



Sir John Longstaff : Portrait of a Lady

18 February to 22 April 2012

Education Resource Kit

VELS Arts, VCE Studio Arts & VCE Arts

sam.
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GREATER
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Introduction Foreward

This exhibition spans the career of one of Australia's most highly regarded portrait painters. It brings together 28 portraits of women painted by Sir John Longstaff between 1890 and 1931. Many of his portraits feature significant people in John's Longstaff's life: his mother, wife, sister in the early years; numerous portraits of close friends, some of whom were prominent art patrons or important women in Australian culture in the early twentieth century such as his biographer Nina Murdoch. Private commissions by wealthy patrons in London were particularly important in establishing his reputation both here and overseas. This exhibition presents an overview of the artist's oeuvre and the artistic influences on his style of representation and displays the changing roles of women in Australian culture as well as womens fashions over five decades.

This education resource kit provides a range of suggested and further activities that are aligned with VELS Arts curriculum, VCE Art and VCE Studio Arts. For a full list of images, chronology and please refer to the exhibition catalogue which contains an excellent essay by guest curator Susan Gilberg,, titled *Enduring Elegance: Sir John Longstaff's Portraits of Women*.

Rhonda Chrisanthou

Visual Arts Educator, Shepparton Art Museum

Cover image: Sir John Longstaff, *Miss Ethel Grey in Riding Habit* c.1898, oil on canvas mounted on board, 194 x 123 cm, Shepparton Art Museum, donated anonymously 1966, photograph: Amina Barolli



Ada Garrick (Mrs Bright) 1895
Oil on canvas, 126.4 x 87.8 cm
Gift of Miss Rachel Bright, 1953
National Gallery of Victoria



Jessica c.1925
Oil on canvas, 90.2 x 69.8 cm
Inscribed u.l.: J Longstaff
Felton Bequest, 1925
National Gallery of Victoria

Foreward

Sir John Longstaff: Portrait of a Lady brings together a stunning selection of paintings of women by one of Australia's most highly regarded portrait painters. To have a portrait painted in the 19th century required a person to have affluence and certain standing in the community. Many of Longstaff's sitters offer a fascinating and now rarely glimpsed insight into Australian history. Many of the portraits are the wives of notable men although several female subjects had distinguished careers of their own, including suffragette Rose Scott and writer, poet, radio broadcaster, friend and biographer of Longstaff, Nina Murdoch. The portraits selected for this exhibition offer an opportunity to review the tradition of portrait painting through the career of a particularly talented and gifted painter, and observe the development of Longstaff's style and technique over a period of five decades.

Susan Gilberg, Curator

VELS 4, 5, 6

Exploring and Responding

Longstaff often painted commissions of very wealthy clients in either full or three quarter length formats. These portraits became an important source of artistic practice as and income source.

- Find a full length portrait of a lady from the exhibition. Can you explain:

Who is this person?

What is she wearing?

How is she standing?

Why do you think Longstaff painted a life-size person?

Do you think this is a realistic representation?

What kind of frame surrounds the painting?

Some of the portraits in the exhibition are tribute paintings, commissioned by private or wealthy individuals to remember important, rich or successful people.

- Compare two commissioned paintings in the exhibition and answer the following:

Who is this person and why they are important?

Why and when was the portrait done?

Is it painted from a photograph or from real life?

Where do you think the portrait was hung when it was finished?

How does the frame complement the painting?

To capture the essence or character of a person, Sir John Longstaff often focused on a particular gesture, feeling or thought of the sitter. This highlighted expressive features in the hands and face of the person, and used light and dark, as well as rich textures, to convey the mood or thoughts of his subject.

- Select a painting from the exhibition that you think best does this.

Who do you think the lady is?

Why did you think she had her portrait painted by Longstaff?

What kind of feeling is expressed through her gestures or gaze?

What aspect of her dress stands out the most?

Several of his portraits feature youthful or famous women who had successful careers in modelling or the performing arts.

- Find a portrait of a woman that emphasises elegance or glamour.

Who is this woman and when was her portrait painted?

Why do you think Longstaff painted her portrait?

Do you think Longstaff painted the image directly from sittings or a photograph?

What painterly or expressive techniques has he applied?

How true to life is this portrait? Consider the use of light, tone and texture.

VELS 4, 5,6

Creating and Making

- Portraits often show people in their best or favourite clothing. Design an outfit or item of clothing that you would like to wear to have your portrait painted.
- Find a photograph of a person you admire. Reproduce the image of this person in black and white. Add a range of colour and textures that reflect something of their character or personality. Design a suitable frame for this portrait.
- Use a projector to help you draw an outline of a life-size figure or figures to form a large scale drawing or silhouette. Use a tonal palette in one colour that best suits the character of the person or people.
- How is the body language or gestures made by a model or mannequin when they are posing different to that of a person whose portrait is being done by a painter or photographer?

Explore this idea by finding 3 different outlines of mannequins or models from one kind of magazine (e.g. sporting, fashion, lifestyle). Trace over, copy, cut and paste the image into a collage or composite drawing. Add additional tone and line to complete the work.

Repeat this process with 3 images that are portraits of well known people.

- Ask a person or friend to sit or pose for you to draw. Sketch or photograph three different aspects of a friend's character that can be associated with a particular look, attitude or gesture. Add dramatic effects through the use light, colour and tone.

Ask the person to select the work that best shows who they are and frame this work for exhibition.

VCE Art

While many of his contemporaries are well known Australian painters, Sir John Longstaff is a lesser known but highly influential academic painter of historical, genre and portrait painting. According to curator Susan Gilbert, he was during his lifetime 'an award winning artist of great renown'.

Suggested Activities

...there's no formula for producing a work of art. There is only one justifiable demand, which is to produce something of beauty. That is essential, and beauty embraces a very wide field indeed. It isn't to be measured by conventional standards nor bound to conventional methods of achievement either!

Sir John Longstaff

- With reference to both early and late portraits of women explain how Longstaff became an important and influential portrait painter in Australia in the early 20th century.

Traditional portraiture of the period required the presence of a sitter rather than a photograph to create a convincing image of a person. Whenever Longstaff relied on photographs his images were more likely to be flat or two dimensional.

- Find two works from the exhibition that support this statement. What other artistic influences might have directed his use of flattened colour and space?

Longstaff's portraits of female friends and members of his family differ from many other private commissions, including portraits of famous people and prominent or wealthy men.

- Investigate how Longstaff's relationship to the sitter may have influenced his use of composition, stylistic elements or painterly techniques to portray the character of the person

The exhibition *Portrait of a Lady* spans five decades of portrait painting in Australian society.

- Select one painting from each decade to suggest how portraiture changed in style from 1890 to 1931. Consider formal aspects related to the sitter's pose, dress, expression and the use of pictorial space, as well as textural and tonal elements.

VCE Art



Lady in Grey 1890
Oil on canvas, 135.0 x 90.0 cm
Inscribed u.l.: J Longstaff 90
Gift of John H. Connell, 1914
National Gallery of Victoria

Further Research

- Investigate how *Japonaserie*, impressionism and photography influenced the representation of women in portraiture in the late 19th and first half of the 20th century. In particular, look at comparable works by any of the listed artists.
- How influential is the approach taken by Longstaff on contemporary portraiture? Find art works of prominent or successful women by current artists or photographers. Compare formal elements of design, cultural, personal and contemporary influences in the work of selected artists with Longstaff's portraits of women.

VCE Studio Arts

'It is for portrait painting that he was best known and the most compelling of his portraits were his portraits of women.'

Susan Gilbert
Curator

Suggested activities:

'On that Wednesday morning several positions were sketched before Sir John, through a chance movement of mine, saw the pose which he considered Ideal. It focused the strong studio light upon head, hands, and necklace. The artist was delighted with it.'

From The artist and 'Miss Hendrie' by Edna Rasmussen

- Refer to works from the exhibition for a close study of Longstaff's approach to portraits of young women. Consider aspects of the sitter's mood, gaze and expression and how it is expressed through tone, texture and painterly techniques. Looking at the works in the exhibition, *Portrait Of A Lady*, what aspects of his practice might distinguish him as an important Australian artist in the late 19th and early 20th centuries?

Create a series of small sketches in pencil of a work that focuses on different aspects of the character of the sitter by examining their gestures, body language, gaze and pose.

Use a range of tones to sketch out contrasting light and dark features that complement the mood or attitude of the sitter.

VCE Studio Arts



Mrs John H. Connell c.1900
Sketch portrait
Oil on canvas, 132.8 x 103.4 cm
Gift of John H. Connell, 1914
National Gallery of Victoria

Find two portraits by Longstaff that successfully use painterly tonal techniques to create textural or atmospheric effects. How does Longstaff use light and dark create a particular mood or effect that complements the pose or character of sitter?

Further research

Compare and contrast Longstaff's portraits of prominent or affluent women with the work of any of his contemporaries in Australia or overseas. Refer to painters listed below or source other prominent photographers or painters of the period.

Influential Artists

Australian artists and close contemporaries of Longstaff in the early twentieth century who were well regarded in portrait painting: Rupert Bunny, Hugh Ramsay, E Phillips Fox, Alexander Colquhoun, George Lambert, Tutor St George Tucker, Lionel Lindsay.

Contemporary landscape painters and close friends included: Frederick Mc Cubbin, Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, David Davies, John Peter Russell, Charles Conder.

Other important artistic influences: James McNeil Whistler, James Singer Sargeant, impressionism, Diego Velazquez, Frans Hals and Titian.

Glossary

Academic art - is a style of painting and sculpture produced under the influence of European academies of art such as the Académie des Beaux-Arts in and Royal Academy of Art, London

Commission – a private paid request or order made directly with the artist for an artwork

Genre painting - the term genre-painting (also called genre works) refers to pictures depicting situations and scenes of everyday life. Subjects typically include domestic settings, interiors, mealtimes, markets and other street scenes.

Japoniserie - stylistic characteristics, as in art, decor, or film, influenced by or reflective of

Mannequin - a person employed to wear clothing to be photographed or to be displayed before customers, buyers, etc.; a clothes model.

Oil Paint A definition by Winsor & Newton state: "Oils are one of the great classic media, and have dominated painting for five hundred years. They remain popular for many reasons: their great versatility, offering the possibility of transparency and opacity in the same painting; the lack of colour change when the painting dries; and ease of manipulation."

Oeuvre - the works of a writer, painter, or the like, taken as a whole.

Portraiture - Traditional easel-type portraits usually depict the sitter head-and-shoulders, half-length, or full-body. In most cases, the picture is specially composed in order to portray the character and unique attributes of the subject

Palette - the range of colors used by a particular artist.

(The) **Salon** - beginning in 1725 was the official art exhibition of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France. Between 1748–1890 it was the greatest annual or biannual art event in the Western world. From 1881 onward, it has been organized by the Société des Artistes Français.

Suffragette - female supporter of the cause of women's voting rights in late 19th and early 20th century

Underpainting - preliminary painting used as a base for textures or for subsequent painting or glazing.

Longstaff Exhibition

Annotated Exhibition Entries

1. *Lady in Grey*

1890

Oil on canvas

135.0 x 90.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

Longstaff's wife, Topsy, was the model for this work painted while he was a student in Paris and exhibited at the Paris Salon.

A review of Longstaff's exhibition at the Old Court Studio on Swanston Street in 1898 states:

One of these pictures shows a pure, ethereal profile and a figure clothed in tender, delicate greys, the whole composition suggesting in tones of exquisite softness the dreamy grace almost of a vision. The treatment is characterized by a peculiar flatness, which makes the effect almost decorative, but there is no gainsaying the charm and beauty of the picture which was hung in the Salon of 1891, and attracted a good deal of notice.ⁱ

The composition and arrangement of paint reflects the influence of Whistler and the Japanese influence prevalent in Europe during the 19th century. Longstaff was probably exposed to *Japonisme* through the publication *La Japon artistique*, founded in 1888, and he may have attended Siegfried Bing's gallery in Paris renowned for *Japoniserie*, as well as exhibitions on Japan at the École des Beaux Arts in 1890 and the *Exhibition Universelle* in 1889.ⁱⁱ Fellow student Alison Rea noticed Longstaff's interest in Japonism while visiting his Montmartre studio in 1891. In her subsequent article for the *Australasian* she mentions a table littered with, amongst other things, "....ancient Japanese and other jars..."ⁱⁱⁱ

Longstaff painted a number of portraits of Topsy at this time that he sold or gave to other artists, such as Charles Condor, but as can be seen from a photograph of Longstaff in his Grosvenor Chambers studio in 1896 he kept this one.^{iv} It seems that he may have sold it to John Connell sometime before he returned to London in 1901. From this photo we can see that it was reframed, possibly by John Connell when he purchased the painting. In his book, *Framing the Nineteenth Century, Picture Frames 1837-1935*, John Payne confirms that the frame was replaced between 1896-8 with a frame by the Melbourne manufacturer John Thallon.^v

2. *Lady in Black*

1893

Oil on canvas

195.0 x 100.3 cm

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Purchased 1896

During Longstaff's first attempt at this portrait of Miss Doeherty, an art student from California, he ran out of turpentine and in his impatience to keep working he used lamp oil to thin the paint hence, the painting took sometime to dry. After six weeks Longstaff tested the paint with his finger and when it came away dry he rubbed a cloth over the work only to find that all the paint had come off. His impatience had proved disastrous, but after the initial shock Longstaff laughed it off and fortunately Miss Doeherty agreed to sit for him again.^{vi}

A correspondent for the *Argus* wrote in his review "The Australian Artists at the Salon, Paris, May 5, 1893":

This year Messrs. Alston, Longstaff, Bunny, and Robinson could hardly have had their pictures better placed if they themselves had chosen the positions.... Mr. John Longstaff's "Portrait de Mme. D---" more than easily holds its own with any work of a similar nature in the exhibition....Mr Longstaff is to be congratulated on this strong and clever work, which is painted in a low key of colour. The hands are admirably painted and full of character, and the figure is strikingly true and life-like.^{vii}

3. *Ada Garrick (Mrs Bright)*

1895

Oil on canvas

126.4 x 87.8 cm

National Gallery of Victoria

Gift of Miss Rachel Bright, 1953

According to Murdoch's biography Longstaff received this commission not long after arriving in London from Paris in 1894. Phil May had gone to Italy letting Longstaff stay in his London flat while he was away. Longstaff, recovering from the flu, had hardly any money left when Ada's father, Mr Garrick, knocked on the door.^{viii} It was exhibited at the Royal Academy of Art, London, in 1895.^{ix}

4. *The Artist's Wife*

1896

Oil on canvas

59.7 x 47.0 cm

Art Gallery of South Australia

This portrait of Topsy was exhibited in 1898 at the Old Court Studio in Swanston Street along with *Lady in Grey*. The reviewer commented on Longstaff's versatility and compared the portraits thus:

There are two portraits of the same lady which admirably illustrate this artistic many-sidedness.... In striking contrast is the second version of the same sitter. Here we have a woman of flesh and blood, the flesh-painting refined but also warm and solid, the contours beautifully moulded, and the pose natural, easy, restful, as well as elegant. Ideas may vary, according to the mood of the onlooker, as to which is the more interesting picture, but there can be no two opinions as to which is the more lifelike portrait, and it is this variety of intention which lends the charm of breadth to Mr. Longstaff's work, making us sharers in some degree, if only for a few moments, in the plastic and responsive temperament which is the mark of the true artist.^x

A later critic wrote admiringly:

The masterful and confident manner of the execution, the consummate handling of the paint, the beauty of the subject, the exquisite modelling of the face and the tenderness of the flesh tints are the qualities which combine to make a picture of unsurpassed loveliness.^{xi}

5. *Miss Ethel Grey in Riding Habit*

1898

Oil on canvas mounted on board

194.0 x 123.0 cm

Shepparton Art Museum

Presented anonymously 1966

This portrait was also exhibited at the Old Court Studio in Swanston Street in 1898 and it also received an enthusiastic review:

Another interesting portrait is that of a brown haired, blue-eyed girl, of, perhaps, 16, with a wistful look in her eyes and waving masses of gold-shot locks falling about her shoulders. She is dressed in a riding habit, the folds of which she catches up with one gloved hand, while the other holds a slender whip. The clever treatment of the hair, the winsome little face and the dainty, girlish sweetness of the figure all help to accentuate the leading ideal of youthfulness and grace.^{xii}

6. *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*

1898

Oil on Canvas

114.4 x 88.0 cm

Shepparton Art Museum

Gift of Jean Longstaff, 1945

Longstaff's mother, Jessie Campbell Longstaff, was sixty six years old when he painted this portrait of her. Longstaff captures his mother's warmth and sense of humour with a quizzical expression. Jessie's dress was made from a length of silk Longstaff had sent from Paris.^{xiii} He painted a companion portrait of his father in 1909 which is also in the Shepparton Art Museum.

7. Polly Apperly

c1899

Oil on canvas

Shepparton Art Museum

Polly Apperly was Longstaff's favourite sister. Her husband managed the Bank of Victoria at Eaglehawk, near Bendigo, and this portrait was painted during a visit by Longstaff. Polly enthusiastically followed her brother's career and collected newspaper and magazine articles about him. The scrapbook she assembled is still in the family.^{xiv}

8. Mrs George Lansell

1899

Oil on canvas

132.9 x 109.5cm

Collection of Lance Lansell, Melbourne

According to Murdoch's biography, the Lansells had organised a reception for 500 guests to unveil this portrait. On the morning of the reception Longstaff had asked that Mrs Lansell put on her ball gown and jewels and sit for him again. Mrs Lansell did as he requested and on entering the ballroom saw that Longstaff, much to her vexation, had painted out her face. Longstaff explained that he was not altogether pleased with it and wanted to repaint it. He assured her that the paint may not be dry but all would be well, and he swiftly completed the repainting with impressive results. One guest, a Mr Henderson, was particularly impressed by the lifelike depiction of Mrs Lansell. Having entered the ballroom after first greeting Mrs Lansell on the stairs he expressed his shock at seeing her again so soon only to realise that it was the portrait.^{xv}

9. Portrait of Suzanne Hay

1900

Oil on canvas

68.5 x 55.8 cm

Bendigo Art Gallery

Suzanne Hay was a lifelong friend of Longstaff as were her brother and sister-in-law, Andy and Mary Ellen Hay, who all lived near Bendigo.^{xvi} The portrait was in Suzanne Hay's possession for many years. At one stage Hay also owned the small self portrait of Longstaff dated 'London 1903' that is now in the collection of the Shepparton Art Museum.

10. Mrs John H. Connell

1900

Oil on canvas

188.6 x 107.4 cm

National Gallery of Victoria

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

As was the custom at the time portraits of married women were titled with their husband's name. Mrs John H. Connell was born Emily Baker in Melbourne in 1864 and she married publican and art collector John Henry Connell in 1886. Emily died in 1913 and it was in 1914 that John Connell gave his collection of art and antiques to the National Gallery of Victoria in a landmark gift, including these two portraits of his late wife.

Connell had remarried in 1913 and his second wife asked him to remove Emily from the family vault in Healesville and to have her buried elsewhere in the cemetery.^{xvii} It would appear that she also did not want the

portraits of Emily and they were included in the gift of his collection to the gallery. Connell did not give all his Longstaff paintings to the gallery in 1914 and it is likely that he may have acquired more after 1914 because an auction of his estate by Leonard Joel in 1953 included paintings by Longstaff.

11. Mrs John H. Connell

c1900

Oil on canvas

132.8 x 103.4 cm

National Gallery of Victoria

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

12. Portrait of a Young Woman

1901

Oil on canvas

49 x 37 cm

Private Collection

Art in Australia, April 15, 1931, contains a portrait of Longstaff's cousin Mercy Longstaff painted in London in 1903. *Portrait of a Young Woman* may be another portrait of Mercy Longstaff as there is a striking resemblance between the two paintings and Longstaff was known to paint people more than once.

As we have seen from the portrait of Mrs Connell, Longstaff was a master of the loose brush stroke and has elegantly captured the young woman in this portrait with a limited palette.

13. Mrs Reginald Broomfield

1911

Oil on canvas

71.8 x 58.4 cm

National Gallery of Victoria

Felton Bequest, 1937

This vivacious portrait, painted in one sitting, elicited a glowing review when first exhibited in the Royal Artists Society exhibition in Sydney in 1911:

Mr John Longstaff "sweeps the board" with the sparkling vitality of the dark-browed, dark-eyed, joyous countenance catalogued as No 33 ("Mrs. Reginald Broomfield"). The red carnation of the face beneath the black cap, and the crimson colour of the lips above the dark coat, together with the long, coral necklace are employed to give brightness to the rich ensemble which forms the most fascinating work in the gallery.^{xviii}

Mrs Broomfield was born Annie Love in Castlemaine, Victoria in 1880. Reginald Broomfield, a prominent Sydney barrister, was her second husband. This portrait was painted in August 1911 while Annie was pregnant with her daughter, born the following month.^{xix}

14. Portrait of Mrs R.C. Broomfield

c1920s

oil on canvas

58.5 x 48.0 cm

Private Collection

This portrait was recently found to have covered an earlier unfinished portrait from 1890. The date on this portrait of Mrs Broomfield is difficult to read but a number of factors indicate that it was painted sometime in the mid 1920s: Mrs Broomfield appears older than the 1911 portrait and orange had also appeared in Longstaff's palette in the 1920s, as in the portrait of *Edna Thomas* (Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum) painted in 1925.

We know it was painted before August 1929 as it appears as the frontispiece for an exhibition catalogue in 1929, *Fifty Years of Australian Art by Members of the Royal Art Society* by G. Galway.

15. *Lady in Black*

nd

Oil on canvas

195.0 x 100.0 cm

Horsham Regional Art Gallery

Gift of Mr Mac Jost

From the sitters' costume this portrait appears to have been painted sometime after 1910. It may have been painted during Longstaff's 1911 visit to Australia. It seems to be one of the last full-length portraits he painted of a woman. The background colour gives this painting more warmth than his *Lady in Black* of 1893, but there is the same reserved dignity about the sitters.

16. *Portrait of Nina Murdoch*

1920

oil on canvas

63.2 x 36.3 cm

National Library of Australia, Canberra

Nina Murdoch (1890-1976) was a writer, poet, radio broadcaster, friend and biographer of Longstaff. She was one of the first women general reporters to work for the Sydney *Sun*. Murdoch later moved to Melbourne with her husband and worked on the *Sun News-Pictorial* until retrenched during the depression. She was responsible for developing the Argonauts' Club while managing the Children's Corner on radio 3LO in the 1930s. Murdoch also traveled widely during the 1920s and '30s, and gave travel talks on the wireless and wrote travel books.^{xx}

17. *Miss Eve Gray*

c1922

Oil on Canvas

60.0 x 50.0 cm

Collection of Nicolaas van der Waarden, Sydney

Eve Gray (1900-1983) won the "Most beautiful woman in Australia" competition in 1922.^{xxi} The judges were made up of prominent portrait painters including Longstaff, Julian Ashton, George Lambert and Lionel Long. Longstaff reportedly offered to paint Gray's portrait.^{xxii} She began her career as a photographic model but after winning the competition she became a celebrity, and her career as an actress took off with leading parts in plays and pantomimes. Gray returned to England, the country of her birth, in 1924 where she continued acting in the theatre and also made a number of silent movies.^{xxiii}

18. *Miss Rose Scott*

1922

Oil on canvas

112.3 x 86.4 cm

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Gift subscribers to the Rose Scott Commemorative Fund 1922

Rose Scott (1847-1925) was a women's rights activist and founding member of the Womenhood Suffrage League of New South Wales in 1891.^{xxiv} Scott was a friend of Longstaff and Nina Murdoch.

Longstaff has created a comfortable environment for this crusader of women's rights with an armchair and a curtain in the background. The colours of the palette and the expression of the sitter infer both a warmth and strength of character.

19. *Dame Nellie Melba*

1923

Oil on canvas

153.0 x 112.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria

Presented from the Estate of Dame Nellie Melba, 1932

Melba had her portrait painted many times, although some critics feel none of them fully captured her personality and presence. It is interesting that Longstaff had not painted her portrait earlier as they had first met in London in 1894. Joan Lindsay, wife of Daryl, wrote: 'Longstaff in his portrait in the Melbourne gallery has missed the strength – I can't imagine that Melba in real life was ever starry-eyed'.^{xxv} However, Longstaff may have wanted to capture that moment before Melba was about to sing.

It is thought that the figure of Melba is modelled on Sir Keith Murdoch's tall and dignified housekeeper. Longstaff needed someone with a 'majestic air' as Melba was considered dumpy and rather commonplace at that stage of her life.^{xxvi}

A length of Venetian velvet damask, the "colour of the bloom upon a plum", that appears in the background of a number of Longstaff's portraits was given to him by Melba. Murdoch says Melba gave it to him at the height of her fame, during the days she was singing at Covent Gardens, for him to use as a background for his paintings.^{xxvii}

20. *Portrait, Mrs Henry Thompson*

1924

Oil on canvas

75.0 x 60.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria

Gift from the L.W. Thompson Collection, 2004

This small portrait sympathetically depicts a mature woman looking somewhat self-conscious about having her portrait painted. Longstaff seems to have put her at her ease and brought a sparkle to her eye. It is also an example of the masterful tonal qualities of his work.

21. *Jessica*

c1925

Oil on canvas

90.2 x 69.8 cm

National Gallery of Victoria

Felton Bequest, 1925

Longstaff painted Jessica Harcourt's portrait when she was 17. Harcourt worked as a mannequin for department stores such as Buckley's and she was also on the chorus line of J.C. Williamson musicals. Longstaff's portrait helped to launch her screen acting career when she won the lead roll in *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1927). Harcourt made a number of films, launched her own line of cosmetics and worked in radio, but gave up acting when she married writer Fred Thwaites in 1937.

Roe points out that this portrait was initially called *The Black Hat*, then *The Picture Hat*, before Longstaff changed the title again shortly before his death. Roe suggests that this was done to ensure the identity of the sitter and that it also suggests a familiarity with the sitter.^{xxviii}

22. *Untitled [Jessica Harcourt]*

c1930s

Oil on composition board

61 x 47.2 cm

The University of Melbourne Art Collection

Purchased 1967

23. *Edna Thomas*

1925

Oil on canvas

110.5 x 85.0 cm

Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum

Edna Thomas was a Louisiana *chanteuse* touring Australia when Longstaff painted her portrait. Miss Thomas received glowing reviews for her performances of negro spirituals and Creole songs.^{xxix} She gave concerts in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney.

24. Portrait Study

1920s

Oil on canvas

60.5 x 51.5 cm

Geelong Art Gallery

HP Douglass Bequest Fund, 1935

Very little is known about this sitter. It is a small, intimate work and an example of the various types of portraits Longstaff painted. The dark background accentuates the light focused on the face and the assured touch of Longstaff's brushstrokes create a masterful representation of the sitter.

25. Betty [Roland]

c1925

Oil on canvas

91.0 x 81.0 cm

Ballarat Fine Art Gallery

Martha K. Pinkerton Bequest 1940

Betty Roland (1903-1996) wrote plays, radio and movie scripts, autobiographical books and five children's books. Her best known play is *The Touch of Silk*, first performed in 1928. Roland left school at 16 to work as a journalist for *Table-Talk* and *Sun News-Pictorial* and was active in left-wing politics. *Caviar for Breakfast*, 1979, the first of her autobiographies, is based on her time working on the *Moscow Daily News* and smuggling literature into Nazi Germany.^{xxx}

26. Portrait of Lydia Rolins

c1931

Oil on canvas

76.0 x 64.0 cm

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Gift of Dr J P Parkinson, 1974

Lydia Rolins was a friend of Rose Scott and it would appear that Longstaff knew her through Scott.^{xxxi} Rolins was the wife of a Sydney judge and prominent in Sydney society. Longstaff captures the warmth and charm of the still beautiful Rolins in this warm and vivacious portrait.

27. Lady Cussen

c1931

Oil on canvas

Dimensions tbc

Collection of Charles Morrissey, Tamworth, NSW

According to the family there was a whirly gig in the background of this portrait which Lady (Johanna) Cussen thought was dreadful. It unknown whether Longstaff or another painter subsequently painted over it. Longstaff had previously painted a portrait of Sir Leo Cussen (1929, NGV) and was a friend of the family.

28. Alice Morrissey (nee Cussen)

1931

Oil on canvas

49 x 39 cm

Collection of the Gorman Family

Longstaff offered to paint this portrait of the Cussen's daughter Alice Morrissey. Again this small intimate and affectionate work demonstrates the effortless precision of Longstaff's brush strokes and masterful use of colour.

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- ⁱ ‘Mr. John Longstaff’s Picture, An Interesting Exhibition’, *Argus*, 3 August 1898, p. 6.
- ⁱⁱ Karen M. Roe, *Sir John Longstaff: career and Oeuvre*, Masters Thesis, Latrobe University, 1991, p. 39.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Alison Rea, ‘Australian Artists in Paris’, *Australasian*, 14 March 1891, p. 524.
- ^{iv} *John Longstaff in the studio, Grosvenor Chambers Collins Street*, 1896, Collection of State Library of Victoria, Melbourne
- ^v John Payne, *Framing the Nineteenth Century, Picture Frames 1837-1935*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2007, p.216.
- ^{vi} Nina Murdoch, *Portrait in Youth of Sir John Longstaff (1861-1941)*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney and London, 1948, p.123-25.
- ^{vii} ‘The Australian Artists at the Salon. (From a Correspondent), Paris, May 5’, *Argus*, 17 June 1893, p.13.
- ^{viii} Murdoch, p. 145.
- ^{ix} Roe, p. 48.
- ^x *Argus*, 3 August 1898, p.6.
- ^{xi} Louis McCubbin, *Table Talk* of 5 June, 1951.
- ^{xii} *Argus*, 3 August 1898, p.6.
- ^{xiii} Prue Joske, *Debonair Jack, A Biography of Sir John Longstaff, 1861-1941*, Claremont, Melbourne, 1994, p. 75.
- ^{xiv} Joske, p. 83.
- ^{xv} Murdoch, p. 185 - 186.
- ^{xvi} ‘Artspace Update February 2001’, *Tarrngower Times*, Thursday February 2, 200[1], p.3, Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum Artist’s File.
- ^{xvii} Laurelee McMahon, *John Henry Connell – The Man and His Collection*, Postgraduate Diploma Thesis, The University of Melbourne, 1994.
- ^{xviii} ‘Royal Art Society. Strong Australian Landscapes, Delicate Water-colours’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 August 1911, p. 11.
- ^{xix} *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 17, 1911, p.
- ^{xx} Suzanne Edgar, ‘Murdoch, Madoline (Nina) (1890-1976)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, p. 627.
- ^{xxi} *Argus*, 13 March, 1923, p.7.
- ^{xxii} *The Sun*, 26 May 1922, p.7.
- ^{xxiii} Information courtesy of the late Nick van der Waarden, owner of the portrait, from information he had gathered from a number of sources including Eve Gray’s cousin.
- ^{xxiv} Judith Allen, ‘Scott, Rose (1847-1925)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, Melbourne University Press, 1988, pp 547-549.
- ^{xxv} Joan Lindsay, *Time Without Clocks*, Loch Haven Books, 1994, p.30.
- ^{xxvi} Roe, p.107.
- ^{xxvii} Murdoch, p. 203.
- ^{xxviii} Roe, p. 108.
- ^{xxix} ‘Miss Edna Thomas. Farewell Concert’, *Argus*, 21 December 1925, p. 10.
- ^{xxx} www.econ.usyd.edu.au/wos/workinglives/roland.html
- ^{xxxi} Joske, p.144.