

Tom Carment

My taste has changed over time. I remember, as a child, being really upset by the 19th Century painting [by Evariste Luminais] of the two brothers on a raft, set adrift, their Achilles tendons cut. These days I find that picture sentimental, and look at it, unmoved.

I have been visiting the Art Gallery of NSW regularly since I was a teenager. No other place has had a bigger influence on my art education. In choosing four works from the collection, I have not picked pictures that are necessarily the “greatest” or most important in the collection, but the ones which speak to me in a personal way.

As an artist who spends a lot of time doing watercolours and drawing, I have chosen some of my pictures from the Gallery’s collection of works on paper.

They are only sometimes on general display, but the staff are very happy to show works to the interested public in the Study Room on Lower Level 2. You need to ring and make an appointment.

Photo by Michael Wee.



Thomas Gainsborough *The Reverend Samuel Kilderbee*

Samuel Kilderbee was a close friend of Thomas Gainsborough and I think what I really like about this portrait is its intimacy and warmth, the complicit gaze of the sitter, his round open face. Kilderbee used to find commissions for his friend and they apparently carried on a bawdy correspondence, now lost. The paintings of Gainsborough's late period, with their wispy bravura brushwork, and elegance, are masterly, yet sometimes quite detached. Gainsborough chafed in the yoke of his portrait commission work, having to please his aristocratic patrons. This picture is very different. It feels relaxed, the brushwork neither too laboured, nor too flashy. It's a portrait of friendship.

Thomas Gainsborough *The Reverend Samuel Kilderbee* c.1770-74. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 63.5 cm. Purchased 1966.



Olive Cotton *Storm* 1938. Gelatin silver photograph 30.8 x 30.2 cm. Gift of Edron Pty Ltd 1995 through the auspices of Alistair McAlpine.



Ivy Pareroultja *Mt Gillen, NT* 2013. Watercolour on wove paper, 17.0 x 54.0 cm. Mollie Gowing Acquisition Fund for Contemporary Aboriginal Art 2014. © Ivy Pareroultja, courtesy Ngurratjuta Iltja Ntjarra Many Hands Art Centre.

Ivy Pareroultja *Mt Gillen, NT* lower

I had initially chosen to talk about an Albert Namatjira watercolour, *Catherine Creek, Northern Territory*, but due to copyright issues was unable to do so. It is a beautiful work, an enclosed view, with a great sense of light and a harmony of linear patterns running through the trees and rocks. I urge you to view it in the Study Room. I have chosen instead *Mt Gillen, NT*, a recent work by Ivy Pareroultja, a richly coloured painting of an undulating range. It has a feeling of inland light, a great energy and lightness of touch.

Ivy is the daughter of Edwin Pareroultja, who painted with Namatjira and Rex Battarbee. She now lives in Alice Springs where she paints her country from memory at the Many Hands Arts Centre. I recently went hiking with two friends in the West MacDonnell Ranges. It was my first visit to that wonderful country. A few times I felt pretty sure that I was standing close to where Namatjira had painted, an uncanny feeling, in that ancient and largely unchanged landscape.

Olive Cotton *Storm*

I love the sombre drama of this photo. Taken in the 1930s it is almost a premonition of where the photographer would spend most of her life. I had the good fortune to be acquainted with Olive Cotton, through my friendship with her daughter Sally. I first met Olive in the 1970s at about the time when her work was being rediscovered, after a long gap. From 1941 to 44, Olive had run the Max Dupain Studios in Sydney, but after that she retreated to a bush block at Koorawatha, outside Cowra, with her husband Ross. At "Spring Forest" she raised her two children and continued taking her photos, always using her trusty Rolliflex camera, the sort with a viewfinder you look down into, and a square format. In the 1960s she opened a small photography business in a Cowra arcade where, apart from commercial work, she could also sort and make prints from her archive of negatives. About 40 years later I helped Sally dismantle and pack away this studio as the bulldozers waited outside. When I look at this photo of trees and a stormy sky, I think of Olive, her kindness and her perseverance.



Elioth Gruner *Weetangera, Canberra*

Weetangera, Canberra is like a bookend to Elioth Gruner's other very popular work in the collection, *Spring Frost*. They were painted nearly two decades apart and are quite different in style, but share one thing – an immersion in the landscape. *Weetangera* is perhaps Gruner's last major work and is the culmination of his numerous plein air paintings of the Monaro region. He was introduced to the area by his friend George Lambert, and it changed his palette, away from the greens of eastern valleys to a subtler array of bone greys and ochres. Gruner's late landscapes have a crisp delineation of form, a great sense of space and hazy light. In *Weetangera* he achieves a quiet classicism – every brushstroke seemingly just right, and natural, down to the distant whiff of smoke and the streaky clouds that are not really holding back the heat of the sun. To me, this is one of the great depictions of summer.

Elioth Gruner *Weetangera, Canberra* 1937. Oil on canvas 63.8 x 76.5 cm. Purchased 1937.

NEXT MONTH Fiona Hall