

A Pair of Spanish Eyes: The Life and Times of Miguel Mackinlay (Michael McKinlay)

Member *Dorothy Erickson* is busy on a number of fronts, researching the lives of women artists in Western Australia prior to World War I, completing a dictionary of artists and artisans to 1950 and revising her manuscript for part II of *Inspired by Light and Land* from 1960-2000, but the area engaging most of her attention at present is the life and art of Miguel Mackinlay. Here she tells us a little of this artist.

Miguel, known as Michael when he lived in Western Australia, was claimed by J.W.R. Linton as the most successful student to graduate from his art classes at Perth Technical School. Born in Spain in 1895 to a Spanish mother and Scottish father he arrived in Western Australia in 1906 with his father, brothers and sisters.



Stan Cross's cartoon of himself, Gus Dunn and Miguel arriving in London. *Smith's Weekly* 25 Dec. 1937, p. 16.

Miguel had an exceptional facility in figure drawing and portraiture, and exhibited with the WA Society of Arts from 1911 to 1914. He also won several poster competitions, including a national one in the Victorian Chamber of Manufactures' *Great All Australian Exhibition* in 1914. His entry was called "The Wanderer". Before he left to undertake further study in England in 1914 he had a major exhibition in St George's Hall in Perth with the cartoonist Stan Cross. As yet none of these works has been traced.



'A French Post, Château-Thierry', Champagne 1918, pen & wash 29 x 32cm.

In London Miguel painted a large panorama for the newly opened Savoy House, the headquarters of the WA Agent General in the Strand. He was caught up in the war, drawing some surprisingly delightful sketches of his time in the trenches.

He married his artists' model, made a good living as an illustrator for major publishing companies, showed regularly at the Royal Academy and was prestigiously 'hung on the line' (the most important placement). He became the 'talk of the town' in the very competitive art world of 1920s-1930s London. He moved to live in the artists' colony of Bushey just out of London in Hertfordshire and died in 1959. His illustrative work led to him being described on the *Antiques Roadshow* c2006 as England's Norman Rockwell.



'Tête-à-tête', oil on canvas, 207 x 237cm was 'hung on the line' in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1930; now on loan to Bushey Museum and Art Gallery

This project was commissioned by the artist's grandson based in Bahrain to co-ordinate a team of researchers, genealogists and photographers in Spain, Scotland, England and the USA to piece his life together, document it and produce a catalogue raisonné of his output. The result will be a website, a hardcover book and exhibitions in England, hopefully also in Australia and possibly also in the USA.

Several of Mackinlay's artworks are in Princeton University Art Museum, a few pieces remain with his Western Australian relatives. One is in the Art Gallery of WA but the majority of his artworks are in the UK with family or on display in regional collections in Bushey and Leamington Spa. Some must surely be hanging on walls or stored in cupboards in Western Australia. They would be signed M. McKinlay. If you have one on display or lurking in storage Dorothy would like to hear from you at – dorotheerickson@ozemail.com.au

Dorothy Erickson



'Summer', 1933, oil on canvas 166 x 199cm, on loan to Bushey Museum.