 1921, Art in Australia printed the address given by the Society of Artists president, Sydney Ure Smith, at the opening of the Society's annual exhibition (September-October, 1921). The

general attitude it conveys is instructive because Wakelin had a total of five works accepted and exhibited by the Society in their annual shows for 1920 and 1921:

Australians are quick to discern affectation. It is a quality we do not welcome, and that may be one of the reasons why the new art movements have never had much influence here...

Fashions in art are well to avoid and we in Australia would do well to leave them alone... At the present time the desire to be original in art is something to be suppressed...

Little wonder Wakelin and de Maistre rejected their earlier experiments for a more popular style when they were continually disheartened by attitudes such as this.

The very conservatism of the local situation, the deliberate disregard for the new and the difficult must also have played a major role in making Meldrum's

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23 1920: Cat. no. 70 - Landscape No. 3 - 10 gns.
   " " 98 - Still Life No. 3 - 20 gns.
   " " 206 - A Study - kindly lent.
1921: " " 76 - Landscape - 100 gns.
   " " 82 - Still Life - 30 gns.

The Society's selection committee was still dominated by such arch conservatives as the Lindsays (Norman and Lionel) and the Ashtons (Julian and Howard).

ideas possible or even plausible: (Lloyd Rees)
"Our world was, after all, so isolated that a book of such seeming authority was bound to have an effect far beyond anything it could achieve in a more sophisticated society." It is perhaps also significant in this context that the Meldrum theory was supposedly founded on a study of the old masters. This not only established its legitimacy - it also accorded well with the attitudes of such important and recognized local artists as George Lambert and Norman Lindsay, both of whom based much of their own art on a study (in quite different directions) on traditional painting.

Meldrum appears to have been in quite close contact with Wakelin and his circle of artist friends and this personal association, coupled with Meldrum's professed "persuasive eloquence", no doubt affected Wakelin to some degree, always receptive, as he was, to new ideas. Lloyd Rees

25 Rees, op. cit., p. 122.
26 Typescript of interview with Wakelin by Virginia Gerritt.
has also noted that "Wakelin expressed his belief . . . that colour only reached full effectiveness when its tonal adjustments to surrounding colours were harmonious. And it was for this reason he felt a study of Meldrum's theories could be of great future value for him." 28 Wakelin was obviously not attracted by the doctrinaire nature of Meldrum's theory, even less by its condemnation of the modern movement. The reference here to an interest in obtaining "harmonious" colour arrangements hints at a continuing preoccupation with the dominant concern of the 'Colour-Music' phase. It also suggests perhaps an awareness (possibly gained through a reading of Wright 29) of Cezanne's search for harmonious nuances of colour to act (in this case) as equivalents of gradations of light and dark and to augment depth, plasticity. 30 Wakelin did in fact believe, for a


29 Wright's interpretation of Cezanne's use of colour is a little incomprehensible in parts, but nevertheless emphasizes the artist's preoccupation with "gradations" of colour that are related to each other and modified by varying degrees of light.

30 (Cezanne) "One should not say model but modulate . . . . Drawing and colour are not distinct; as one paints one draws. The more the colours harmonize the more precise is the drawing." - Wright, Forum, op. cit., p. 49.
time, in the existence of a connection between
Cezanne's and Meldrum's approach to painting:

I know that at the time I found an analogy
between Meldrum's approach and Cezanne's dictum:
'Penetrate what is before you and persevere
in expressing yourself as logically as
possible.' Later I found the Meldrum theory
far too restrictive. 31

The reference here to Wakelin's perceiving an
analogy between Cezanne and Meldrum in the early
1920's is perhaps of vital significance for our
understanding of this period in his art. Wakelin
would have read Cezanne's famous "dictum" in Willard
Huntington Wright's Forum article 32 or in the same
author's book, Modern Painting ... . 33 On the
basis of his having read Wright's analysis of Cezanne
this particular analogy may have been only part of
Wakelin's apprehension of a much more extensive
correlation between the approach of each artist.
Such a correlation, perhaps unthinkable today, may
nevertheless have appeared quite plausible during
the 1920's when knowledge of Cezanne was limited
and based largely on a very small number of articles

31 Wakelin, "Post-Impressionism in Sydney ...", op. cit.,
p. 94.
32 p. 45. 33 p. 138.
about the artist and only a few reproductions (mostly black and white) of his work. Recognition of an affinity between Cézanne and Meldrum, based on such a limited understanding of the French artist's work, would have given greater credibility and authority to Meldrum's theory and would certainly have made it more acceptable for Wakelin.

Obviously a slight similarity may have been observable between Cézanne's reference to 'logical expression' and Meldrum's emphasis on the scientific, rational ordering and definition of our visual impressions. Throughout his discussion in *Forum*, Wright underlines that Cézanne's is an intellectual, a "mental process"\(^{34}\), a carefully considered analysis and interpretation of nature: "He [Cézanne] saw in objective nature a chaos of disorganized movement and he set himself the task of putting it in order."\(^{35}\)

In his . . . *Art and Views*, Max Meldrum wrote, "This cultivation (of faculty) . . . lies in the ability to analyse and define the order of visual impressions."\(^{36}\) and, "... the art of painting is a pure science."\(^{37}\)

\(^{34}\) *Forum*, p. 55.  
^{36} p. 35.  
^{37} p. 29.
And this emphasis on a conscious rational approach provided the basis for Meldrum's entire theory. For him it guaranteed "Truth" to visual appearance. For Cezanne, however, it was a means of "realising" nature, of penetrating to nature's "inherent synthesis". And although the painterly interpretations made by each artist were to quite different ends this superficial theoretical similarity does remain.

In a further comparison of Wright's analysis and Meldrum's theoretical statements, however, other more closely connected affinities are discernible. Both Cezanne and Meldrum recognized the limitations of Impressionism (although Cezanne did not repudiate it as Meldrum did), looking back to the old Masters as a source of inspiration - and both artists insisted on a close and truthful observation of nature. Both wanted to analyse and transfer nature's colours to the canvas. Meldrum, in terms of a formula of tone ("All the scientific works of art - that is to say, the works of the great Masters - have consisted

38 Forum, p. 57.

of a grouping of the infinity of nature's tonality into a few averaged tones."\(^40\) and Cezanne, according to Wright, in terms of the "consistent gradations of the colours of light."\(^41\): Cezanne used modulated colours to represent degrees of light and Meldrum insisted upon "the definition of the exact relationship between light and dark."\(^42\) However, for those not familiar with the actual colours used by Cezanne, what may not have been considered here was that his colour was rich and often high-keyed, Meldrum's restricted and usually low-keyed.

Both Meldrum and Cezanne applied paint in distinct patches or strokes. Wright emphasizes that Cezanne's use of colour was such that it could effectively take the place of traditional concepts of drawing and modelling in composition\(^43\):

\(^{40}\) ibid., p. 40. c.f. "I must carry on. I simply must produce after nature." (Cezanne to his son Paul, Aix, 13 Oct., 1906). Taken from Herschell B. Chipp, Theories of Modern Art, 1971, p. 23.

\(^{41}\) Forum, p. 46. \(^{42}\) Meldrum, op. cit., p. 13.

\(^{43}\) "By understanding the functioning elements of colour in relation to texture and space, he was able to paint forms in such a way that each colour he applied took its relative position in space and held each part of an object stationary at any required distance from the eye. As a result we can judge the depth and sense the solidity of his pictures as we do in nature," - Wright, Forum, p. 53.
(Cezanne) "When colour is richest, form is at its plenitude. In the contrasts and rapport of tones lies the secret of drawing and modelling."  

Meldrum similarly noted that "Only perfect accuracy of tone can produce perfect modelling and give a complete sensation of light and atmosphere, space and distance."  

Again, the importance placed by each artist on truth to visual impressions is apparent in such a statement as, (Wright) "Cezanne conceived his drawing form and colour as one and the same in the exact manner that these qualities, united in each natural object, present themselves to the eye."  

(Meldrum) "This return to Nature simply means the translation of optical impressions within the limitations of a medium and in the scientific order in which these impressions come to the eye."  

In their respect for the study of nature, their rejection of the traditional importance of drawing and modelling to achieve three dimensionality, their

44 ibid., p. 49.  
45 Meldrum, op. cit., p. 13.  
46 Wright, op. cit.  
47 Meldrum, op. cit., p. 29.
analysis of light and dark into a series of tones or colours and their deliberate, rational approach to painting, Cezanne and Meldrum were alike. In their general attitudes to and conception of the artist's role, however, they could not have been more dissimilar. Cezanne was never to make a theory of his art or to systematize his approach. He was emphatically opposed to any such theorizing. Meldrum's doctrine was founded on the formulation of a set of "invariable truths", rules that precluded any other approach and were intended to destroy individuality.

That Wakelin eventually found the Meldrum dogma "far too restrictive" perhaps suggests that at the outset of his study of Meldrum this aspect of the theory, the limitations imposed by its doctrinaire attitude (an attitude that was the antithesis of all that Post-Impressionism - and Cezanne - stood for), was not yet fully realized or not, at this stage, of

48 "... one says more and perhaps better things about painting when facing the motif than when discussing purely speculative theories - in which, as often as not, one loses oneself." (Cezanne to Charles Camoin, Aix, 28 Jan., 1902). Taken from Chipp, op. cit., p. 18.

49 "Individuality in Art spells decadence!" - Meldrum, op. cit., p. 64.
great importance: the theory was after all, novel. Consequently an analogy with Cezanne was far more operable. What conflicts most strongly with this analogy and what seems to have been ignored by those (like Wakelin) who did perceive a correlation was that Meldrum completely rejected as 'decadent' those art movements and artists (including Cezanne) who worked since, and during the Impressionist period.

Nevertheless, Wakelin did see a link between the emphasis placed by both Cezanne and Meldrum on a logical, rational approach to painting. In view of the systematic use of colour in his 1919 paintings this common point may have proven particularly attractive for him. Whether he also perceived the more closely connected affinities discussed above and based on the two books (Meldrum's ... Art and Views and Wright's Forum article) we know he read is not definite, but does seem possible. 50

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50 There appears to be no evidence to confirm the validity or otherwise of this conjecture. Apart from Wakelin's statement in reference to a possible link between Cezanne and Meldrum, Lloyd Rees has written, "Without being specific I think such deductions were made . . . ." (in litt., Lloyd Rees, 20 Dec., 1974.), although this neither really confirms nor denies.
the light of these affinities (no matter how shallow), Wakelin's involvement with the Meldrum concept of art does at least become more comprehensible.

Wakelin's earlier reference to the restrictiveness of the Meldrum dogma is significant here for it was probably this narrowing of style that had much to do with his leaving for England early in 1922. Just prior to departure Wakelin held his first one-man exhibition at the Anthony Hordern's Gallery (beginning February 1, 1922)\(^{51}\) - and received his first favourable reviews:

A largeness of view and breadth of treatment with clear colour effects are distinguishing characteristics of Mr Wakelin's work . . . .

and

After many adventures in the exploration of modern colour and other theories in his exhaustive search for what is right in art, Wakelin has discarded all schools and come back to nature . . . a confirmed realist.\(^{53}\)

Yet even Wakelin's seemingly acceptable style at this

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51 45 paintings exhibited including The White House (No. 6), Landscape (No. 11), Self Portrait (No. 7) and The Brass Pot (No. 18). None are dated, but are probably those already referred to in this thesis.

52 "Rising Sydney Artist" (anonymous), Evening News, Sydney, 3 Feb., 1922, p. 7.

53 Bulletin, 16 Feb., 1922, p. 34.
time was not immune to criticism:

The Wakelin show . . . is frankly disappointing to the ordinary person who likes the canvas to convey a bit of the green earth or the golden beach as it suited the creator to make them. Indefiniteness does not always mean poetic vision nor are colour extravagances always colour rhapsodies. 54

The two critics quoted above might almost be discussing different exhibitions. Very few paintings from this 1922 show survive today making any definite confirmation of either critic's views impossible. 55 However, we may deduce that it was perhaps a mixed exhibition of Wakelin's pre-1920 work plus those painted during his Meldrum-influenced period. A sympathetic article in Art in Australia (February, 1922) referring to the exhibition, appears to treat all those works exhibited as resulting from the influence of Cezanne alone:

He essayed to do as Cezanne had done - to interpret rather than create - to find in his painting the harmony of colour tone which would produce the rhythm of form inherent in the subject itself . . . . His desire is to find


55 It is difficult to ascribe definite paintings, now surviving, to this exhibition for the titles of many were either rather nonedescript ("Landscape", "Still Life", etc.) or were altered in later years.
the essential colour harmony of his subject and starting with his gamut of tones, to create his forms, finding the outline as the last and not the first thing.56

But the author might almost be discussing a Meldrum-influenced, as well as a Cezanne-influenced approach - so closely related are the two in these respects. The reference to the importance of colour harmony also conforms well with Lloyd Rees' previously quoted statement (page 132) about the possible reasons for Wakelin's turning to Meldrum in 1920.

56 Anonymous, A.A. 1, 1 (Feb., 1922).
CHAPTER V

PART I: 1922-24

WAKELIN IN ENGLAND

Following his rather financially unsuccessful Hordern's exhibition, Wakelin sailed for England with his wife and son. In London he eventually obtained work with Hopwood's advertising agency and "Cinads" - the company which produced the first advertising films in England - as an illustrator and scenario writer. Although necessity forced Wakelin to work throughout his two and a half year stay in England this latter job proved advantageous in that it involved sketching trips around the country (including Ireland) and the chance to paint over the weekends.

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1 About £60 was made from the sale of paintings.
2 Roland jr. - born December 5, 1914.
3 The company's first big account was the London, Midland and Scottish Railway. Wakelin sketched at various places throughout the country for these advertising films.
While in England Wakelin made several trips to France (three - the first with John Young⁴) specifically to study its art. Paris, however, proved disappointing. For Wakelin it was conspicuous in 1922 for its distinct lack of modern art. On the occasion of a visit to a 'modern' exhibition at the Luxembourg Wakelin recalled:

Modern! It was just like the art gallery in Sydney. There was one very fine Monet . . ., no Gauguin, a rather indifferent Cezanne (which was a bitter disappointment) and a poor van Gogh.⁵

The situation in London during the earlier part of Wakelin's stay seems to have been similar; modernism had still not completely consolidated its position in either country by 1922. However it was of course far more established and more thoroughly accepted than it would be in Australia for some time to come.

Cezanne had died in 1906 and Wakelin had missed the only exhibition of the French painter's work during his two and a half years in London. But he

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⁴ At this stage Wakelin and his family were living at Willesden Green. Young, after selling his framing business, arrived with his family three months after Wakelin and lived at Tulse Hill.

⁵ V. Gerritt Interview.
did manage to see the Van Gogh exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in December, 1923:

... it burst on me like an explosion. There was the Van Gogh "Zouave", "Old Roulin the Postman", "Corn Stooks". It was a revelation. None of the few prints we had seen in Sydney could reproduce the vitality in the paint itself. It seemed to have a life of its own. 6

According to Wakelin there was also an exhibition of Gauguin's work 7: "Just as thrilling as van Gogh but in a different way." 8

In his recollections of this period in England Wakelin emphasized the impact of his first real confrontation with Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting. 9 But this was not all that impressed him; he also recalled the beauty of the English landscape, its soft colour and diffused light 10 - so different

6 ibid.
7 I have not been able to find the date or location of this exhibition.
8 Virginia Gerritt Interview.
9 "I well remember the thrill when P.G. Konody took me to an exhibition in Savile Row (this was the Burlington Fine Arts Summer exhibition) where I saw real paintings by Cezanne, Renoir, Monet and many others." Wakelin, "Post-Impressionism in Sydney . . .", op. cit., p. 94.
10 "I love the English colour - the soft greens. Would love to go back now and paint" - Interview with Virginia Gerritt.
from Australia. The fact that it was totally unlike our vivid, sometimes harsh luminosity necessitated a complete reworking of his approach to colour and light in painting.

(Wakelin) I was painting a lot, but it took time to get used to the light. Then one day I did a sketch of a viaduct out in the country and from that time on I knew where I was going.11

The painting that resulted, Golders Green, Brent River (plate 37) belongs in the middle period of Wakelin's English stay. Those preceding it and others of 1923 are markedly different in both conception and execution. Dated 1922, Wakelin's St. Paul's, London12 (plate 35) and his small, untitled landscape13 (plate 36) owe more to Whistlerian aestheticism than the more vigorously expressive Post-Impressionism. Perhaps the fact that Wakelin had not had much direct contact with examples of Post-Impressionist art is significant here, for these works, with their muted tones and soft lyrical light would seem to indicate a virtual regression to earlier Impressionist-

11 ibid. 12 Cat. no. 41. 13 Cat. no. 42.
inspired concerns. However this may not have been a deliberate return to such concepts or indicate a definite Whistlerian influence. It was quite possibly Wakelin's own, if not original solution to the newly-posed problems of painting the English colour and light. That he, whether consciously or unconsciously, reverted to earlier precedents for these solutions is perhaps logical and predictable in view of his uncertainty about his own art at this stage. And that he found these solutions unsatisfactory is evident in his statement previously quoted (page 146).

St. John's Wood\(^\text{15}\) (illus. viii) and Golders Green, Brent River\(^\text{16}\) both painted a year or so later, moved away from the ethereality of Wakelin's 1922 works towards a schematised, but more substantial treatment of form and an 'earthier' tonality. Colours are restricted, but not as radically as the Meldrum-influenced dark tonal range. The

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14 It is possible Wakelin was influenced by Whistler when he first saw the artist's paintings in England. But he never mentions such an influence in his recollections of the English stay.

15 Cat. no. 46. 16 Cat. no. 47.
quieter colouring of all Wakelin's English paintings must be regarded as a direct response to the subtler lighting of the English landscape. The more obvious basic concerns of the Sydney works are, however, still in evidence; components of the landscape are strongly simplified, emphasizing plane surfaces and the balancing and juxtaposition of colour and mass. Brushwork is more textured and boundaries less clearly delimited, but formal structure maintains its importance. Generally, the paintings are not so very different from many of Wakelin's Sydney works. His Self Portrait\textsuperscript{17} (plate 1, vol. I), with its naturalistic tones and broad technique has much in common still with the Meldrum phase paintings - although Wakelin's colours are warmer, more diversified and his brush technique more vigorous.

In all these works it is difficult to discern any far-reaching stylistic effects that may have resulted from Wakelin's immediate contact with the paintings by Cezanne and other Post-Impressionists. Rather they reveal a coalescing of interests basic

\textsuperscript{17} Cat. no. 44.
to earlier paintings - tone, colour, reduction of form, are now more confidently handled and organized within the picture. The 1924 English paintings succeeded in broadening these developments - although they too are not dramatically changed. **Battersea Bridge** 18 (plate 38) and **Lanercost Road, Tulse Hill** 19 (plate 39) each treat different subjects under quite different conditions, yet both are formally and technically quite successful. In **Battersea Bridge**, colour, applied in short, thick strokes is used to convey both the immateriality of air and water and, by contrast, the pulpability of solid mass. **Lanercost Road** . . . is concerned less with atmospheric effects than with formal design and solid colour. Houses are 'tilted', forms are simplified and traditional perspective rules ignored. Instead colour, bright and warm in the foreground, subdued and cooler in the background, allied to a rather 'clumsy', distorted diminishment of form is used to suggest depth. The parallel with Cezanne is here quite obvious, but Wakelin's overall treatment and

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18 Cat. no. 50.  
19 Cat. no. 49.
conception is still very different.

Wakelin's *In the Luxembourg Gardens No. 1* 20 (plate 40), painted in Paris in 1924, is the only painting I have found from this period to make any radical statement in the realm of colour and brush technique. With its bright autumnal tones, excited, thick brush strokes and broad treatment of form it is the exception rather than the rule - an experiment in 'plein-air' painting that has more in common with the works of the late 1920's than with contemporary paintings.

Nevertheless Wakelin's technique in England did become, generally, at least a little more lively, his treatment of form more schematic and his composition bolder. There is no discernible evidence of the influence of any one distinct contemporary English artist and however much Wakelin acknowledged the greatness of Gauguin and Van Gogh his own style remained largely unaffected by their innovations.21

20 Cat. no. 51.

21 The more recent innovations of such movements as Cubism, English Vorticism and Futurism seem to have held little interest for Wakelin. He makes no mention of ever having seen or been impressed by the works of artists belonging to these movements.
A slight influence of Cezanne is evident, but not until his return to Australia later in 1924 was Wakelin's style to reveal a decisive Cezanne derivation. Apart from Cezanne what must have proven influential at this time was the general preoccupation with more expressive techniques, with colour and with distorted, reduced form - a climate of change and experiment that Wakelin had not experienced in Sydney.
Wakelin returned to Sydney in October, 1924, and joined the O'Brien Publicity Company, once again as a commercial artist. His article for the March, 1925 edition of Art in Australia reflects a newfound confidence and deeper insight into the aesthetics of the modern movement gained overseas. At the same time he condemned and criticized the artistic situation in Sydney for its lack of interest in contemporary European art:

Painters now become more concerned with the expression of emotions and sensations than with the imitation of natural facts. Van Gogh distorted natural facts enormously in his efforts to express himself and Cezanne with his great depth of vision makes us feel the very elemental forces of nature in simple paintings of fruit and landscape. It seems remarkable that Australian painters have been so little interested in the

1 See Appendix
significance of these modern 'movements' and are still content to paint up to the standard of fifty years ago.\(^2\)

Roy de Maistre revealed a similar understanding in an article for the same magazine later in 1925. Awarded a two year travelling scholarship by the Society of Artists in 1923, de Maistre had spent most of his time in France, returning in 1925 convinced in the "great modern Masters'" aims to give "expression to the things felt rather than seen." and that "the representative is fast giving place to the interpretive".\(^3\)

Both artists had grasped what was central to the modern movement – the importance of emotive expression, of individual interpretations and fresh perceptions in the creative process. But such an understanding did not have the liberating effect one would expect. In the works produced immediately following Wakelin's return to Australia what has changed is not his vision of, and his dependence upon

\(^2\) "Roland Wakelin" (biographical note, statement by artist), A.A. 3, 11 (March, 1925).

\(^3\) Roy de Maistre, "Modern Art and the Australian Outlook", A.A. 3, 14 (Dec., 1925).
nature, but rather his technical approach to it — and for this we must look to the precedent of Cezanne.

In the Chatswood⁴ (plate 42) and Dee Why⁵ (plate 43) landscapes (both 1924—post October) a much more vigorous and spontaneous brush technique has been adopted. As Cezanne had done, Wakelin uses juxtaposed strokes of colour rather than line to construct form and to suggest plasticity, depth, even movement. He no longer simplifies by reducing form to a series of interlocking planes, but creates a more broken, diversified surface with distinct strokes of colour. Despite these more conspicuous parallels with Cezanne, however, neither landscape is, I believe, altogether 'successful'. Wakelin failed to achieve the integration of parts, the harmony Cezanne created in such a beautifully conceived work as House on the Banks of the Marne⁶ (plate 44). Unlike the 'universality' of Cezanne's interpretation of nature, Wakelin's is finite,

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⁴ Cat. no. 54. ⁵ Cat. no. 55. ⁶ 1888-90, 65 x 81 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington.
constricted. He seems to have been unsure at this stage of just how to apply his newly understood awareness of Cezanne's technique to his own painting.

*Still Life with Table Knife*\(^7\) (1925, plate 45) achieves a more successful synthesis of Cezanne's formal innovations, distorting the conventional perspective viewpoint, emphasizing the three-dimensionality and the interaction of objects through these distortions. If, at the same time Wakelin's still life lacks the feeling of suppressed energy, the dynamic plasticity inherent in Cezanne's still life paintings\(^8\), it is still a formally accomplished work – among the first by Wakelin to directly reflect the true impact of Cezanne's formal revolution.

The formation of the Macquarie Galleries in 1925 marked a significant milestone for Wakelin and the small group of artists who shared his views. Established by John Young and Basil Burdett – both

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7 Cat. no. 56.

8 e.g. *Still Life with Soup Tureen* (1883-9), oil on canvas, 65 x 82 cm, Louvre, Paris (illus. Frank Elgar, *Cezanne*, New York, plate 57).
supporters of Sydney's more 'radical' artists - the gallery was to provide a much needed exhibiting forum for younger, lesser-known artists as well as those whose artistic position had already received public confirmation. The inaugural exhibition in 1925 was devoted entirely to a showing of Wakelin's paintings - forty-three in all - primarily painted in England and including Battersea Bridge (plate 38), West Wickham and St. John's Wood (illus. viii).

The exhibition was strongly criticized by Howard Ashton in the Sun who wrote that ". . . Mr Roland Wakelin has come back from Europe with an immense admiration for one of the worst landscape draftsmen who ever got by momentary aberration into the Louvre - Paul Cezanne." Ashton was still adamantly opposed to the modern movement - most especially to Cezanne whom he believed had ushered it in. The Daily Telegraph and Sydney Morning Herald

9 Cat. no. 45.

10 Sun, Sydney, 19 April, 1925, p. 16. According to Wakelin ("Post Impressionism in Sydney . . .", op. cit.) Ashton also wrote that "Mr Wakelin has been to Paris where he sat at the feet of Paul Cezanne. Paul Cezanne was a bourgeois soul who should have been a pork butcher but took to painting because he thought it would be easier." (I have been unable, however, to locate this quotation in the Sun.)
were fairly non-committal and perhaps a little ambiguous. The *Telegraph* believed that Wakelin, "By concentrating upon design and sedulously avoiding the things which painters of his particular school describe as non-essentials, has certainly produced pictures well calculated to 'hit the eye'."\(^{11}\)

The *Sydney Morning Herald* described his pictures as "a little crude", but nevertheless, "full of vitality".\(^{12}\)

Margaret Preston's foreword to the catalogue of the exhibition attempted to provoke a more complete appreciation of Wakelin's paintings by explaining what she believed to be the ideals behind them:

Roland Wakelin is a Modern. He offers this exhibition to the public after an absence of three years from Sydney, and asks that the works be judged and accepted on their aesthetic rather than their pictorial qualities .... In them he has made his subjects subservient to his spiritual sense. These are the works of inner consciousness, not mere optical vision.\(^{13}\)

One of this country's first distinctively

\(^{11}\) *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 15 April, 1925, p. 2.

\(^{12}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 April, 1925, p. 11.

\(^{13}\) Margaret Preston, *Catalogue introduction*, *Roland Wakelin*, Macquarie Galleries, 15-25 April, 1925.
'Australian' artists - she specialized in painting native flower arrangements and was greatly influenced by aboriginal art - Margaret Preston's own style placed emphasis on strong, simple design, schematic, stylized form and a restricted colour scheme. As such it too departed quite radically from much contemporary Australian art. Preston had travelled widely overseas, had gained some understanding of recent European art and, like Wakelin, recognized the limitations of local art. Her reference in the Wakelin catalogue to the importance of "inner consciousness" is of significance because it was this quality she found particularly wanting in Australian painting:

... the importance of subjective expression is emphasized. Until the brain works in conjunction with the spiritual vision, Australian artists will never produce anything different from that work produced in the studios where they learn their trade . . . . Art is, aesthetically speaking, but a product of the imagination and should be worked with and enjoyed by the same faculty.14

For Preston, Wakelin was less motivated by the need for representational accuracy than by his inner

feelings. In this sense (for Preston) his painting transcended most Australian art. But Wakelin's works were not merely the product of his "spiritual sense": they were also the result of a fully conscious awareness of the precedent of Cezanne, of formal construction and of a studied application of colour. They were subjective in that they expressed to some degree Wakelin's personal vision of the motif, but, like Cezanne (whose work influenced this vision), they were carefully and deliberately realized. What was important now, however, (and this is the essential meaning of Preston's catalogue introduction and also her criticism of Australian art) was the artist as 'transformer' rather than mere 'depictor'. The 1925 Macquarie Galleries exhibition did not invoke the antagonism Wakelin's earlier 'Colour-Music' show had done - but in a society aware only of the function of fully conscious, imitative creation, Margaret Preston's reference to imagination and "inner consciousness" in the artistic process still constituted something of a threat to established thought. Opposition was, however, gradually weakening.
CHAPTER VI

1926-35

THE CEZANNE PERIOD

In 1924 Wakelin returned from England to a country still suspicious of artistic change and largely unresponsive to the international aesthetic revolution. Lionel Lindsay's catalogue introduction to the 1923 exhibition of Australian art in London expressed an attitude commonly held in this country:

"Australia has stayed unaffected by the 'Stunt' art that has ravaged the older civilizations, going the way of three parts tradition which is the safest and surest."  

If the figureheads of the local art scene clung to tradition little more could be expected of the less well-informed. At this stage colour reproductions of the moderns were not yet available in Sydney.

Our only enduring art publication, Art in Australia, dealt almost exclusively with Australian artists and

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1 Lionel Lindsay, "Australian Art" in catalogue, Exhibition of Australian Art in London, 1923.
generally adhered to a traditionalist viewpoint.\textsuperscript{2}

The London publication, \textit{The Studio}, was widely read, but its conservative programme neglected the European avant-garde movements almost exclusively. Other books on modern art were available\textsuperscript{3}, but their distribution and hence, appreciation was very limited. In 1923 an Exhibition of European Art was brought to Australia by Penleigh Boyd and exhibited in Melbourne and Sydney. It included paintings by Augustus John, William Orpen, William Strang, and from France, Albert Besnard and Lucien Simon, but nothing by the more radical French or English artists.

Ignorance was thus one of the prime factors in determining the conservative attitude of most Australians towards art. Ignorance combined perhaps with a national complacency and unwillingness to explore new directions. But by the end of 1926 the situation was at least beginning to improve; recognition and assistance by two artists recently

\textsuperscript{2} See extract from Ure Smith's article for Art in Australia 11 (December 1921) (Ure Smith was then the editor of the magazine.), p. 30.

\textsuperscript{3} See those referred to on page 80.
returned from abroad and 'acceptable' locally did much to raise the status of the small group of artists who, like Wakelin, were challenging this ignorance.

George Lambert and Thea Proctor had both returned to Sydney after a period of study and painting overseas. Their contact with modern European art, although not decisively influential for their own painting, helped broaden their outlook and their awareness of the deficiencies of the Australian situation. Lambert's own works were rather academic - smooth and dry in technique and conventional in subject matter. His *Important People* (exhibited in 1921 with the Society of Artists) with its rather cool and affected decorative style and clear, bright colours was received favourably and established him as a leading figure in Sydney's art world. Like Lambert, Thea Proctor also reacted against the prevailing taste for a Meldrum-inspired tonal naturalism. Her interest in design and colour determined her sympathy for the

4 c. 1914-20 canvas, 134.5 x 170 cm, Art Gallery of N.S.W.
experiments of Wakelin and de Maistre although her own style remained, like Lambert's, fashionable rather than excitingly new.

Despite their obviously limited modernity Proctor and Lambert were sufficiently perceptive to recognize the unsatisfactory state of Australian art and the conservatism of its leaders. Their support for the often-ignored younger artists was expressed in their participation in and organization of an exhibition held in November, 1926 and devoted to those artists finding recognition difficult. Wakelin contributed six paintings to this exhibition held at the Grosvenor Galleries and called "A Group of Modern Painters," Renamed "A Group of Contemporary Painters" (1929) and later in 1932 "The Contemporary Group" Wakelin continued to exhibit with it each year until 1959. Among the eight other exhibitors in this first exhibition were (apart from Lambert and Proctor) Roy de Maistre, John D. Moore, Elioth Gruner, Margaret Preston and Kenneth MacQueen. By 1933 the Group also

5 Cat. no. 16 - The Skillion, Terrigal - 30 gns.
" " 17 - Still Life with Beer Bottle - 25 gns.
" " 18 - " " Pewter Pot - 20 gns.
" " 19 - " " Yellow Jug - 15 gns.
" " 20 - Holland Street, Chatswood - 25 gns.
" " 21 - The White House, Bay Road - 25 gns.
included the Melbourne 'Post-Impressionists' - George Bell, Arnold Shore and William Frater - as well as two female modernists - Grace Crowley and Dorrit Black. The "Contemporary Group" was not intended, however, to constitute any sort of cohesive movement. Formed more for exhibition purposes it originally expressed a common dissatisfaction rather than common stylistic aims. Thea Proctor wrote of its artists in 1938 - "... but they are united in ideals, chief among them being a distaste for commercialism, a dislike of photographic realism and a desire to improve their own work ...".

The Group continued to provide a forum for many local artists for years to come. But although labelled 'contemporary' their works could hardly be described as 'radical' in its most innovatory sense. Prior to the first November, 1926 exhibition, Art in Australia devoted its entire September edition to an issue entitled "A New Vision of Australian Landscape". Under the auspices of Sydney Ure Smith (the quarterly's

7 A.A. 3, 17 (Sept., 1926).
editor), these artists were at last receiving some sympathetic publicity. The editorial, however, stressed that theirs was not a revolutionary reaction against the currently 'acceptable' art:

This is no riotous band of mutineers yelling for the blood of Streeton, but rather an interesting few, each of whom, perhaps, at some time in his career awoke with horror to the realization that art had become an anaesthetic . . . . They congregate under no one banner, yet they have much in common, and the catch-cry to that would be 'simplification and reduction to essentials'.

Others involved in the early years of the Contemporary Group were perhaps not quite as radical as Wakelin in their interpretation of such ideals, yet what was basic to all the artists of the Group was the importance they now gave to formal design and colour as opposed to a direct, unimaginative realism. Their work, conservative by contemporary European standards, was still emphatically based on reality, but a reality subject to individual formal or expressive aims. Writing in 1962, Wakelin's criticism of Australian art during the twenties underlines also those particular elements with which

8 ibid.
his own art was then concerned:

As I remember it the chief weakness in
Australian painting in the early years
of this century was its lack of form.
There was little sense of design,
little feeling for the interlocking
relationship of forms and coloours
within the picture space . . . .

Speaking at the opening of the first
Contemporary Group exhibition in 1926, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown also stressed the importance of autonomous colour
and pictorial structure in the work of the Sydney and
Melbourne modernists:

Their work did not aim at realism - it was
a revolt against the photographic methods
of last century. They left to the camera
any painstaking reproduction of nature as
it was and used the forms of trees, houses
and other natural objects as mere pretexts
for designs and arrangements in line and
colour.

Radcliffe-Brown, Foundation Professor of Anthropology
at Sydney University, had arrived from Capetown in
1925. By 1926 he was already, as Lloyd Rees recalls,

9 Wakelin, "Thea Proctor", catalogue, Society of Artists
Exhibition of Drawings and Prints, 28 March-10 April, 1962.

10 Sydney Morning Herald, 26 November, 1926, p. 7. (The article
is not by Radcliffe-Brown, but an account of what he said.)

11 In 1931 he left Sydney to take up a Professorship at the
University of Chicago.
"... an outstanding figure in the avant-garde group ..."12 His immediate public involvement with the local modernists reflects his enthusiasm for their art and their ideals - an enthusiasm and understanding that may have been determined to some extent by his appreciation of the art of primitive peoples as well as his knowledge of European modernism.

But despite the fact that the Contemporary Group artists were supported by Radcliffe-Brown, by such prominent artists as Lambert and Thea Proctor and by such an authoritative leader in the local art world as Sydney Ure Smith, the first exhibition in 1926 was still publicly attacked. Howard Ashton, still fighting desperately against modernist trends, believed the works by Proctor, Lambert and Gruner to be "... the only things of artistic importance ...", dismissing the rest as "... mere eccentricity based on the latest revelations of Paris."13 M.J. MacNally,


an artist himself\textsuperscript{14} but also an opponent of the 'new' art, headed his rather in comprehensible review in the \textit{Daily Telegraph}, "Decadence in Art: A Group of Moderns".\textsuperscript{15}

Among the paintings exhibited by Wakelin in the first Contemporary Group show his \textit{The Skillion, Terrigal}\textsuperscript{16} reveals the effects of a deepening Cezanne influence - to become more decisive during the next few years. A different painting (owned by Grace Cossington Smith), but of the same subject and very similar in treatment was also painted by Wakelin in 1926.\textsuperscript{17} Reproduced in this thesis (plate 46), its description and analysis pertains also to the landscape exhibited in "A Group of Modern Painters". Colour is now applied directly to the canvas in hatched brushstrokes constructed to emphasize not only the solidity of land, sea and sky, but also, as Cezanne had intended, to

\textsuperscript{14} MacNally's lyrical, romantic watercolours were the antithesis of the 'modernists' strong colours, their solid formal compositions and their emphasis on design and structure.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Daily Telegraph}, Sydney, 25 November, 1926, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{16} Exhibition cat. no. 16.

\textsuperscript{17} Thesis cat. no. 58.
suggest movement and depth. As in Cezanne's paintings detail has become unimportant, submerged in the effect of the whole. But even more than Cezanne Wakelin was interested primarily in retaining formal clarity and solidity - and he attempted to effect this through a controlled, heavy application of paint and a simple, restricted scheme of colours. Forms are distorted, flattened in the manner of Cezanne, but again lacking the mastery with which Cezanne used such devices in the interests of formal composition. And despite the more obvious affinities Wakelin fails to achieve the complete welding together of forms so vital to the French master's work and central to his 'realization' of nature.¹⁸

As in the 1925 paintings Wakelin is, in The Skillion, aware of Cezanne's fundamental innovations in the realm of technique, but lacks the vision that moulded this into a successful and profound unity.

¹⁸ Cezanne refers often in his writings to this continual search for realization: "... with me the realization of my sensations is always very difficult." - (Cezanne to son, Paul - Aix, 8 Sept., 1906). Taken from John Rewald, (ed.) Paul Cezanne: Letters, London, 1941, p. 262. Kurt Badt discusses this aspect of Cezanne's thought at length. He sees "... the concept of interrelationship and harmony" as "the basis of the problem of 'realization' that occupied his [Cezanne's] artistic life." (Badt, The Art of Cezanne, London, 1965, p. 3.)
(Wakelin) By the time I painted "The Red House" in 1927 the tide was slowly beginning to turn. . . . during this period the works of the moderns were finding a wider appreciation due to the return of artists from abroad and the appearance here of large reproductions in colour of the works of the modern masters.19

It would seem that the formation of the Contemporary Group may also have played a part in broadening the local artistic outlook - and the semblance of authority it achieved, the sense of cohesion it produced among its artists appears to have provided Wakelin with a new confidence; his 1927 works continued and developed the basic stylistic directions inherent in preceding paintings, but with a completeness and touch of individualism lacking in earlier Cezanne-inspired works.

In The Red House20 (illus. ix) colours are again 'earthy' and forms simplified, emphasizing the underlying structural design of the whole. But

19 Wakelin, "Post Impressionism in Sydney . . . ", op. cit., p.94.
20 Cat. no. 59.
as opposed to Cezanne's increasingly summary treatment of reality, Wakelin here is more controlled, concise, his brushwork careful and deliberate. Formal considerations - an interest in imposing a solid, architectonic structure upon the subject - here take precedence, I believe, over any deeper metaphysical concerns. And I feel also that it was largely this dominating formal concern that perhaps limited Wakelin's progression to a completely abstract interpretation of reality - an interpretation, metaphysical in essence, that had embraced Cezanne's final solutions in paint. In fact, despite the overall formal simplification, there is in The Red House an attention to detail and a clear delineation not found in many earlier paintings by Wakelin. Yet the basic technical achievements of Cezanne remained, for Wakelin, a solution to his own fundamental pictorial interests - his search for a solidly structured, concentrated composition, an almost cubic reduction of form to essential planes and a limited 'natural' colour scheme with little reference to atmospheric or light effects.
Boats at Berry's Bay\textsuperscript{21} (plate 47) echoes the same problems tackled in \textit{The Red House} although composition is now flatter and the colour scheme more subdued, restricted. It lacks the dynamism of \textit{The Red House} with this painting's emphasis on strong, diagonal movement and a complex interweaving of planes - but, with its quite opposite emphasis on a more static horizontality, it nevertheless still achieves a quite pleasing linking and balancing of form.

As Wakelin remarked in reference to his \textit{The Red House}, by the end of the 1920's public appreciation and understanding of the fundamental precepts of the modern movement was accelerating. And consequently, reaction to their application in Australian painting was relaxing. The Society of Artists now reversed its stance in favour of innovation and originality. The Society's 1929 catalogue introduction acknowledged that "... the influence of new movements is being felt and the heat of argument engendered by it has helped to save the Society from

\textsuperscript{21} Cat. no. 61.
becoming too complacent." It admitted the importance of "manifold means of interpretation" and the need for a "broad progressive outlook."  

The September, 1929 edition of *Art in Australia* again devoted almost its entire issue to a discussion of the work of those artists attached to the Contemporary Group. Basil Burdett, co-partner in the Macquarie Galleries, art critic and one of the leading supporters of the Sydney modernists, contributed an article condemning the conservatism of local reaction to new art styles, the "general unreadiness to absorb vital, fresh contributions to art . . . ." 

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22 (Anonymous) Catalogue, Society of Artists Spring Exhibition, 7 Sept.-4 Oct., 1929. Possibly written by Ure Smith, still president of the Society of Artists. It is interesting to compare the views expressed here with Ure Smith's 1921 address to the Society (see page 130).

23 Art critic for the Melbourne Herald (1936-40), Burdett was also responsible for organizing (for this same paper) the first full scale exhibition (200 paintings) of European modern art shown in Australia (1939).

24 "There is no doubt that a great deal of the public misunderstanding of the work of sincere and progressive artists is wilful, or, at least, culpably negligent. The most traditional forms couched in slightly different terms, are often condemned without thought or reflection." - Burdett, "Some Contemporary Australian Artists", A.A. 29, 3 (Sept., 1929).

25 ibid.
in this country. Ethel Anderson, another enthusiastic patron of modern art, largely reiterated Burdett's views in an article, "Subject in Art", for the same magazine. She too was concerned for the general lack of 'modern' subjects in Australian painting. She saw the preoccupation with a conservative, severely nationalistic form of painting as being largely dictated by the public's ("patron's") unwillingness to go beyond nationalism to a more international outlook on art. Individualism had not been encouraged and

26 During the depression years she held several exhibitions at her home for a number of modernists including Wakelin. - Wakelin interview with Virginia Gerritt, Feb., 1964.

27 Ethel Anderson, "Subject in Art", A.A. 29, 3 (Sept., 1929). This aspect of Australian painting - the country's prolonged adherence to a very nationalistic form of art - has been discussed at length by a number of our art authorities. Daniel Thomas believes the need for a national art had emerged with federation, and "since the impressionists had been the first group to demonstrate an authentic feeling, indeed love, for Australia, and to capture, accurately, the unique quality of Australian light and atmosphere it is easy to understand why the style and its favoured subject matter should take such strong hold." (Daniel Thomas, "Contemporary", Antipodean Vision, Melb., 1962, p. 21). In Place, Taste and Tradition (Sydney, 1945, p. 136), Bernard Smith had also seen "the reason for the continued popularity of the Heidelberg painters" as resulting from their creation of "the first authentic vision of the country". And he also recognized the limitations of this "continued popularity" - particularly in relation to Arthur Streeton - where "the Streeton tradition had prevented or thwarted the natural development of original artists who paint in quite a different manner from the disciples of Streeton".
Australian art had suffered accordingly:

Out of individual art, the art called 'great', universal art is evolved. . . . when, in a picture, 'idea' animates 'form', it may be said to have the characteristic which distinguishes 'great art' from topical and provincial art - from art that is merely 'a dialect, not a language'.

For Ethel Anderson, most contemporary Australian art was a "dialect" and therefore not "great art".

However, referring to Wakelin's 1928 Macquarie Galleries exhibition in a newspaper article headed "Living Art" she took quite a different view:

While Mr Wakelin's art is individual, personal in its expression, and in its symbols perfectly Australian, it is not merely parochial. It is, in essence, universal. It comes in on the tradition of the modern world and it extends that tradition.

The September, 1929 edition of Art in Australia may perhaps be regarded as both reflecting and helping to achieve a change in the general attitude towards Australian art. Its outspoken criticism of commonly held artistic thought, its sympathy for those artists whose works it reproduced and the

28 Anderson, op. cit.

29 22 Aug.-1 Sept., 1929 (31 paintings). The exhibition was opened by Mrs Anderson.

30 Sydney Morning Herald, 8 Sept., 1928.
authority which its position in the local art scene
gave to the viewpoints expressed, could not have
failed to affect a large number of its subscribers.
The articles included in this issue were also
accompanied by a number of reproductions including
Wakelin's Landscape, Bay Road, Thea Proctor's
The Doll, de Maistre's Still Life, The Green Pineapple
by Adrian Feint and Kenneth MacQueen's The Green Hill.
Common to all works was a noticeable lack of interest
in depicting the lyrical or poetic effects of light
or the moods of nature. Most paintings illustrated
reflected the trend towards a more constructive,
design-conscious approach with colour used decoratively,
forms simplified and composition flattened and distorted.

Developing public awareness, however, was perhaps
already indicated in the press interest evoked by
Wakelin's exhibition in 1928 at the Macquarie
Galleries. The Sydney Morning Herald was particularly
sympathetic:

... there is much more in these works
than appears to a casual glance - especi-
ally in the glance of one accustomed to
the highly finished technique of the realistic
school. Mr Wakelin is a follower of Cezanne.
He emulates the French painter's striving
after mass and adopts the same methods as
Cezanne to obtain these qualities. His work is stimulating and grows upon the spectator who approaches it in a sympathetic spirit. 31

The author's reference to Cezanne is here of interest for it was later in December, 1928 that Art in Australia published Wakelin's first comprehensive theoretical statement revealing the extent, at this stage, of his assimilation and understanding of Cezanne's artistic approach and ideology. I quote it at length here because of its obvious significance and relevance in the analysis of Wakelin's contemporary paintings.

Modern painting aims at the setting down of essentials in the clearest and most direct manner possible . . . . It is generally accepted that in painting we cannot give all that nature offers. Paint is a limited medium and if one particular truth is stressed then other truths must be sacrificed. 32

Wakelin continues with the example of a still life by

31 (anonymous) Sydney Morning Herald, 22 Aug., 1928, p. 10. But not all the reviews were quite so favourable. The Bulletin (5 Sept., 1928, p. 39) wrote, "Another exposition of the Fantod School of Art is thrown on the walls of the Macquarie Galleries . . . in some samples of the work of Roland Wakelin."

Cezanne, emphasizing that concentration on truth to appearances (polishing the apples, ruling up the table, making the jug straight etc.) results in a destruction of the "rhythmic flow of line - that concentric feeling in the design, the feeling of 'radiation from centres' which is a basic truth of Life itself . . . . To the painter the first essential is that his subject has life - movement, not by copying movement, but by giving movement to his lines, vitality to his colour . . . .":

So the painter in his desire to give his work qualities of life, looks on his subject (either in fact or imagination) and instinctively seeks in it the particular accent of line, tone or colour which will give that vital rhythmic unity which he feels to be inherent in Life.

. . . a painting must be enjoyed for its own sake - for its own independent Life - significance - beauty.

This is the first such article in Art in Australia revealing not only a clear understanding of recent art trends and the principles involved, but also paralleling, to an extent, the current popular aesthetic expounded by Clive Bell and Roger Fry. Wakelin's view is the 'art for art's sake'

33 ibid.
view taken by the then contemporary aestheticians. Whether he read Fry's Last Lectures\textsuperscript{34} or Bell's ideas on "significant form"\textsuperscript{35} we do not know - but with reference particularly to the last sentence quoted above, it does seem quite plausible. Both Fry and Bell believed that the artist contemplates an object purely for the immediate sensations aroused and not with a view to its past associations or future utility.\textsuperscript{36} All works of art should aspire to this particular kind of purity and the spectator's reaction should be reciprocally pure (i.e. it should be a reaction to formal components within the painting only).\textsuperscript{37} Wakelin too stresses the "independent Life" and "significance" of a work of art. Vitality for Fry is a quality of a 'good' work.

\textsuperscript{34} Roger Fry, \textit{Last Lectures}, Boston, 1962.

\textsuperscript{35} Clive Bell, \textit{Art}, London, 1914. Bell here expounds his theory that "significant form" is the one quality of a work of art that arouses emotion and that it is this quality which is common to all art.

\textsuperscript{36} "To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space". \textit{ibid.}, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{37} "... the ideal work of art is the outcome of a free spiritual activity... on the part of the spectator." Fry, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 38.
of art and this 'vitality', which parallels Wakelin's "rhythmic flow of line", is the power of a work of art to communicate the feeling that it has a life of its own - preconceived ideas and formulas interfere with the illusion of life which gives a work its vitality. Wakelin arrives at similar conclusions when he speaks of that "vital rhythmic unity . . . inherent in Life." Like Wakelin, Fry stresses that truth to appearances, to "finish" is the antithesis of that special artistic sensibility responsible for the creation of vitality in a work of art. 38

The aesthetic to which Wakelin prescribes corresponds not only to that of Fry or Bell, but also, as is to be expected, to his mentor - Cézanne (on whose work both aestheticians based much of their thinking). Wakelin's statement, "Modern painting aims at the setting down of essentials in the clearest and most direct manner possible . . . .", 39 closely follows Cézanne's well-known dictum: "Get to the heart of what is before you and continue

38 ibid.
to express yourself as logically as possible."\textsuperscript{40}

What is central to both statements is that the artist must go beyond outward appearance to the core of reality, to extract only what is essential for his art. Again, (Cezanne to Emile Bernard) - "One thing is certain; we should not be content with strict reality, with 'tromp-l'oeil'. The transposition that a painter makes with a personal vision, gives to the representation of nature a new interest . . . that is to say, something other than reality."\textsuperscript{41}

Cezanne's struggle to realise, through his painting, the 'inner significance' of nature is implied in both statements here. Kurt Badt believes this search for truth became a search for the "togetherness" of objects - their "interrelationship" and their "interdependence".\textsuperscript{42} Cezanne wanted not

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{40} Letter to Emile Bernard (26 May, 1904) - Taken from Rewald, \emph{op. cit.}, p. 237.
  \item \textsuperscript{41} Letter to Emile Bernard. Taken from Erle Loran, \textit{Cezanne's Composition}, Berkeley, 1963, p. 95.
  \item \textsuperscript{42} "To represent the interrelationships which he discovered in the real world in such a fashion that clear images of objects ultimately emerged, with intelligible relationships to space everywhere in the painting and to obtain the means to do this through observation of nature itself, was what constituted the problem of realization in Cezanne's mind, a problem which he himself frequently described as the crux of his endeavours." Badt., \emph{op. cit.}, p. 33.
\end{itemize}
to reproduce nature, but to parallel nature. I doubt, however, that Wakelin was aware of the deeper, more personal reasons behind Cezanne's struggle for 'realization'. What is of note here is that he at least grasped the fundamental import of Cezanne's approach to nature in his art - the significance of the work of art for its own sake, the importance of colour and rhythm within the composition, and the need to sacrifice reality to give life, movement something beyond normal perception.

And Wakelin's paintings of this period (1928-34) did, I believe, attempt to evolve a pictorial solution to his theoretical viewpoint. Brushwork now becomes more vigorous, more decisive. The heightened sense of vitality that results is clearly evident in Still Life with Yellow Table\textsuperscript{43} (plate 48) and Ball's Head Landscape\textsuperscript{44} (plate 49) - 1927-30 and c. 1932 respectively. Although these works and others of this period are basically a continuation of earlier concerns with their emphasis on the solidity, the tangibility of form and on structural clarity within the composition, there is in many a new feeling for

\textsuperscript{43} Cat. no. 63. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{44} Cat. no. 74.
the inherent rhythm of objects, their relationship with each other and with their surroundings. This is particularly evident in the two works already mentioned, the 1932 Still Life with Apples and Dahlia \(^{45}\) (plate 50) and The River at Windsor \(^{46}\) (plate 52) painted in 1934. As Cezanne had done, Wakelin distorts and flattens perspective (particularly in the still lifes) in keeping with the limits imposed by the two-dimensional nature of the picture plane. The tensions and rhythms that are set up create movement, vitality in an otherwise static composition. The formal linking of objects, the harmony that these distortions also establish approaches the "vital rhythmic unity" of which Wakelin speaks. There is, in these paintings, a sense of both tranquility and inner dynamism, a formal tension not evident in earlier examples. Colour is perhaps richer now, but still has the basic 'earthy' quality (e.g. Last Panel Before Joining Up \(^{47}\) (plate 54), The River at Windsor) so typical of much of Wakelin's work to date.

There were, however, some notable exceptions to the usual scheme of colours; Bridge under

\(^{45}\) Cat. no. 75. \(^{46}\) Cat. no. 83. \(^{47}\) Cat. no. 76.
Construction 48 (plate 55) employs a decorative range of rather 'sugary' pinks, blues and violets, almost fauve-like in colour and quite opposed to the solid, natural tones of most works. Bay Road Station 49 is conceived along similar lines. In both, forms are distorted, surfaces tilted and intricately faceted into areas of light, pastel, almost ethereal colour. The mildly futuristic quality of these works, so uncharacteristic of the majority of Wakelin's contemporary paintings, may possibly have been influenced belatedly by English Vorticism. 50 The Vorticists, headed by Wyndham Lewis, distorted form (although much more radically than Wakelin) and they were especially interested, like the Italian Futurists, in aspects of the machine age, of modern industrial technology. Wakelin's painting of the Harbour Bridge and Bay Road railway station, both typical features of this age, may have inspired an approach more consistent with the distinctly 'anti-natural' qualities of these subjects. Earthy tones

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48 c. 1928, Cat. no. 66. 49 1927, Cat. no. 60.
50 The Vorticists were active mainly in the period 1914-15.
are thus dispensed with and normal perspective deformed. Grace Cossington Smith exhibited a similar interest in the construction of Sydney's bridge in her *The Bridge In-Curve* \(^5\) (1930). With Margaret Preston she also extended her involvement with machine-age objects to the painting of still life. However, like both Wakelin's paintings, such works as Preston's *Implement Blue* \(^5\) (1927) and Grace Cossington Smith's *Things on an Iron Tray on the Floor* \(^5\) (c. 1927) were not typical for this period within each artist's oeuvre. They reflect a passing rather than a thorough-going preoccupation with modern technology; nature remained the chief inspirational source for all three painters.

Due, no doubt to the depression, Wakelin's production of watercolours was more prolific during this time than at any other in his artistic career.

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51 oil on pulpboard, 83.8 x 111.8 cm, National Gallery of Victoria, repro. Exhibition catalogue, *Grace Cossington Smith*, Art Gallery of N.S.W., 1973, pl. 32.

52 oil on canvas, 42.5 x 43 cm, Art Gallery of N.S.W., repro. Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting*, 1971, pl. 117.

53 oil on plywood, 54 x 69.3 cm, Art Gallery of N.S.W., repro. *Grace Cossington Smith* exhibition catalogue, pl. 25.
North Sydney Landscape\textsuperscript{54} (1933), the untitled water colour\textsuperscript{55} (1934) and View Towards Balmain\textsuperscript{56} (1932) all achieved, despite the medium, a sense of structure and solidity intrinsic to Wakelin’s oils. View Towards Balmain is particularly outstanding for its compositional organization of reduced, almost cubic form, its solid structuring and its depth. As in The Last Panel Before Joining Up (plate 54) or the pencil drawing, House with a Steep Garden\textsuperscript{57} (illus. x), Wakelin imposes order and structure upon the landscape, simplifying and reducing form to reinforce this organization. Tree Study\textsuperscript{58} (plate 56) is, however, less structured, more spontaneous in its sketch-like quality. One is perhaps more aware in this picture of the artist’s feeling for nature, its inherent vitality and life, than in those more deliberate, carefully executed watercolours where a complex formal organization denies direct spontaneity.

\textsuperscript{54} Cat. no. 79. \textsuperscript{55} Cat. no. 84. \textsuperscript{56} Cat. no. 77. \textsuperscript{57} 1932, Cat. no. 78. \textsuperscript{58} Cat. no. 68.
Encouraged by increasing public acceptance and, in view of the more radical styles currently evolving locally (e.g. Cubism and Constructive), a new respectability, these were intensive exhibition years for Wakelin. Throughout the depression he continued to work at O'Brien's\(^59\) (sometimes only one week in three), exhibiting in 1930 at the Turramurra home of Mrs Ethel Anderson\(^60\) and in 1932 at Dorrit Black's short-lived Modern Art Centre.\(^61\) Sales were negligible, but attendances were good and the exhibitions did provide publicity as well as a display forum for Wakelin's still prolific output.

Not until 1934, however, did Wakelin hold his first truly popularly successful exhibition, and not until 1935 his first financially profitable show. Both were held at the Macquarie Galleries\(^62\) and both

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59 Wakelin was never a 'professional' artist in that he was almost always forced to work at a day job. His sales were never high enough to provide adequate financial support for his family (see appendix).

60 73 paintings - 1913-30 (no catalogue).

61 no catalogue, situated 56 Margaret St., Sydney. Dorrit Black, like Grace Crowley had studied under L'Hôte and Gleizes in France. The Centre helped promote the abstract-cubist-constructivist trend in contemporary Sydney art.

62 1934 - July. 1935 - June (33 paintings).
were widely reviewed in the press. The 1934 exhibition, organized largely by Ethel Anderson, comprised twenty-nine oils and six watercolours and included the paintings, *Ball's Head Landscape* (plate 49) and *The River at Windsor* (plate 52).

Accompanied by six reproductions\(^{63}\), a very sympathetic and concise review of this exhibition by influential critic, Kenneth Wilkinson, appeared in the August (1934) edition of *Art in Australia*. Wilkinson wrote:

Few Australians can approach Roland Wakelin in the vitality he gains by simplifying and organizing his subject matter. Not only does he relate the various planes of a landscape in a way which gives remarkable solidity and depth, but each object . . . , through a concentration into its essential elements becomes a forceful and an individual entity in the general ensemble.

. . . the result is considerably more stimulating than the uniform success of the 'safe' painters who have reduced their mode of attack on natural phenomena to a formula. While Mr Wakelin retains this adventurous spirit his influence will continue to grow. \(^{64}\)

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CHAPTER VII

PART I: 1935-47

RECOGNITION - AND A SOBERING OF STYLE

I have discerned no lasting or decisive stylistic changes in Wakelin's work produced between 1935 and his death in 1971 - or at least none that could warrant a discussion of new developments or directions under separate headings and within distinct chapters. Some minor developments are evident (e.g. a renewed interest in vivid colour in various paintings), but these are not necessarily consistently followed nor are their effects all-pervasive; as will be seen, Wakelin was quite capable of radically varying his approach from painting to painting. And as his mature works are not only varied but also very prolific I have found it necessary to discuss them within two parts. 1947 was not a year of immense significance for Wakelin - there were few such events within this period of his life. But 1947 was the year in which he was elected President of the N.S.W.
Contemporary Art Society and was given the Society of Artists medal — and I have selected this as a convenient rather than a truly significant date for breaking my discussion.

Wakelin received official recognition when he was finally elected a member of the Society of Artists in 1934.¹ 1935 was the year of his first profitable Macquarie Galleries exhibition and his first sale to a public gallery.² Accompanying this public acknowledgement, however, was a quite noticeable change — or rather moderation — of style evident in many paintings. This was not a completely pervasive or dramatically decisive change; Wakelin continued to paint quite often in a mixed style (a combination of both earlier and present tendencies) for a number of years. Yet this change was clearly obvious and significant for the period with which it coincided in his life. Referring to the 1935 Macquarie Galleries show, the Sydney Morning Herald noticed

¹ At this stage Sydney Ure Smith was still president, Julian Ashton, Norman Carter and Sir John Longstaff, vice-presidents.

² Mount Wellington, Tasmania (1935, plate 57) was bought by the Art Gallery of N.S.W.
"... a growing delicacy and mellowness of expression. The Cezanne-like period seems to have passed its zenith, giving place to passages of pure lyricism which point to the ascendancy of other stars..." and, "This change in the general estimation of Mr Wakelin's painting was not due to a marvelous improvement in his work, but to a change in the minds of the onlookers. Slowly but surely a new set of art values was being established."

However the writer failed to perceive what I believe to be a connection between Wakelin's sobering of style and "the change in the general estimation" of his paintings. Sydney's art public had become more receptive to new styles, a little more sophisticated in their appreciation of art. Their acceptance of Wakelin's work may have been determined to some extent by this more enlightened outlook - but Wakelin's now less radical, quieter style must also have made his paintings more 'acceptable' and thus helped hasten his eventual recognition.

If the N.S.W. Art Gallery's buying policy in

1935 was a reflection of public taste we may gain some idea of the so-called 'sophistication' of this taste through a study of the Wakelin purchased by the Gallery in that year - Mount Wellington, Tasmania (plate 57). Gone here are the simplified forms, the flattened, schematized composition (e.g. The River at Windsor, plate 52) and the thickly stroked-in colour (e.g. Ball's Head Landscape, plate 49) of earlier works. Brush strokes are finer, paint is applied, not in distinct patches, but blended in larger, more precisely delineated areas. No longer are we confronted with a lively, constructive approach to nature. Wakelin's attitude is here one of placid interpretation rather than dynamic analysis; the scene is depicted realistically, almost romantically, with none of the more radical pictorial effects that previously aggravated both critics and public.

Wakelin's portrait of Lloyd Rees (plate 58) and Mrs Wakelin (plate 59) - both 1935 - reveal a new interest in light, again a much finer, more

4 Cat. no. 90. 5 Cat. no. 93. 6 Cat. no. 91.
cautious brush technique and a conventional, suggestive setting. They lack the formal simplicity, the understated vitality and directness of such an earlier work as Portrait of Marjorie Fear\(^7\) (illus. xi). The 1936 Portrait of Treania Smith\(^8\) (plate 60) approaches more the simplicity of the earlier painting, but this is a severe, almost classical simplicity. Pose and setting are again conventional - as is Wakelin's treatment of form and space.

Wakelin had now won the recognition and artistic success he appears to have sought for so many years.\(^9\) But, in a sense, he had gained public approval at the expense of the forcefulness, the vitality of his earlier, more formally complex and difficult works. From the mid thirties the controlled formal structuring of preceding years relaxes into a more lyrical, often romantic conception of nature. Wakelin admired Constable\(^10\) and it seems that the English landscape painter was

\(^7\) Cat. no. 72. \(^8\) Cat. no. 97.

\(^9\) To this time Wakelin persisted in exhibiting with the Society of Artists despite criticism and opposition to his membership of the Society.

\(^10\) Conversations with Wakelin's daughter, Judith Murray - June, 1973.
perhaps indirectly influential for him at this time. An interest in dramatic cloud effects and the depiction of landscape under subdued light conditions is already noticeable in *Mt. Wellington, Tasmania*. These kinds of effects were to be explored and developed in many paintings of the late thirties and early forties; *The Bridge from Lavender Bay*\(^{11}\) (1939, plate 62), *Crepuscule*\(^{12}\) (1942), *Richmond Landscape*\(^{13}\) (plate 68) and *Black Mountain, Canberra*\(^{14}\) (illus. xii) - both 1944 - and *Ploughing at Hinton*\(^{15}\) (plate 63) all involved an almost complete reversal of the usual interpretation of the Australian landscape in its traditionally more 'typical' aspects - heat haze, brilliant sunlight, vivid blue skies etc. But then Wakelin was never really interested in these particular features of the local landscape, the subject of so many pictures painted since colonial days - and still fashionable.

That Wakelin was impressed by the beauty of the

\(\begin{array}{ll}
11 & \text{Cat. no. 107.} \\
12 & \text{Cat. no. 123.} \\
13 & \text{Cat. no. 128.} \\
14 & \text{Cat. no. 127.} \\
15 & \text{Cat. no. 132.} \\
\end{array}\)
English light and landscape colours has already been mentioned (chapter five), and is perhaps confirmed by the evidence of these mature paintings. Even in full sunlight such works as De Maistre's House\textsuperscript{16} (1943, plate 64) and Ryde Landscape\textsuperscript{17} (1947, plate 65) have the soft luminosity and quiet tonality of the English countryside. Wakelin's preferences in this respect may have been determined originally by his earlier boyhood in New Zealand. Here the rich colouring, the subtlety and softness of the landscape (particularly in the mid North Island where Wakelin grew up) corresponds more closely to the English than to the Australian landscape. Wakelin's St. Mary's from Hyde Park\textsuperscript{18} (1937, plate 66) typifies this 'Englishness'. Although an interest in capturing the effects of sunlight on grass and trees is evident here in a rather restrained application of flecks of paint, Wakelin's colours are quiet and soft, premixed rather than pure and carefully modulated. Trees, foliage, grass are now more precisely painted in small strokes quite different to the

\begin{flushleft}
16 Cat. no. 124. & 17 Cat. no. 136.
18 Cat. no. 101.
\end{flushleft}
broad parallel slashes of earlier works. Components of the picture are no longer composed and organized into a formalized architectonic unity. As in later mature paintings - 

- **St. Phillip's, Church Hill**

(1943, plate 67), **Richmond Landscape, Tasmania** (plate 68) - Wakelin here confronts reality, altering or emphasizing only those aspects which will serve to convey, pictorially, the mood he feels the scene to evoke. He is here descriptive rather than analytical, romantic and poetic rather than detached and constructive. He no longer imposes structure, order and simplicity on reality, but interprets subjectively.

Wakelin's interest in light - one that had not deeply concerned him previously - is not in a penetrating, luminous brilliance, but a quiet, all-pervading glow that mellows and unifies rather than sharply defines (e.g. **Black Mountain, Canberra**, illus. xii, **Ploughing at Hinton**, plate 63). Forms are no longer analysed and reduced for pictorial purposes or for the more profound reasons Wakelin

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19 Cat. no. 126.
alluded to in his theoretical statements. Compositional organization and structuring, the superimposition of formal design on landscape, still life, portrait, is rejected now for an anecdotal, sometimes sentimental interpretation of the subject. And this is almost a complete reversal of the 'art for art's sake' position suggested in Wakelin's 1928 essay for Art in Australia.

Wakelin's diminishing interest in a formalized, schematic depiction of reality is reflected in the large number of more intimate pictures of family and friends produced during the thirties and forties. In Fairytales (1936, plate 69), Portrait of Clarice Young (1938, plate 70) and Interior (1942, plate 72) one senses that Wakelin has painted for the simple pleasure of capturing the subject on canvas - not in the investigation of a primarily formal or technical objective. Produced for the sheer enjoyment

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20 See Wakelin's aesthetic statement for Art in Australia (1928) quoted on pp.177-8.
21 ibid.
22 Cat. no. 96.
23 Cat. no. 104.
24 Cat. no. 120.
of painting, the warmth and intimacy they suggest denies analysis of a more intellectual kind - and most carry personal associations above and beyond purely pictorial concerns.

Such works do certainly lack the vitality and formal interest of earlier (pre 1935) paintings, but this is perhaps partly compensated for in a number of paintings by a renewed interest in colour. In Judith in Blue (1941, plate 73) and Interior at Pott's Point (1940) colour glows, producing a warm, soft light suggestive of Wakelin's now more subjective approach and interpretation. Brushwork is, however, restrained and deliberate, lacking the more expressive flourishes, the vitality of his earlier technique. Crepuscule and Stormy Sunset (both 1942), with their rich colour and broad, painterly effects, recapture something of this former vigour, but in a more romantic vein.

Although quite radically altering both his formal technique and choice of subject matter in

25 Cat. no. 117. 26 Cat. no. 114.
27 Cat. no. 119.
these mature years, Wakelin did not completely abandon earlier concerns. His diversity of approach becomes most obvious in a study of the still life paintings produced during the 1935-1947 period. This type of subject provided greater opportunity for formal manipulation and perhaps less for a romantic or anecdotal approach. Nevertheless, Wakelin's technique and his interpretation were still quite diverse. Still Life with John Young\textsuperscript{28} (1938, plate 74), with its predominantly dark tonality, carefully modulated colour and rather static composition contrasts strongly with the near contemporary Still Life with Pewter Pitcher\textsuperscript{29} (c. 1938, plate 75). Here colour is cool, decisive, almost metallic in brightness.\textsuperscript{30} The classically simple construction and straightforward conception of the subject opposes the subdued romanticism and the anecdotal aspects (the background portrait of Young) of the former still life. More importance has been attached to such Cezanne-derived compositional manipulations as the tilting of objects, the

\textsuperscript{28} Cat. no. 105. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{29} Cat. no. 102.

\textsuperscript{30} The reproduction does not do these colours justice.
distortion of formal perspective. And these help to create liveliness and movement in an otherwise immobile still life. By comparison, Jug and Drapery (1939, plate 76) approaches the 'sketchy' technique - the broadly applied colour and lively brushstrokes - of earlier works. Colours are simple, earthy, while form and outline are only roughly suggested.

Iceland Poppies (1940, plate 77) is perhaps Wakelin's most vitally alive and most pictorially successful still life painting. With its informal composition, its flecks of colour and its vibrating light effects it has much in common with the fundamental ideas of the Impressionist artists. And the influence of Cezanne is also evident in its structural distortions. Roses (1944, plate 78) completely reverses this approach. Tonally subdued, it lacks the excitement, the formal interest, the suggestion of natural lively beauty inherent in Iceland Poppies.

Diversity is perhaps the keyword in a description

31 Cat. no. 109. 32 Cat. no. 112. 33 Cat. no. 129.
of the works painted between 1935 and 1947 - a
diversity that extended from a sketch-like sponta­
taneity, to a rather descriptive naivety, to a
sometimes subdued, sometimes colourful romanticism.
With some notable exceptions I feel most lack the
boldness, the more direct and penetrating 'reality'
of many earlier works.

Wakelin was never a particularly adept painter
of the human figure, but during these years it does
begin to appear more frequently in his painting.
Straightforward and unsophisticated, his interiors,
portraits and a number of landscapes\textsuperscript{34} including
figures are simple perhaps to the point of becoming
banal. Readily comprehensible, these works are
personal and private; Wakelin is here less concerned
with formal composition and analysis than with
content. His is now generally an emotionally rather
than an intellectually determined response to the
visual world - and he is inspired by the close, the
familiar, the particular rather than the universal.

\textsuperscript{34} e.g. The Bridge from Lavender Bay (plate 62)
"Modern art aims at the setting down of essentials in the clearest and most direct manner possible." wrote Wakelin in 1928. "Essentials", however, were no longer the prime objective. What seems to have mattered in many works now was an adherence to visual truth - not truth in a metaphysical sense (a truth that would have required a distortion of reality), but truth in a perceptual sense; the artist could interpret as he wished (i.e. according to the reaction the subject may invoke), but visual fidelity remained important. Apart from the brief period during 1919 Wakelin had never really departed from a strong dependence on visual reality. But his interpretation of reality prior to the mid thirties had been subject to formal and stylistic considerations that altered this reality - that in a sense 'heightened' it. Now such considerations appear to have become secondary, often unimportant. They have been replaced by a personal, but more simple and less penetrating interpretation of nature.

36 e.g. Interior (pl. 72), The Train to the Mountains (Cat. no. 125), Richmond Landscape, Tasmania (pl. 68).
that largely ignores formal manipulation and technical innovation.

During the period 1935-47, Wakelin continued to exhibit regularly with the Contemporary Group (annually), the Society of Artists (annually) the Macquarie Galleries (1935, 37, 39-44, 46), the Contemporary Art Society (1947) and the Australian Academy of Art (1938). He was represented in a number of important exhibitions: 1938 - "150 Years of Australian Art" at the Art Gallery of N.S.W., 1941 - "Art of Australia 1788-1941" which was circulated in the U.S.A. and Canada, and in 1942 his first important retrospective exhibition was staged at the Art Gallery of N.S.W. In 1947 Wakelin was elected vice-president of the Contemporary Art Society jointly with Desiderius Orban and, in this year also, was given the Society of Artists medal jointly with George Bell. Official recognition was thus complete.

37 3 paintings - Diana, Golder's Green, Hendon Landscape.
38 Romantic Landscape, Exhibition catalogue no. 83.
Press reviews in association with several of the exhibitions (mainly those at the Macquarie Galleries) reveal that Wakelin's reversal of interests was apparent to at least a section of the contemporary public. One headed "Richly Coloured Paintings" observed:

Roland Wakelin's exhibition at the Macquarie Galleries shows this accomplished artist in a new and even more favourable light. In the past he stressed the form and weight of solid objects until this phase of his painting became a preoccupation obscuring every other aspect. Now his art has become completely individual.40

Referring to this period and contiguous with this article, Wakelin himself later wrote:

No man can paint except in his own way and hope to do good work. Cezanne was the major influence of my life and I once made the mistake of trying to paint as he did . . . . If I had gone on doing that all I would have achieved would have been to turn myself into a little Cezanne. I wanted to be myself and all my life I've tried to be myself. If an artist . . . succeeds in being himself he achieves something.41

Wakelin does not refer to any specific period

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40 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 July, 1940, p. 6. The reviewer may be Kenneth Wilkinson.

when he thought he was merely "imitating" Cezanne, but we may assume he is speaking of the 1925-35 period - his most obviously Cezanne-inspired. The fact that Wakelin believed he was, at this stage, only imitating Cezanne was no doubt influential in the development of a more personal, original, but rather sober style. Official acceptance by the public during the thirties must have consolidated and reinforced this change or 'maturing' of style - for Wakelin experimented little in ensuing years. A rather critical review of his 1944 Macquarie Galleries exhibition revealed an uncommon perceptiveness towards a change of style that often virtually opposed the aesthetic precepts of Wakelin's earlier work. Paul Haefliger, the author, refers to it as "a new and disturbing quality", one "of anxiety to record the pleasing aspects of his subject matter." It conflicts with and denies the "architectonic discipline" so well understood in Wakelin's earlier work and now so subject to other, less painterly concerns.

42 11-30 Oct., 1944 (33 paintings).
44 ibid.
But despite the fact that these works are (and I would agree here with Haefliger) aesthetically less exciting, their "charm", as another reviewer termed it\textsuperscript{45}, did win Wakelin a certain popular appeal previously virtually non-existent. His official recognition resulted in the one-man retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of N.S.W. in 1942 - a rather important landmark in his career - and the award of the Society of Artists medal in 1947.

Wakelin was now sixty, a mature artist, once a champion of modern ideals, now something of a romantic and traditionalist. His age and his almost compulsive necessity to paint whenever or whatever inspired him\textsuperscript{46} contributed greatly to the highly personal, perhaps sometimes rather inconsequential nature of many of these 1935-47 paintings and those that were to follow until his death in 1971.

\textsuperscript{45} "The passing years have done more than merely mellow Roland Wakelin's art; they have granted him charm without enfeeblement"and,"A breath of Romanticism blows over the severity of the landscape of his earlier days." - "Wakelin is Fine Colourist", (anonymous) Telegraph, Sydney, 13 March, 1946, p.3.\textsuperscript{46} All those closely associated with Wakelin during his life attest to this almost obsessive urge to paint.
PART II: 1948-71

THE FINAL YEARS

In 1948 Wakelin exhibited eight New Zealand landscapes with the Northwood Group at the Macquarie Galleries. The group comprised four other artists - Lloyd Rees, George Lawrence, Marie and John Santry - all living in or around the Sydney suburb of Northwood. Although Wakelin, Lawrence and Rees had known each other and had been painting and sketching together for some years, the Group did not emerge as a definite body until 1945 when they held their first art classes. It had only one exhibition in Sydney and one later in Brisbane in 1961.

Wakelin's association with the Northwood Group however, had no significant consequences for his art at this time. The Group did not constitute a united movement nor did it necessarily adhere to any one

1 5-17th May, 1948.
2 Rees, (Small Treasures of a Lifetime, p. 145) also mentions John Bucklow who joined later.
common aesthetic; each artist painted in his own style and each conceived and interpreted the landscape quite differently. However, all were united by a common enjoyment of landscape painting and of 'plein-air' sketching.

For years we worked together on Saturdays in various areas around Sydney . . . . But more than anywhere else we preferred to work in what was at that time the village of North Ryde . . . .

This area provided the subject for many of Wakelin's paintings produced during the late forties and early fifties. Breezy Day at North Ryde⁶ (1948, illus. xiii), Old House at North Ryde⁷ (1952, plate 81) and another quite differently conceived work, but of the same subject⁸, largely continued those interests developed earlier in the forties and discussed in the preceding chapter. An attention to

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⁴ The catalogue introduction to the 1948 exhibition referred to the artists as being "bound together by ties of friendship and common interests."

⁵ L. Rees, op. cit., p. 145.

⁶ Cat. no. 140.

⁷ Cat. no. 153.

⁸ Dated 1949 and in the University of Melbourne Collection. Cat. no. 145.
broadly sketched-in cloud effects, to the weightiness of mass bathed in a warm glowing light that substantiates rather than dissolves form - these were all evident previously during the forties and even late thirties.\(^9\) The earlier version of *Old House at North Ryde* (painted in 1949), however, achieves a warmth and brilliance of colour not found in preceding works\(^10\), but anticipating, I think, a general heightening of colour evident in many paintings throughout the 1950's. And this renewed interest in bright, exaggerated colour seems to have been the outcome of a parallel interest in a more intense light. It is still the 'soft' light of a sunny winter's day or the afterglow of evening - but due now to a new emphasis on colour it revitalizes rather than sobers form.

*Old House at North Ryde* (1949) is a rather extreme example of Wakelin's newly emergent colour

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\(^9\) e.g. *The Bridge from Lavender Bay* (1939, pl. 62), *Interior* (1942, pl. 72), *De Maistre's House* (1943, pl. 64), *Crespuscule* (1942).

\(^10\) Warm reds, oranges, purples are used extensively in large areas suggestive of the heat and bright sunlight of an Australian summer's afternoon. Forms are blocky, cubic and broadly treated.
and light interests. Other works - Morning on the Yarra\textsuperscript{11} (c. 1950, plate 79), St. Peter's, Watson's Bay\textsuperscript{12} (1954, plate 82 and illus. xvi) and South Coast Road\textsuperscript{13} (1955, plate 83) - explore a more restrained use of colour, the agent of a light, golden and mellow that softens yet simultaneously emphasizes form. Double Bay\textsuperscript{14} (1958, plate 84) employs a vivid range of colours, but it too has this suffused, unifying, romantic 'glow'. It is beautifully used in The Showground Tower from Centennial Park\textsuperscript{15} (1956, plate 86), but here the artist's normally descriptive and straightforward approach has been broadened to admit a lyrical, more suggestive atmospheric quality not found in the carefully detailed paintings - Morning on the Yarra (1956, plate 79), The Bridge\textsuperscript{16} 1958, plate 93), Woolloomooloo\textsuperscript{17} (1960, plate 89) and The Argyle Cut\textsuperscript{18} (1963, plate 90) - more typical of Wakelin's mature vision.

\textsuperscript{11} Cat. no. 146. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{12} Cat. no. 159.
\textsuperscript{13} Cat. no. 162. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{14} Cat. no. 171.
\textsuperscript{15} Cat. no. 165. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{16} Cat. no. 169.
\textsuperscript{17} Cat. no. 176. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{18} Cat. no. 179.
Wakelin rarely, if ever, attempted in later works to dissolve solid form in a disintegrating, impressionist light or application of colour. Those works already discussed testify to his continuing emphasis on three dimensionality, on form significant for its inherent tangibility. As such they are an extension of earlier Cezanne-inspired preoccupations with pictorial solidity and depth. Other Cezannesque elements - so much a feature of the earlier paintings - have now, however, been completely absorbed into a highly personal style that depended little on the artistic revolution introduced by the early artists of the modern movement.

Apart from his 1928 theoretical writing and other shorter statements and opinions expressed at various times Wakelin was little given to theorizing about his art. The direct, unintellectual, sometimes rather naive nature of many works painted since the late 1930's, the simplicity of his unaffected approach, perhaps explains this absence of a need for a predetermined, intellectual aesthetic theory. A lecture,
written by Wakelin during the 1950's, has, however, given some indication of his approach to colour and the importance he attached to it in his art:

In painting colour is the vehicle with which we create a work of art . . .
colour . . . is inseparable from composition.

He realized that "Colour is . . . a constituent of light," that it is "used to create on the picture plane light, space and volume which is not imitative but abstract." He acknowledged ". . . a profound emotional and spiritual significance in colour." Wakelin perhaps gives us some clue to the inspirational source of the suffused golden glow evident in many paintings when he notes that ". . . yellow is the one basic colour of nature - the golden light of the sun which pervades all." The Showground Tower from Centennial Park (plate 86) and St. Peter's, Watson's Bay (plate 82) illustrate as nowhere else this all-pervading "golden light of the sun"

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19 The lecture, handwritten and quite lengthy, is undated but was written for the Architecture faculty at Sydney University where Wakelin was art instructor from 1952-68.

20 ibid. There are no page numbers for this quote or those that follow.
reiterated in varying degrees throughout many works of the 1950's and 60's. Evening at Werri\textsuperscript{21} (plate 97), painted in 1965, reveals a more expressive, spontaneous Wakelin (in its broad painterly effects) — but it too glows with a gold-hued luminosity.

One may perhaps conjecture that Wakelin's interest in painting a mellow, golden light was the result both of a romantic impulse and a more technical notion about the importance of yellow as the dominant colour in the spectrum\textsuperscript{22}, the "basic colour of nature." Whatever the interpretation it did imbue Wakelin's rather 'ordinary', unsophisticated conception of reality with a softness, a warmth and intensified colour needed to provide formal and aesthetic interest in many otherwise undistinguished paintings. That this light, and consequently colour, is lacking in the New Zealand landscape reproduced\textsuperscript{23} is possibly evidence also that Wakelin saw it as a peculiarly Australian feature; it was his personal

\textsuperscript{21} Cat. no. 181.

\textsuperscript{22} It is interesting to note both Wakelin and de Maistre placed yellow in the position of middle "C" in their colour-music scales of 1919.

\textsuperscript{23} plate 80. Cat. no. 150. Wakelin visited New Zealand in Dec., 1951.
interpretation of local light effects - not what at first appears to be an anglicized version of a rather untypical Australian luminosity.

Unusual for this period of his career is Wakelin's Kiama (plate 88) painted in 1949 in a vigorous style that expresses dramatically the windswept, stormy quality of this particular scene. But the swift strokes of paint employed here to suggest wind, movement are not typical; Wakelin was rarely, if ever, concerned with these more extreme weather effects. In many mature paintings he continued to apply colour in thick, juxtaposed strokes or, less frequently, expressive swirls, but these were seldom suggestive of movement; by confining and controlling his brush technique in such examples as The Ferry (1952, illus. xiv), Sydney Waterfront (1955, illus. xv), The Argyle Cut (1963, plate 90) and Carthona (1954, plate 92) Wakelin emphasizes rather

24 Cat. no. 144.  
25 Cat. no. 152.  
26 Cat. no. 161.  
27 Cat. no. 179.  
28 Cat. no. 156.
the stability and solidity of mass, air and water—all parts of the composition are given an almost equal density. By stressing the materiality of his medium he stresses also the 'materiality' of the entire scene.

Despite Wakelin's eventual complete departure in the landscapes of later years from his earlier, more experimental, Cezanne-inspired works, the mature still life paintings carried a lingering Cezannesque influence that, like the still lifes discussed in the preceding chapter, are among Wakelin's most satisfying works. Wakelin was not generally prone in later years to formal distortion or any overt simplification. Two still life paintings, however—Still Life with Black Bottle 29 (1953, plate 94) and Still Life with Jug and Apples 30 (1964, plate 95)—achieved a successful integration of both. The first, dark and rich in colour, emphasizes, in its deliberate arrangement of objects, the tangibility of solid form and in its formal distortions a structural, but dynamic instability. The second is painted

29 Cat. no. 154. 30 Cat. no. 180.
in a more intense, impressionist light that partly dissolves definite form and outline in reflections and cast shadows. Objects are still quite recognizable and quite substantial, but there is in this work a lightness and formal ambiguity that make it one of Wakelin's most delightful paintings. At seventy-seven he was still capable of creating pictures of beauty and sensitivity.

During the 1950's Wakelin continued exhibiting with the Macquarie Galleries, and the Contemporary Group until 1959. In November, 1950, he went to Melbourne, teaching at the National Gallery school there for a short time. In December, 1951, he visited New Zealand for three months and during 1956-7 toured England, Holland, France and Italy for about seven months. From 1952 to 1969 he taught art classes in the Faculty of Architecture, Sydney University. Throughout the 1960's he was represented in a number of important gallery and travelling exhibitions including one retrospective exhibition in 1962 at the Bank of N.S.W. House, Sydney 31 and a

31 May-June, 1962 - 55 paintings, no catalogue.
second major comprehensive retrospective at the Art Gallery of N.S.W. in April, 1967. 32 Accompanied by numerous reviews and articles in various publications, this exhibition in a sense 'crowned' Wakelin's artistic career.

There is little to distinguish the paintings of the last decade of Wakelin's life from those of the 1950's. One may perhaps determine a new, crisper, brighter colour in Regatta 33 (1966) or Terrace Houses, Double Bay 34 (1963, plate 96), and a more vivacious brush technique in Hydrangeas 35, (c. 1968, plate 98) or Still Life with Jug and Apples (plate 95) - but generally the works continued preceding preoccupations. The artist's health was worsening throughout the sixties, however, and this, combined with his age, contributed perhaps to a natural weakening of artistic powers evident in some paintings. 36 Wakelin sometimes included figures in these later paintings and, as

32 8-30 April, 1967 - 92 paintings.
33 Cat. no. 183. 34 Cat. no. 178.
35 Cat. no. 185.
36 e.g. The Argyle Cut (pl. 90) and Still Life with Green Cloth (1963).
always, they are never quite comfortably assimilated into the picture as a whole. Before all else a painter of landscapes, Wakelin never succeeded, I believe, in painting a human form that became an integral part of the scene depicted or that managed to convey a sense of innate liveliness. In Manly Beach\textsuperscript{37} (1960, plate 91) and The Argyle Cut Wakelin's figures are solid, sculptural, but almost inanimate—and their naive conception is perhaps a little too simple to be convincing.

Although hampered by illness Wakelin continued to paint (mostly still life pictures) until his death in May, 1971. And the fact that he did continue to paint into his eighties underlines his lifelong obsession with painting. If, as Douglas Dundas has remarked this "compulsion to paint has sometimes resulted in works that lack inspiration"\textsuperscript{38}, one may note that it also resulted in a number of very enjoyable, formally successful paintings. In his obituary to Wakelin's death James Gleeson wrote:

\textsuperscript{37} Cat. no. 175.

He will be remembered not because his example played any real part in shaping the course of art history in Australia, but because he created a firmly integrated body of work which was so indelibly stamped with the qualities of a unique artistic personality that Australian painting would be very much the poorer for its absence.  

Russell Drysdale did believe, however, that Wakelin "... helped to emancipate both painters' and society's view of art."  

Whatever the view of Wakelin's contribution to Australian art he was not, and will never be remembered as, a 'great' artist. Many critics noted the limitations that perhaps weakened Wakelin's artistic facility, but they also paid tribute to his perseverance, his life-long involvement with painting:  

We know him as a steady, down to earth painter; one whose passion sometimes outstrips his technique and his impulse his discipline, but whose theories and fundamental beliefs are unshakable.  

39 James Gleeson "Roland Wakelin: a style all his own", Sun Herald, (Sydney), 6 June, 1971, p. 94.  

40 This extract comes from a letter written by Drysdale ostensibly for a daily newspaper. The letter, unprinted, was shown me by Wakelin's daughter, Judith Murray. However I have not been able to find it reproduced in the local papers and can therefore offer no further reference.  

41 James Cook, Daily Telegraph, Sydney, 10.7.57, p. 18.
Wakelin's most important contributions to the advance movement of Australian art, were, I believe, those paintings of his earlier, experimental period. He was, however, bound always to the visual world — and this world became in later years personal and romantic, one where considerations of style and interpretation were influenced solely by his individual emotional responses, not by formal concepts or intellectual theorizing. It is difficult and unwise to attempt to place the Wakelin of later years in any definite art category precisely because of the personal, highly individual nature of the mature paintings. His earlier, pre-1935 works are 'Post-Impressionist' or more concisely, 'Cezannesque', in their source and inspiration, but the later paintings often almost reversed this artistic approach. Although consistently dependent on visual reality in these more mature works Wakelin was by no means a realist. A romantic perhaps, but his was not the violent emotionalism of the nineteenth century Romantic painters. Sobered to an extent by his earlier contact with the more classical, controlled works of Cezanne, Wakelin's romanticism was restricted to his use of colour and light rather
than choice of subject matter or actual painting technique. Herbert Badham saw Wakelin as neither "a romanticist nor . . . a realist; he is simply Wakelin and his work is removed from the work of his fellows by its personal content. It is not a matter of subjects or techniques, but a matter of the spirit or soul . . . ." 42 James Gleeson saw Wakelin's art as one of "quiet, but unmistakable dignity", 43 one that "brought to maturity a richly Romantic vision of the world . . . ." 44 But it was Gleeson's article in reference to the "Wakelin Memorial Exhibition" held at the Macquarie Galleries in 1972 45 that best revealed this critic's understanding of Wakelin's art - and perhaps broadens our understanding of the artist's work more than any categorization could achieve. Gleeson believed Wakelin's "concept of light as an adhesive agent" to be "his most distinctive


43 J. Gleeson, "Roland Wakelin . . . .", op. cit.


45 29 March-17 April, 59 paintings (1915-1970).
contribution to the art of this country." He continued:

It was not the central theme of his painting as it was for the more orthodox impressionists, but he used it with wonderful skill to fuse his forms into a cohesive whole. Volume and the sense of weight were his main preoccupations and he was able to endow his objects with an almost palpable reality. There is nothing harsh or aggressive in Wakelin's art - his work is strong, but gentle, alert yet relaxed, concentrated, yet soothing."

But Wakelin must not be judged solely on his later output. His earlier experiments with 'modernist' concepts may not have been directly instrumental in revolutionizing the Australian art consciousness, but they are significant for their experimental nature, their complete departure from accepted contemporary artistic standards. Wakelin's questioning of this art, his refusal to bow to its authority and his attempts to introduce a more modern international outlook through the example of his own art - to break free from the demands of a restrictive nationalism - are reasons sufficient enough to warrant him a place in the history of Australian art. His

46 James Gleeson, "Wakelin in Perspective", Sun, Sydney, 29.3.72, p. 30.
47 ibid.
importance, however, lies not only in his earlier attempts to introduce modern art and its aesthetic to a conservative Australian society, but also in the significance of his complete life-long commitment to painting. His prodigious output may sometimes have resulted in works lacking real inspiration, rather naive and a little unconvincing, but on the whole his oeuvre was that of a man bound simply and utterly to painting and to the visual world that inspired him. Patrick McCaughey wrote, "He was a master of but one style - the very personal style of Roland Wakelin." And Grace Cossington Smith, friend and former artistic collaborator, bestowed the praise - "He was a rock!"  

48 This extract is taken from an article titled "Homage" by McCaughey. The clipping of the article, however, contains no reference to its source or date. As it is likely to have come from a Melbourne paper and as it gives no clue of a possible date (no specific exhibition is mentioned) I am unable to site the article in its original location.

49 Miss Cossington Smith in conversation with Daniel Thomas.
Like many other local artists Wakelin found it impossible (until the last few years of his life) to live solely from the sale of his paintings. Resigned to such a position, working as a commercial artist became, for him, the most tolerable alternative means of earning a living. Commercial work required some artistic skill, but it was not creatively taxing - and this was of great importance for Wakelin. It left him free to channel his creativity into painting during the weekends and particularly the two week Christmas holiday break when he was able to take time off for painting excursions both interstate and within N.S.W. The paintings begun and completed during this period usually formed the nucleus of works for his next exhibition.

Wakelin seems to have been satisfied working as a commercial artist for Smith and Julius in Sydney
(1917-22) and then in London for Cinad's advertising films. The work at Smith and Julius was not often stimulating, but as Lloyd Rees (then a fellow commercial artist) has noted, Wakelin "... was not unhappy there ... as he enjoyed the company of his fellow artists." The atmosphere at the O'Brien Publicity Company for which Wakelin worked from 1924 to 1941 was not, unfortunately, quite so congenial. More typical of most large advertising agencies, the pace here was often hurried and a little too impersonal - although Wakelin (perhaps because of his outside painting interests) seems to have remained immune from becoming caught up in its commercialism. First and foremost an artist Wakelin viewed commercial art purely as a means of supporting himself and his family. That it necessitated some creativity, but at the same time left him almost entirely free on weekends was a combination of advantages that few other jobs could offer.

Apart from the advertisements reproduced


2 The originals are held at the Macquarie Galleries, Sydney. No other information as to their intended advertising context etc. is available.
evidence of Wakelin's commercial art work survives on the back covers of the Sydney Telephone Directories intermittently from the early 1930's to 1941 - when he left O'Brien's. Wakelin was responsible here for the "Feltex" carpet (1938, 39 and 40), the "Osram" (November 1934 and 35, 1936) and the "Gilbey's Gin" (1931, November, 1932 and May, 1935) advertisements. The "Feltex" works were generally of interiors painted in a rather realistic, but colourful style that was allied to a number of his contemporary paintings. The "Gilbey's" advertisements (e.g. illus. xix) placed greater emphasis on design and strong, striking colours. None could be described as particularly startling or revolutionary (this, after all, is not necessarily the role of the commercial artist), but they were competently and professionally handled.

As can be seen from the advertisement reproductions included here (illus. xvii-xxii), Wakelin's subjects were diverse and his treatment of them equally and appropriately varied. Although they cannot be given specific dates most would have been

3 e.g. Interior at Pott's Point (1940, cat. no. 114), Interior (1942, cat. no. 120, pl. 72).
completed during the 1930's. In the "Royal Cigarettes" advertisement (illus. xviii) Wakelin has used the etching technique to great advantage, emphasizing depth, structure, surface complexity and 'richness'. By contrast, illustrations xxi and xxii (possibly painted later in the 1930's) reveal a more modernist, almost 'art deco' approach; bolder colours and flat design are used here to achieve 'impact' rather than an aura of luxury. It is perhaps interesting to note that Wakelin's contemporary painting style remained unaffected by such modernist effects. As a commercial artist he was committed to following the latest and most popular advertising styles and techniques - a commitment that rather conflicted with the individuality of his quite different painting style.
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The following bibliographic list has been subdivided into a general bibliography (references used throughout the thesis) and a more specialized chapter bibliography. Within each section references are arranged alphabetically by author's name where given. Where no author is given (catalogues, some newspaper and periodical articles etc.) listing is chronological. Most locally produced books and periodicals cited (particularly the Art in Australia editions) incorporate reproductions of Wakelin's work, but I have only noted the inclusion of these where such reproductions were those not referred to or reproduced in this thesis or those I have not had recourse to see by any other means.
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